

EVENINGS WITH THE SKEPTICS

OR

FREE DISCUSSION ON FREE THINKERS

BY

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'Believe it, my good friend, to love Truth for Truth's sake is the principal part of human perfection in this world, and the seed-plot of all other virtues.'—LOCKE

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PRE-CHRISTIAN SKEPTICISM.

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P R E F A C E.

THE primary intent of the author of this work was to fill, however imperfectly, what he considered a gap in the history of philosophy. Since the publication of Staudlin's well-known monograph on the subject (Leipzig, 1794) no work has appeared in modern literature having for its object a complete and impartial history of Skepticism. Attempts have been made both in Germany and France to supply what has been generally recognised as a want, but they have either been partial, as in the case of Dr. Tafel's work, or abortive, as in the projected works of MM. Bartholmess and Émile Saisset.

Another motive that actuated the author was to suggest a new method for the investigation and classification of philosophic thinkers. Most persons must have remarked the confused appearance presented by ordinary histories of philosophy, in which thinkers of all kinds are huddled together without any regard to intellectual affinities or similarities. It seems at least worth considering whether some elementary basis of classification might not be adopted which would subdivide philosophers according to their psychological idiosyncrasies. Thus they might be arranged, as Diogenes Laertius remarked, into two main classes, Synthetic and Analytic, or, using the more usual terms, Dogmatists and Skeptics—denoting respectively those in which constructive or disintegrating instincts preponderate. Such a division, although not rigidly logical, seems the best of which the subject is

capable. Probably few remarkable intellects have ever existed as to which it would be impossible to determine whether their bent, their native unbiassed propensity, was Dogmatic or Skeptical. Hence the following work, taking as its subject eminent examples of the analyzing, inquiring type of intellect, endeavours to show the similarity of its procedures under varying conditions of time, race, country, diversity of dogmatic and social environment, &c. Its readers will learn a lesson surely worth acquiring—that Skepticism—the exercise of the questioning and suspensive faculty—is confined to no period, race, religious or secular belief. In itself the energy is altogether natural, and its manifestation, even when extreme, ought to arouse no harsher feelings than are evoked by other developments of human speculation which also share a natural basis and starting-point.

Genuine Skepticism may be regarded from two stand-points.

1. In relation to dogma, it is the antithetical habit which suggests investigation—the instinct that spontaneously distrusts both finality and infallibility as ordinary attributes of truth. It inculcates caution and wariness as against the confidence, presumption, self-complacent assurance of Dogmatists. Thus interpreted, it is needless to point out the importance of its functions. A history of doubters and free-thinkers is in fact the history of human enlightenment. Every advance in thought or knowledge has owed its inception and impulse to inquiring doubt. Hence it would be idle to deny or attempt to minimize the historical importance of Skepticism, or the perennial antagonism between doubt and dogma—the dynamic and static principles of all human knowledge.

2. Considered in itself Skepticism implies (1) Continuous search, (2) Suspense, or so much of it as is needful as an incentive to search. This is the literal meaning of the word as well as its general signification in Greek philosophy.

We thus perceive that the Skeptic is not the denier or dogmatic Negationist he is commonly held to be. Positive denial is as much opposed to the true Skeptical standpoint as determinate affirmation. One as well as the other implies fixity and finality. Each, when extreme and unconditional, makes a claim to omniscience. Now it is in order to wean back, if possible, a much-abused philosophical term to its primitive use, as well as to conform to the increasing and true taste of spelling foreign words in their own manner, that the author has adopted in this work the orthography of *Skeptic* and *Skepticism*. Whatever meaning, therefore, his readers may have been accustomed to attach to the more common *Sceptic*, &c., he begs them to understand that a Skeptic in these volumes is above all things an inquirer. He is the indomitable, never-tiring searcher after truth—possibly one who believes, at least one who affects, search more than he does absolutely definitive attainment.

Most men are willing to accept the inquiring attribute of the Skeptic. What they dislike is Skeptical suspense; but a small amount of reflection might convince them that if the mind is to exercise its greatest instinct of continual search, it can only do so by virtue of some motive-influence, *i.e.* a consciousness of defective knowledge. Unhappily there are few speculative truths, even of those commonly believed, which do not on examination reveal a sufficiency of human nescience to justify further investigation, while it is evident that not a few minds are so constituted as to be impatient of definitive certitude of any kind. It would be difficult, *e.g.*, to propound a truth which would satisfy the exigent requirements of a Montaigne, or could withstand the unscrupulous Eristic of a Sokrates.

The true Skeptic may hence be defined as the seeker after the absolute. He is the searcher who must needs find, if he find anything, not only demonstrable and infallible, but unconditionally perfect truth. As such he may plead com-

panionship in thought and aspiration with other human seekers after the Infinite. He becomes allied with religionists, with mystics, with idealists, with philosophic hunters after the *Ding an sich*, with persistent inquirers of every type whose ostensible goal transcends their actual powers. That such a seeker need not be impeded in his energies by the full consciousness of their inconclusive result is evident. He shares the ardent temperament—the passion for search for its own sake, common to all minds of his own type. What Mystic, *e.g.*, was ever deterred in his pursuit by the impossibility of his desiderated consummation—complete union with deity? or what religionist ever considered himself thwarted in his endeavours after spiritual perfection by the self-evident futility of his efforts? This definition of Skepticism as truth-search may serve to remove some of the objections made against it as an antagonistic influence to religion, and especially to Christianity. Taking Christianity in its primary and true sense, as we find it embodied in the words and life of Christ, this supposed conflict of its dictates with reasonable inquiry after truth is nothing else than an ecclesiastical fiction. Certainly the claims of a religion which asserts itself as the Truth, which bases freedom upon truth-discovery, whose Founder's profession was that He came to bear witness to the truth, and which appealed to the reason and conscience of mankind, *i.e.* to their instincts of spiritual and moral truth, can never be fairly represented as opposed to truth-search. To the further objection, does not the definition of Christianity as a Revelation render further search needless? an answer is given in the course of this work. Here it may be remarked that as a matter of fact hardly one of the thinkers commonly accounted Skeptics, notwithstanding their aptitudes for free inquiry and their impatience of dogma, have ever thought of impugning the two great commandments of the law proclaimed by Christ to be the basis of His religion. What has been most affected

by Skeptical disintegration has not been Christianity so much as its undue ecclesiastical development.

A passing reflection is hereby suggested as to the utility of Skepticism, both suspensive and inquiring, in meeting some dogmatic tendencies of our present-day thought. Notwithstanding no small outcry as to the diffusion of Skepticism, it may be doubted whether the chiefest and most mischievous propensities of our time are not Dogmatic rather than Skeptical. Certainly a century, that has given birth to such dogmas as the infallibility of the Pope and the immaculate conception of the Virgin—that has witnessed the abnormal development of doctrine and ritual which has characterised some professedly Protestant churches, can scarcely be classed as a *Sæculum Skepticum*. And even if the complaint of increased unbelief could be shown to be sustained, it might in part be justified on the principle of Sextos Empeirikos, that Skepticism is always found in proportion to the extent of the Dogmatism that has engendered it.

Nor is it only theologians that are thus unduly dogmatic. Our science teachers, with some few exceptions, seem just as liable to assume a tone of infallibility in respect of theories inherently incapable of demonstration; while the Agnostic, who proclaims all truth to be impossible, and thereby seeks to justify intellectual apathy, is in reality equally guilty of arrogating omniscience. It is doubtful to which of these three types of dogmatists a due infusion of the cautious, self-distrustful, persistently energising spirit of Skepticism would be most beneficial.

Such appear to the author to be the general considerations calculated to explain to his readers the standpoint, purport, and intention of his work. As to its method and plan—the intermingling of philosophical discussion with formal essays—little need be added to what is said on that point in the Introduction. It seems especially demanded by the subject of the work. A series of didactic essays, however

useful for dogmatic purposes, would ill accord with the freedom which necessarily pertains to philosophical inquiry. Another advantage not less marked is the formal recognition of divergent standpoints in the contemplation of truth, without which indeed Free-thought and free discussion are mere contradictions in terms, while a third reason of a different kind seems to be the expediency of investing philosophical subjects, whenever possible, with a humane, homely, and familiar interest. Writers on philosophy are too apt as a rule to affect the position of hierophants, they are careful watchers over sacred and incommunicable mysteries, they are teachers of esoteric lore, and in harmony with their high vocation their language is oftentimes pedantic and unduly technical. Now, whatever might have been urged in defence of such exclusiveness some centuries ago, it is certainly indefensible in these days of general culture. There are few problems that have emerged in the history of human speculation that might not profitably be discussed by well-informed and candid disputants, and few minds not hopelessly stunted by excessive dogma that might not benefit by such earnest and friendly colloquy. All such controversial exertations must tend to engender intellectual independence, to awaken and stimulate thought, as well as to promote its truthful and ingenuous expression. This indeed represents one chief object of the work—its didactic as distinct from its historical aim. Writing the history of truth-seekers, the author incidentally advocates untiring and disinterested search for truth as the duty alike of the scientist, the philosopher, and the Christian. Hence he adopts—possibly from professional association—as the text of his subject the remarkable words of Locke found on the title-page, ‘Believe it, my good friend, to love Truth for Truth’s sake is the principal part of human perfection in this world, and the seed-plot of all other virtues.’

It may obviate misunderstanding with respect to other

writers who have within the last few years treated of subjects relating to the theme and personages herein discussed, if it is remembered that the work of which these volumes form a part was planned and begun seven or eight years ago. Both the execution and publication have been delayed by the author's distance from any large public library, and by other disadvantages and limitations of his position. For any defects attributable to such causes, though necessarily independent of his own volition, he offers his sincere apologies.

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EVENINGS WITH THE SKEPTICS.

INTRODUCTION.

INTRODUCTION.

THE warm rays of a July sun, loaded with the sounds and perfumes of summer, were pouring in through the open windows of the spacious library of Hilderton Hall in the county of Wilts; rebinding in aerial cloth of gold the goodly collection of vellum-bound folios which filled the lower tiers of shelves round the room; while they were reflected by the richly gilt backs of the more modern octavos which occupied the shelves above them. At the large writing table in the centre of the room, with grey head bent over a folio from which it was lifted only at certain intervals to make a note in the common-place book which lay open at his elbow, sat the master of the house to whom we are about to present our readers.

Alfred Trevor Esquire of Hilderton Hall, to give him his full designation, was a very remarkable man. For the greater part of his life he had been a consulting physician with a large London practice. But having reached what he considered the meridian of human existence—fifty years, he determined to retire from duties which increased fame rendered yearly more arduous, and live a secluded though not inactive life in some quiet rural neighbourhood. While meditating on this scheme, he received the welcome intelligence from a very old friend, a country parson, that the squire's place in his parish was for sale. He immediately took the requisite steps for securing what was to him a really 'desirable property,' and it was in this way that Mr. Trevor—the great London doctor, as the poor folks of the neighbourhood usually called him—came to be located at Hilderton. But although he had given up practice, he had not given up *theory*, as he used to say. He still took the keenest interest not only in all subjects relating to his old profession, but on all matters of general culture, especially philosophy, both

physical and metaphysical. Even in his busiest time Trevor had been a reading man. His medical friends were unable to understand how with such a practice he could find time for carefully perusing not only books connected with his profession, but the best products of the philosophical and scientific literature of France and Germany as well. He was indeed only able to effect this by the thrift of time which is the necessity of busy and the superfluity of idle men. Travelling by rail or in his carriage to a consultation, he was generally accompanied by some English or foreign work which had just been published, or, with pencil and note-book in hand, was engaged in writing memoranda for some medical or philosophical article which one of his editorial friends had induced him to undertake. One of the main reasons why he had thrown off the shackles of his profession so soon, was that he might have a greater amount of leisure for the pursuit of his studies. His life at Hilderton was pre-eminently that of a studious recluse. His books absorbed his whole time, with the exception of the needed intervals for food and exercise, which were however doled out with such a niggard hand, that an excess of half an hour in his ordinary exercise-time was, he affirmed, just as hurtful to him as an excess of food or drink. Some question of medicine or philosophy continually occupied his busy brain, nor was his pen unemployed in giving the results of his labours to a public which had always regarded them with an appreciative eye. Dr. Trevor had never been married. A philosopher, he maintained with Petrarca, did not need a wife, or if he did his philosophy was worthless. His housekeeper and sole female companion was an only sister, somewhat more advanced in years than himself, who superintended his household and cared for his wants with a thoughtfulness and assiduity almost maternal.

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While Dr. Trevor was employed in his library in the manner above described, a footstep was heard on the gravel walk outside, a slight tap at the window followed, and Mr. Arundel, the Rector of Hilderton, his very oldest friend, stepped into the room.

‘Good morning, Doctor,’ said he; ‘hard at work as usual, I see. What study can you possibly find of sufficient interest to keep you indoors on such a glorious morning?’

‘Good morning, my dear Arundel,’ replied the doctor, rising hastily from his chair and shaking him warmly by the hand. ‘I am engaged on a subject which has latterly taken up a good deal of my time—I am studying Empiricism.’

‘Why,’ retorted his friend with a grave satirical air, ‘I thought you had retired from the profession.’

‘From its practice only,’ replied Dr. Trevor. ‘In its theory, and in kindred speculations, I am more immersed than ever. Have you ever read Sextos Empeirikos?’

‘The great empiric of Greek philosophy!’ responded the Rector. ‘No, not the man himself; I have in this instance followed the modern fashion of merely reading about him. I know what the common histories of philosophy say on the subject, and, to tell you the truth, I have not the least desire to push my researches beyond such second-hand authorities. To me it is always painful to contemplate the extreme weakness and imbecility of old age, especially in a dearly loved friend; and I have far too much regard for Greek philosophy, in its rapid growth and vigorous prime, to care to dwell upon the decrepitude of its declining years.’

‘Nevertheless,’ replied the doctor, ‘old age is merely vigorous growth and blooming maturity mellowed into ripeness. It is the concentration of the wisdom and experience of a lifetime. My ideal of philosophy is not the young nor even the middle-aged man, with stalwart and vigorous frame, and head erect and well-poised upon his shoulders. It is rather the old man with snowy hair and bewrinkled brow, with stooping shoulders and feeble tottering gait. There you have not indeed the prime of material strength, but the calm mature wisdom of intellectual and spiritual power, founded upon the treasured experience and reflection of a lifetime. To reproach, as most historians love to do, the Greek philosophy with growing old, is just as reasonable as to blame a man of robust constitution for daring to attain the utmost possible limits of human existence.’

‘But,’ rejoined Mr. Arundel, ‘in your zeal for your

Skeptical friends you seem to me to mistake the purport of those writers' criticism. You know the proverb, "Once a man and twice a child." Zeller and his brother historians merely mean, as I take it, that Greek philosophy in the time of Pyrrhôn and Ainesidêmos was sinking into its second infancy. With all your enthusiasm for the Greek Skeptics, you surely would not contend that the philosophers of the Second Academy, including their Skeptic successors, are at all worthy of being placed by the side of Plato and Aristotle.'

'In my opinion,' answered the undaunted Trevor, 'the unworthiness is all the other way: I should award those "*maestri di color che sanno*," as Dante calls them, a place considerably below my favourites, Pyrrhôn, Karneades, and Sextos, who deserve confessedly the still higher title: "*I maestri di color che sanno la loro ignoranza*." Your esteemed Plato was, for that matter, nothing more than an unfinished Skeptic. He lacked the hardihood and persistency to follow up his argument to its logical conclusion.'

'Yes,' said Mr. Arundel, 'for a very good reason: because he was clear-sighted enough to discern that to do so would involve him in a hopeless entanglement of puerilities and self-contradictions.'

'Why, as to that,' rejoined his friend, 'those who adopt a given line of argument, and who regard Logic as the guide or method of Reason, ought to carry it out bravely and consistently to its extreme conclusions. The motto for earnest thinkers should be, *Fiat Logica, ruat cælum*.'

'Which,' retorted Mr. Arundel, 'is only another mode of affirming the ultimate impotence of all logical methods; for the outcome of unlimited dialectics is clearly negation. Your motto is synonymous with one which would appear truly terrible to a veteran rationalist like yourself: *Fiat Logica, ruat Ratio*; and your favourite Sextos is, if we may believe the reports current about him in histories of philosophy, a striking illustration of this irrational reasoning, and most illogical logic.'

'Read him for yourself, Arundel,' replied the doctor, 'and you will, if I mistake not, soon alter your opinion of him. He seems to me, with all his paradoxes, a wonderfully

keen and subtle thinker; moreover, he is the only one of all the numerous Sceptics, ancient and modern, who possessed sufficient learning and synthetical power to amalgamate the *membra disjecta* of Sceptical reasonings into a logical and coherent whole. Most historians allow him this merit. Cousin *e.g.* calls his works "*un système parfaitement lié dans toutes ses parties*,"¹ and this is certainly no more than the truth. His two works combined form an exhaustive treasury of Sceptical thinkers and Sceptical arguments. Placed as nearly as possible on the boundary line of Ancient and Modern Philosophy, he systematises the Scepticism of the former, while he may be called the nursing father of the free-thought of the latter. His influence during the centuries succeeding the Renaissance upon the leading thinkers of Europe was enormous, and has never been adequately appreciated. While as to the thought of the present day, there is hardly a single argument in the works of our modern Sceptics and experience philosophers which may not be found in germ or in some degree of development in his writings. I wonder that you, Arundel, when you were in pre-clerical days moving somewhat upon a Sceptical tack yourself, never came in actual contact with him.'

'To tell you the truth,' answered Mr. Arundel, 'I perceived the self-contradictory nature of the Pyrrhonism of which he is the great apostle too distinctly, to wish to become his disciple. Unlike yourself, Trevor, I don't much care for intellectual gymnastics in and for itself, without any definite aim or object. I don't care, *e.g.* to go a long day's shooting, climbing hills and wading streams for the mere sake of the exercise or the excitement of the chase. I want to make a bag of some kind: I don't mind it being what it mostly is, a small bag, but some amount of actual game I must take home, if I want to look back with pleasure to my day's work.'

'And thereby,' said Dr. Trevor, 'you evince your utter deficiency in a true sportsman's instinct, to whom his bag is or ought to be of subordinate consideration. Remember Horace's "*venator*."

¹ *Hist. Gén. de la Philosophie*, p. 187.

*Leporem venator ut alta
In nive sectetur, positum sic tangere nolit.*

I have never been much of a sportsman myself, but I should suppose, in harmony with the opinion I have frequently heard from enthusiasts in field-sports, that its greatest charm consists in the healthy exercise, the free-play of the limbs, the exhilaration of mind, the variety of scenery and the general excitement of the sport, rather than in the bag, as it is called. I, at all events, am quite content to pursue my intellectual researches—to join in the pursuit of truth—without any selfish regard to the contents of my possible bag of results. Thereby I enjoy my day's exercise, the free-play of my reasoning faculties, the picturesque diversity of views and arguments (spiritual scenery, so to speak) of the greatest thinkers of all time, without a greedy calculation of what I am likely to gain by my efforts; indeed, without the faintest wish to incommode myself with a burden which I might perchance lack strength to carry home. Besides,' added he, somewhat mournfully, 'is it not the usual fate of philosophers in search of positive truth to return empty-handed—"to go out for wool and come back shorn," as the old proverb has it. You, for instance, with all your eagerness to make a bag, must have often wended your way homewards after a long and hard day's work with nothing at all to show for it, and a similar fate must have often befallen you in your intellectual researches: so far as positive truth is concerned, you have returned bag-less. Sometimes, too, you must have fired at what appeared in the fog to be a desirable quarry, but which a nearer approach discovers to be perhaps some useless inanimate object. What have you then for your bag?'

'The result, to be sure,' replied Arundel; 'I include negative as well as positive results in my definition of intellectual game—the detection of error as well as the discovery of truth. Perhaps the false appearance by which I was misled may have deceived hundreds of brother sportsmen before me. By discovering and exposing such a falsehood, I shall have effected a positive service to the cause of truth:

I shall have hunted down an *idblum*, as your friend Bacon would term it.'

'For that matter,' rejoined Dr. Trevor, 'I can match your hunting there: I can make a bag of *idbla*—detected errors, or negative truths. Why, here (putting his hand on the folio lying open on the table) you have the largest bag of that sort of game that was ever put together, but, like Sextos, I am unable to bag anything better.'

'Well, take my advice, Doctor,' answered his friend, 'don't be too scrupulous in your hunting and in your estimate of game. If you can't find a blackcock or a pheasant, be content with a rabbit. Truthseekers, like some sportsmen I have known, lose a great number of useful ordinary certainties from excessive fastidiousness. Some years ago I had a day's deer-stalking in Scotland, and returned with a single moor-hen; but even so I had something for my labour, whereas, had I disdained moor-fowl until I had bagged the nobler quarry of which I was in search, I should have come home quite empty-handed. But I must stay no longer at present, discussing a subject so alien to my profession as Skepticism. I am on my way to the top of West-hill down to see that poor fellow Thompson, who broke his leg the other day. I called with Fanny's compliments to ask yourself and Miss Trevor to dinner the day after to-morrow. We expect the Harringtons of whom you have so often heard us speak. By the way, if you want a hearer for your Skeptical opinions you cannot have a better man than Harrington, who unites with a lawyer's acumen, and the deliberative qualities of a judge, a genuine love of culture and philosophy, especially if the latter is tinged with Skepticism after the manner of Mill, of whom he is an enthusiastic admirer.'

'Thanks; I shall be delighted to come, and so I am sure will Louisa,' answered Dr. Trevor. 'I have, as you know, long been wanting to make the acquaintance of your friend Harrington as a kindred sportsman in the broad plains of philosophy. We may compare bags, you know,' added the doctor with a smile.

'Very true,' replied Mr. Arundel, as he turned and stepped out of the open window on to the gravel walk outside; 'but I

don't think that with all his taste for Skepticism you will find Harrington glorying in the emptiness of his bag, or thinking that the sole purpose of the chase is the healthy exercise thereby acquired.'

'Well, we shall see,' rejoined the doctor, as he resumed his seat, and once more bent his head over his folio, while his friend proceeded on his way.

On the day and time appointed, Dr. Trevor and his sister took their way to the rectory, and found on their arrival that the Harringtons had preceded them. Mr. Arundel facetiously introduced his friend Harrington to Dr. Trevor as 'a modern to an ancient Skeptic.' As in duty bound, we must perform the same office of presenting the learned lawyer to our readers.

Charles Harrington Esquire Q.C. was a well-known member of the English bar, and a leader of the Circuit. For the greater part of his life he had resided in London, but latterly had been compelled, owing to his wife's delicate health, to take up his abode on the breezy Wiltshire downs, not far from Salisbury. He had known Arundel since university days, the two men having cemented a mutual friendship of the most intimate kind while students and subsequently fellows of Balliol College, Oxford. Though continually immersed in legal business, Harrington's pronounced literary tastes could not forego the relaxation of what he used to call ironically 'light literature;' the aforesaid light literature consisting generally of philosophical and scientific works, foreign as well as English, which most people would have pronounced exceedingly heavy. He had only recently planted himself within four or five miles of Hilderton, and though he had always maintained a friendly correspondence with Arundel, this happened to be the first occasion on which the Rector of Hilderton was able to introduce him to his still older friend, Trevor. Of the personal appearance of these three men, it is needless to say anything. It will suffice to remark that so far as intellect, manliness, and refinement could be expressed by physiognomy, they were as striking examples of thoughtfulness and culture as could easily be found in the

ranks of the learned professions to which they severally belonged.

When dinner was over, and the ladies had retired (Mrs. Arundel being engaged in taking her new friend Mrs. Harrington over the rectory grounds), the gentlemen drew their chairs round to the open window, and the claret-jug being placed at a convenient distance, Mr. Arundel opened the conversation as follows:—

‘Trevor and I were talking the other day, Harrington, of a subject in which you have always been much interested—Philosophical Skepticism. He claims to be, as I have told you, a Skeptic of the first water; or, taking the element in a more appropriate form, I should rather say—the first degree of cloudiness and mist. Sextos Empeirikos is his master. His works are his Philosophical Bible: of which I may say, in words now nearly forgotten, that he

Devoutly reads therein by day,
And meditates by night.

As a result of these eccentric studies, he is an extreme philosophical Nonconformist. His intellectual and religious creed is Dissidence. A dogma, especially if long established and surrounded by some amount of prestige and authority, immediately excites his ire and distrust. Indeed, dissent has become to him so much easier than assent, that if caught off his guard without time for mature consideration, I think he would very likely dispute the fact of his own existence. His Science is Nescience, and his most absolute certainty is that all things are uncertain. His unbelief even exceeds that of the man who woke every morning with the conviction that everything was an open question; for what may have been in his case a temporary aberration of a half-wakened consciousness, is Trevor’s normal condition. . . . Only, with the happy inconsistency of most Skeptics, he confines his unbelief to speculation, for in action and the practical concerns of life, he is as prompt and decisive as any man I know.’

TREVOR (smiling). Thanks, Arundel, for my portrait, which I hope, however, Harrington will consider is rather a carica-

ture than a true likeness. Leaving out your antithetical rhetoric, and using simple terms, I plead guilty to the accusation of Skepticism. I am, I suppose, a Skeptic—*i.e.* in philosophy and speculation; or, if the paradox were allowable, I should rather say, I believe in Skepticism. For that unfortunate *instinct* (it is really nothing else, as I have proved by numerous comparisons between the spontaneous action of my mind in the presence of any authoritative dictum or dogma, and the reflex action which we term instinct in certain animals), I hold Nature to be primarily responsible. Descended, as Arundel knows, from an extremely heterodox father of my own profession, whose belief was almost bounded by the scalpel and microscope, Skepticism is in my case an hereditary complaint. Perhaps in some future, near or remote, the advance of physiology may reveal the abnormal constitution of grey matter, which manifests itself as the psychical phenomenon we call Skepticism. Anyhow, I was evidently born with a restless, inquiring, dissatisfied, mystery-hating kind of disposition; for my nurse used to say that if any toys were given me having hidden springs, or happened to be representations of moving or sound-uttering animals, or anything I suppose that commended itself to my young senses as a contradiction of the great order of Nature, I invariably used to smash the article before it had been an hour in my possession, in order to get at the source of the wonder. Thus early did I indicate a tendency to 'destructive analysis' which has been my characteristic, or, as Arundel would say, my foible, through life.

HARRINGTON. Well, if the irresistible impulse to break toys forebodes a future of disbelief, I have a young urchin now in my nursery who is clearly destined to achieve great eminence as a Skeptic, at some future day.

TREVOR. You had better have an eye to him and his training, if you intend him to remain through life within the bounds of orthodox and conventional beliefs: of course such infantile tendencies must not be pushed too far. In my own case, I can still recall the suspicion with which I received any communication of a portentous or extraordinary kind, and the grave rumination over pros and cons by which I tried

to get at its probable truth or falsehood. Fairy tales and mythological stories I cordially detested. It seemed a sufficient hardship to have to decide on narratives which purported to be true; but to require even a momentary consideration for stories which professed to be false was an injury against which my budding intellect vehemently recalcitrated. In arriving at my conclusions, it generally sufficed that the matter for which my acquiescence was claimed was opposed to my tiny experience, and the assertion that 'I had never seen it,' or that 'such things never happened now-a-days,' was, I thought, a sufficient warrant for a complete *epoché* or suspension of belief. I remember once being flogged by an irascible master for sturdily asserting that his teaching as to the earth moving round the sun was false, and that I wouldn't believe him; for, as I said, I had seen the sun move round the earth, or as much of it as I could see, hundreds of times. It was not until a few obvious experiments had shown the possibility of mistaking apparent for real motion, that I sullenly yielded a grudging acquiescence to the doctrine. I waged a similar war against the more startling of the Bible narratives, which a pious old aunt used to try and impress on me, though, as a rule, my Skepticism was here overawed and subdued by religious reverence: so that I feared to meet these wonders with the direct expression of unbelief which I did not scruple to apply to ordinary marvels. Still, I was never tired of applying the present as an infallible test of the past, and interpreting the whole course of the world by my own brief experience. Hence my reiterated inquiries, on hearing or reading of some miraculous events, 'Why does not God do so now?' and my childish attempts to reconcile my aunt's exhortations to unquestioning faith with my own insatiable curiosity were, I am bound to say, far from successful. Thus I grew up, and have passed through life opposing an instinctive and uncontrollable resistance to dogmatic affirmation on the one hand, and dogmatic negation on the other, and have succeeded I think in attaining to a certain amount of that *ataraxia*, or philosophic calm, which I conceive to be the final goal not only of Skepticism, but of the exercise of every intellectual energy.

HARRINGTON. Luckily for nurses and teachers, it is not often that children manifest such a determined—I will not say perverse—incredulity as you seem to have done. Your childhood betrays, however, a most unusual defect of the idealising faculty. With most children—it was the case, *e.g.* with myself—that dreamy period when the new-born imagination revels in a world of its own, peopled not with prosaic men and women, but with giants and fairies and pixies and gnomes, is full of intense delight, and the gradual awaking to the stern, cold, and dull realities of life is not unattended with a bitter sense of disappointment. Most thinking men would, I suspect, re-echo Wordsworth's experience:

Heaven lies about us in our infancy,
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing boy.

For my part, I cannot think the child is to be envied who knows nothing of this ideal paradise and who is born surrounded with the dark shadows of the prison-house. My development was so far different from yours, that it was not until I went to Oxford that I experienced a desire to analyse the stock of ready-made beliefs I had been accumulating during the preceding portion of my life. The study which awoke me from the 'dogmatic slumber,' to use Kant's words, in which I had placidly and pleasantly spent some twenty years, was the diligent perusal of Plato, to whose dialogues I was first attracted by the imagination of the disciple, though I soon felt the influence of the master's resistless logic, the quickening effects of his 'torpedo-shock.'

TREVOR. I see: dialectics insidiously conveyed in the garb of idealism, like a powder hidden in jam. Precisely the treatment which an imaginative and, I have little doubt, poetic youth like yourself required. I can easily realise the rude shock which a thoughtful study and consistent application of the Sokratic *Elenchus* would have on a reflective and independent mind. By the way, it is a fact worth notice, that almost every one of the great thinkers of the world were wakened by some skeptical influence. So if Skepticism did no more than startle original minds, the function which

Sokrates claimed for it, and impel them in the path of inquiry, it would still deserve the thanks of reasoning humanity.

ARUNDEL. I knew, if I once set you two going on the congenial subject of Skepticism, you would not know when to stop. But I want to ask you, Harrington, whether you too have discovered, as Trevor claims to have done, that Skepticism is in itself a satisfactory conclusion to have arrived at—nay, the only possible goal of all human intellectual effort; and have you arrived by its means at the heaven of *ataraxia*, or philosophical calm?

HARRINGTON. No, I cannot say that I have: Skepticism is to me only the best method for the discovery of truth. My philosophical motto would be, 'Disbelieve, that you may believe.' For my part, I should regard doubt, considered as the final aim or inevitable goal of all mental effort, as opening up an exceedingly dreary prospect for humanity. My object and desired haven is solely truth, though I am content to pursue it in the cautious mode which becomes a modern philosopher. Hence, even when I think I possess it, I regard such possession as in most cases provisional, and always await, what I find there is always need of—further light.

TREVOR. Notwithstanding your disclaimer, there seems to me no great difference in our respective positions. For myself, I am content with Skepticism rather than truth for my object, from a sincere conviction of my inability to attain, and unworthiness to possess the latter. Paraphrasing the well-known words of Lessing, I would say truth is too mighty for me. It is the prerogative solely of omniscience.¹

¹ Lessing's remarkable words which Dr. Trevor here paraphrases are:—'Were God in his right hand to hold enclosed all Truth, and in his left only the ever-energising impulse towards Truth, with the addition of a perpetual possibility of error, and were to say to me, Choose! Humbly would I bow before his left hand, and say, "Father, give; pure truth is for Thee alone!"' *Lessing, Werke*, ed. Lachmann, x. p. 120. But the distinction between Opinion and Truth, and the fitness of the latter for the gods only, is frequently asserted in early Greek philosophy. In the fragments of Parmenides, opinion is represented as necessarily false and opposed to truth. Diogenes Laertius quotes a fragment of Alcmaeon of Crotonia: 'Of things divine (*ἀφανέων*) and of things human (*θνητῶν*), the gods have

Hence I content myself with—nay, I deliberately prefer as more suitable to human weakness, continual research.

ARUNDEL. It may be some defect of mental organisation, but I have never been able to appreciate that position of Lessing's. It seems to me to be in philosophy the same sort of spurious humility which we have in some eminent religionists, and which does not exclude a considerable amount of pride and self-importance. Nor is the assertion that truth is the prerogative of omniscience quite decisive of our human incompetence to attain it, or at least some considerable share of it. Omniscience is not needed, I humbly conceive, in order to convince me of such elementary truths as the fact of my existence. Indeed, I doubt whether its possession could add anything to the strength of my present conviction on the point. Goethe, you know, said that you need not go round the world in order to maintain that the sky is blue.

TREVOR. You want a course of reading, my dear friend, in some of the freer spirits of Greek philosophy. Let me recommend you to renew your acquaintance with Plato's Dialogues of Search, and to follow them up by Sextos Empirikos. . . . Years ago, you remember, you were much more amenable both to the truth and numberless advantages of a Skeptic's position.

ARUNDEL. No doubt. I have also had my 'Wandeljahre' of doubt and restlessness, as no one knows better than yourself; but I could no more have acquiesced permanently in such a state, than I could go to sleep with my limbs stretched on a rack. . . . Hence my 'pilgrim's progress' has been very different from both of yours; and so also

perfect knowledge, men only guess.' Cf. Karsten, *Parmenides*, p. 141, note. So Varro, quoted by Augustine, 'Quid putem, non quid contendam ponam, hominis enim est, hæc opinari, Dei scire,' Aug. *De Civ. Dei*, vii. 17. Comp. *Diog. Laert.* ed. Meibomius, viii. 83, page 542 note. So Lactantius, *De Fals. Sap.* chap. iii. says, 'In seipso habere propriam scientiam non hominis, sed Dei est.' Montaigne as well as Lessing prefers the process to the object of intellectual research. 'Je propose,' says he, 'des fantasies informes et irrésolues, comme font ceulx qui publient des questions douteuses à desbattre aux escolles, non, pour établir la vérité, mais pour la chercher.' *Essais* i. ch. lvi., and a similar preference has often been avowed by other Skeptics.

has its natural termination; for when bewildered by conflicting systems of thought and speculation, I ultimately found my haven in a moderate and rational Christian Theology.

HARRINGTON. Each man, so far as he is a reasoning being, must find his intellectual anchorage in the harbour, not for which he sails, but towards which he drifts, as it seems to me, guided by the winds and tides of constitution, temperament, education, external circumstances, and the like. It would be a disastrous fate for the intellectual and spiritual commerce of mankind, if all the shipping had to start from the same port and could find shelter only in the same harbour.

TREVOR. To that proposition—although its implication would shock many strict people—I heartily assent. But while you were speaking a sudden thought struck me: By a strange and fortuitous concurrence of circumstances, we have here assembled in this lonely Wiltshire valley, almost shut out from the rest of the world, representatives of the three great divisions of Greek philosophers.¹ I am the skeptic or mere seeker; Harrington the academic or searcher, who hopes to find truth, at least, approximately; and Arundel the dogmatic, who claims to have found truth. Now why should not we form ourselves into a committee for the purpose of examining the tenets or, if you like, the non-tenets of my friends the Skeptics? I had occasion the other day to refer to an enterprise of a similar kind. I mean Vaughan's useful and lively work: 'Hours with the Mystics.' In my humble opinion the Skeptics are infinitely more interesting people than the Mystics, they are of much greater importance in the history of human thought; add to which that Skepticism is much more prevalent now-a-days than Mysticism. And yet there is no history of Skepticism in any modern language at all worthy of its subject. Now, why

¹ Ἰσως καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν κατὰ φιλοσοφίαν ζητουμένων οἱ μὲν εἰρηκέναι τὸ ἀληθὲς ἔφασαν, οἱ δὲ ἀπεφήναντο μὴ δυνατὸν εἶναι τοῦτο καταληφθῆναι οἱ δὲ ἔτι ζητοῦσιν Ζητοῦσι δὲ οἱ σκεπτικοί. Sext. Emp. *Pyrrh. Hyp.* i. 1. Diogenes Laertius divides philosophers into two classes, Dogmatics and Skeptics. *Vita Philosophorum Proœm.*

should not we three take the place of Vaughan's interlocutors and have our 'Hours,' or better perhaps our 'Evenings with the Skeptics'?

HARRINGTON. You have omitted another advantage of applying Vaughan's method to the Skeptics, *i.e.* their treatment by converse and discussion is infinitely better suited to Skeptics than to Mystics. The appropriate environment of a literary subject should be considered of as much importance as the setting of a precious stone, and I have always regarded Vaughan's book as a stone ill set. As a matter of *Æsthetics* we have no right to surround mysticism with a restless halo, like a quivering Aurora of questions and answers, problems and solutions. Its surroundings should be an atmosphere of unquestioning, serene, semi-somnolent acquiescence. On the other hand, discussion and debate form the very life-breath and life-blood of Skepticism.

ARUNDEL. I have no objection to take part in your enterprise, only I must stipulate for the more moderate names as my share of the undertaking. I fear I should never have patience to wade through the quibbles and self-contradictions of such a thinker as Sextos Empeirikos, for instance.

HARRINGTON. If I can possibly find time, I shall be delighted to join in such an undertaking, and am ready to do my utmost to contribute to its success. Philosophical study has been for years my chief relaxation from professional drudgery, and I shall be glad to give the definite aim to my somewhat desultory reading which such an opportunity will afford.

ARUNDEL. I have agreed to join you, and don't want to throw cold water on our new-born scheme, but I confess to some fear that we may not be able to impart to our subject sufficient diversity so as to render it picturesque and attractive to the average thinker. Now you may have, and in histories of Philosophy you do have, infinite varieties of Dogmas or systems of belief, but there can be only one kind of Skepticism. You may construct with a great variety of materials, in many styles of architecture, and for almost numberless purposes, but there is only one method of

destruction that I ever heard of. And my first feeling on hearing your proposal was that a survey of a number of Skeptics would be about as interesting as a walk through a picture gallery which consisted of repetitions of one single portrait. Though the subject of it were drawn with every conceivable variety of expression, attitude, dress &c., and with every possible difference of style and material, of accessories and surroundings, no art or device could, as I think, make such a gallery really interesting.

TREVOR. But the same objection might have been made to Vaughan's work, before he had so triumphantly proved that it was groundless. No doubt there is a considerable family likeness in his gallery of mystics, yet the strong individuality common to them with all original thinkers, their different ways of arriving at their conclusions, their manifold modes of setting forth and developing their opinions, and their varied methods of applying them, constitute a never-ending succession of diverse systems and constructions. Moreover, I cannot at all agree with you as to the substantial identity and consequent monotony of all kinds of destructive criticism, on which point your illustration seems to me misleading. There are in my opinion just as many diversities of disbelief or unbelief as there are of mysticism or any other form of constructive thought. Indeed, so great are the flexibility and versatility of the human mind, that even when it appears to be following a single path, it is continually attempting new directions, sometimes more pleasant and striking, sometimes, perhaps, as mere short-cuts; so that the variety in the apparent uniformity is in reality continuous and unceasing. In this respect the human mind is like Nature herself: careful of the type, it is prodigal of individual differences; or, to use a musical illustration, like Paganini's fiddle, when in the master's hand it is capable of playing an endless diversity of airs and variations on a single string.

HARRINGTON. I thoroughly agree with you, Doctor, as to the inexhaustible variety of human beliefs and speculations, even when the general tendency is the same. For my part, I should be much surprised if in the case of a system of belief being dethroned in the minds of many men at the

same time, the methods of attack and destruction were in any two precisely alike. Some men, *e.g.* must take an antagonistic system by storm; others, by sapping and mining; others again, by quietly beleaguering it and starving out the garrison. The last is, I think, the most effective method, at least I have always found it so in my own case; . . . but there is one difficulty which suggests itself *in limine* to our project, *i.e.* our distance from a good library. There is nothing of the kind in Salisbury, and I am well aware of the scarcity of the works of mediæval free-thinkers.

TREVOR. Oh, as to that, you need not trouble yourself. I happen to have a goodly collection of the works of all the great free-thinkers, in most of the modern languages, as well as translations of Oriental literature of the same kind; so that we shall be independent of public libraries.

ARUNDEL. If you, Harrington, could only cast a glance over his bookshelves your fears on that score would soon be dissipated. Trevor's library contains, I am bound to say, more heresy than the Bodleian and British Museum put together. I am quite afraid to put my hand upon a book I don't happen to know for fear of some subtle heretical contamination. I don't suppose you know, Trevor, that I always think it my duty when I have left your library, supposing I am alone, to kick the dust off my feet directly I get round the corner.

TREVOR. Pooh! pooh! Arundel. I know you are not one of those clerics who never look into any but so-called orthodox books; who learn the contents of others by divination, criticise them by intuition, and pronounce judgment on them by inspiration. To a narrow-minded or uncritical book you have as great an aversion as myself. After all, if there must be heretics in the world, I don't know that you can have them in a quieter, more unobtrusive form, than bound in calf or vellum, and placidly reposing upon a library shelf. There they stand with their ideas clearly or obscurely expressed, as the case may be, no doubt the very best they were capable of had the means of forming; yet asking no recognition at our hands, demanding no intercourse, claiming no identity of thought, expressing no displeasure if we contradict them; being in fact perfectly indifferent, not only to our opinion, but

to our existence. But at the same time, if we really want to learn what they say, they offer their views and arguments with as much cogency and learning as they were gifted with; thus saying their say and leaving the issue to us.

ARUNDEL. For controversial purposes the passive qualities you enumerate are hardly an advantage. Books, at least of dead authors, have an aggravating habit of re-affirmation. 'What they say they stick to' with, if I may *quote* an unclerical expletive, 'damnable iteration.' Hence nothing is so dogmatic as printers' type; nothing less amenable to reasoning, ridicule, or any antagonistic influence which can be brought against it. '*Litera scripta manet*' is usually supposed a merit, but the merit of fixity is not one of which Skeptics and free-thinkers are generally enamoured. . . . But, if you will excuse me, it is quite time we broke up our conference and joined the ladies. As Harrington has asked us to his house the week after next, we shall soon have another opportunity of discussing Trevor's proposal more at length and settling the plan to be adopted. I vote, however, that we have ladies at our sittings; our wives, together with Miss Trevor, should be considered *ex-officio* members of our Skeptical conclave. I have a somewhat selfish reason for making this suggestion, because I feel that in the interests of dogmatism, or definite belief, I am a little overweighted by you two.

HARRINGTON. By all means if the ladies care to join, which I am not sure that Mrs. Harrington always would. But we shall be shortly having a sister of my wife's staying with us permanently, and she, I know, would be delighted to join us, not only as an appreciative listener, but also, if need were, as an intelligent and active participator in our labours. For the greater part of her life she has resided in Germany, and has thereby acquired an avidity for all kinds of philosophical and literary disquisitions. I fear, though, Arundel will not always be able to reckon on her vote in the interests of Dogmatism.

TREVOR. I presume I must submit to the arrangement, though I do it somewhat under protest. There is, I cannot help thinking, an inherent incompatibility between the intellectual organisation of *the sex*, stunted as it has been by

centuries of ill education and imperfect development, and the absolute freedom from bias which is a primary requisite for Skeptical inquiry. Perhaps, however, the German young lady will form an exception to the rule. When we meet at Harrington's I will bring with me, if you like, a paper on the Causes of Skepticism which we can then read and discuss; it will serve to set our philosophical bark fairly afloat.

HARRINGTON (as the friends rose from their seats and took their way to the Drawing-Room). A capital idea, Doctor! Pray do so by all means.

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EVENING I.

GENERAL CAUSES OF SKEPTICISM.

Hæc (inquisitio) quippe prima sapientiæ clavis definitur: assidua scilicet seu frequens interrogatio; . . . Dubitando enim ad inquisitionem venimus, inquirendo veritatem percipimus.

ABÉLARD, *Sic et Non*, p. 16 : Ed. Cousin.

‘ Le Scepticisme est donc le premier pas vers la vérité.’

DIDEROT, *Pensées Philosophiques*.

ὁ ταχὺ ἐμπιστεύων κούφος καρδία, καὶ ὁ ἁμαρτάνων εἰς ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ, πλημμελήσει.

Ecclesiasticus, xix. 4.

EVENING I.

GENERAL CAUSES OF SKEPTICISM.

ON the day appointed during the last week in July, the three friends again met at Harrington's house, which was beautifully situated on a plateau sheltered by fir plantations, half-way up a declivity known as Marley-comb Down, and at a point midway between Hilderton and Salisbury. The Rector of Hilderton had driven over Dr. Trevor and his sister—Mrs. Arundel not being able to accompany her husband, owing to the illness of one of her children. It was a lovely summer afternoon, the heat of the sun being tempered by the breezes which blew off the downs, as well as by detachments of light fleecy summer-clouds, the shadows of which followed each other in slow marching order up and down their grassy sides. A forward spring and hot summer had produced an early and abundant harvest, which was already in full operation. Dr. Trevor was never tired of expatiating on the characteristic beauties of the country through which they were passing. 'After all,' said he, 'harvest is the time for Wiltshire. The corn fields, with their rich glow of colour and picturesque groups of harvesters, give precisely that relief to ear and eye which our unwooded and generally silent downs seem to need.'

'Very true,' answered Arundel; 'harvest is our best time, though a long residence in South Wiltshire has convinced me, that it is not without its beauties at every season.'

TREVOR. Nevertheless, friend Arundel, it holds good of scenery, as of most other objects of human observation: we endue it to a great extent with beauties which our imagination brings to its contemplation.

‘Reserve your Skepticism,’ laughingly rejoined his friend, ‘till after dinner.’

During dinner the conversation naturally turned on Dr. Trevor’s proposed Skeptical discussions, and Mr. Arundel’s suggestion that the ladies should, as he put it, ‘adorn the debates by their presence, even if they did not aid them by their wisdom.’ The suggestion was warmly approved by the ladies themselves, especially by Miss Leycester, Mrs. Harrington’s sister, who had arrived from Germany the week before. This young lady entered into the scheme *con amore*; and as a proof of its feasibility, and the propriety of its comprehending ladies, she entertained the company with her experiences in Germany, where after-dinner conversations on Science and Philosophy were as common in educated circles, as they are rare in England.

‘You see, Florence,’ said her brother-in-law, ‘there is in this difference of national tastes an obvious system of compensation and proportion. The German, after his simple dinner and light wines, is braced up for a discussion on ponderous subjects. The Englishman, after his substantial meal and heavy wines, is naturally unable to do more than aid the circulation of that vapid compound of scandal and inanity which constitutes the staple of English table-talk. Who was it said, “Tell me a man’s cookery, and I will tell you his philosophy”?’

TREVOR. More than one caustic observer of our species. The close mutual relations of head and stomach have always been a favourite subject for sarcasm among cynics and humourists.

MISS LEYCESTER. Whoever he was, he omitted some rather important elements which seem to aid in the determination of a man’s philosophical creed. Besides his food, he should have taken into account the man’s race, parentage, and constitution, his physical surroundings, climate, scenery, and, I almost think, geological formation as well. I have always had an idea that a history of Philosophy might be written on a sort of geographical or meteorological standard. Skeptics and free-thinkers, *e.g.* are, so I have

been told, natives of countries in which the atmosphere is clear, the sky unclouded, and where distant objects are distinctly defined. Worshippers of Dogma, on the other hand, thrive best in misty cloud-covered countries, in which the horizon of each man does not extend beyond a short distance of his personal presence. This, if true, would account for the 'dim religious light' which extreme dogmatists of every creed consider as the appropriate environment of their worship.

ARUNDEL. Of course a Skeptic is a hater of horizons: that a limit should exist, though only apparently, and at the farthest bound of his visual powers, is a thought not to be borne.

MISS LEYCESTER. Perhaps, Mr. Arundel, it is true of limitations of mental as well as of physical vision, that they are only apparent—at least to people who have the hardihood to climb the mountains which bound the view, or to penetrate to the point where the earth seems to touch the sky.

HARRINGTON. In some cases you may be right, Florence, certainly not in all. The very *raison d'être* of the Skeptic consists in the fact that there are very distinct limits to his mental vision, as well as to his other faculties for exploration. The mountains are really impassable, and the distant horizon much too far to be reached by his feeble powers of locomotion; . . . but I confess I have a dislike to discussing a difficult matter informally and 'out of court;' so, as we appear to have finished dinner, I propose that we adjourn to the study and hear Dr. Trevor's argument on the General Causes of Skepticism.

When they had taken their places in the study, Dr. Trevor introduced the subject as follows:—

'In this as in all other subjects of science, we must in due form begin with definition. Now, what is Skepticism?'

To this question there was for a moment or two no answer: then Miss Trevor replied:—

'Skepticism is infidelity, of course.'

TREVOR. A natural answer, Louisa, but not quite con-

clusive. You have merely given the term which Christian Theology has adopted, not quite correctly, as the synonym of the Greek word. In fact, nothing could better elucidate the difference between the classical and Christian conception of this tendency of the human intellect, than a comparison of the two words with their collateral implications. What to the old Greek was merely free search or inquiry coupled with abstention from assertion, became to Christians a blameworthy deficiency of or even antagonism to true Belief.

ARUNDEL. The definition of Skepticism by means of positive terms is difficult. Philosophers are generally classed according to their tenets; but inasmuch as Skeptics deny the tenability of all tenets, it is obvious that some other method must be employed with regard to them. It is not easy to say what should be the positive characteristics of those who deliberately maintain they possess none, except negation and nothingness. Skeptics are in fact the cyphers and blanks of Philosophy.

TREVOR (smiling). True, Arundel. Cyphers because they add tenfold to the value of all other philosophical systems; and blanks, because their worth is indeterminate and unbounded.

HARRINGTON. Suppose we proceed by derivation: the word *Skeptō*, first used of bodily eye-sight, and hence of prying, searching, &c., was afterwards applied to its psychological counterpart of mental inquiry and research. Its signification of doubt arises in an easily explicable manner from its second stage.

MISS LEYCESTER. Sight, Research, Reflection, Doubt—the main stages in the history of the word—seem typical of corresponding stages in the mental growth of the individual and in the history of philosophy.

TREVOR (warmly). I quite agree with you, Miss Leicester, and am glad to think that I have secured so important an auxiliary to my view of the question. . . . As to the meaning of the Greek word, we find that the Greek Skeptics employed a number of terms to signify what I may provisionally call the suspensive attitude of the human mind. I have drawn out lists—(1) of the terms employed to define

the method; (2) of maxims, axioms, and proverbs which they used as elementary principles of Skeptical science. Of the first I find no less than eighteen different terms; while of the second I have accumulated upwards of twelve:¹—facts which sufficiently prove how thoroughly Greek philosophical thought was permeated by Skepticism. Leaving then the Greek technical terms for doubt, and turning to the word Skepticism as we mean to use it in our investigations, we must bear in mind that the word now covers in common acceptation a large space of ground. It may be taken as including every conceivable kind and degree of Un-faith; from pure disinterested inquiry to the most determined and self-contradictory suspense, on the one side; and from the faintest suspicion of the untrustworthiness of the senses to the extremest and most self-annihilating negation, on the other side. Our first task must therefore be to narrow our scope, for it is clear that if we were to include in our survey every skeptical inquirer, commonly so called, our undertaking would be an endless one.

HARRINGTON. There is moreover a further consideration. 'Skeptical' denotes a particular mental attitude which may be evinced in relation to any subject-matter of investigation; hence the term, as De Quincey remarked,² cannot be used absolutely. A man, *e.g.* may be a Skeptic in History or Science as well as in Theology. Are we to divide Skeptics according to the subjects of their doubt, or are we to limit our inquiry to those usually so denominated, *i.e.* Religious Skeptics?

ARUNDEL. Such a division would, in my opinion, be untechnical and embarrassing; for, *pace* the authority of De Quincey and customary usage, nothing, as it appears to me, can be more thoroughgoing in its tendencies and operations

¹ For these lists, see Appendix A.

² Compare *Life and Writings*, by Page, vol. ii. pp. 60, 61. 'Sceptical,' it strikes me, cannot be used *absolutely*, but only in relation to some *assigned* object known and indicated. . . . 'It is true,' he adds, 'that the word *is* used absolutely in one colloquial case, viz., when we say, "Kant was a Sceptic; Hume was a Sceptic," but even then it is an *elliptic* expression . . . for we all understand Sceptic or doubter in the doctrines of Christianity.'

than genuine Skepticism. Tennyson's verse has in this respect a larger application than its author perhaps intended:—

Unfaith in aught, is want of faith in all.¹

We must, I think, divide Skeptics, not according to the objects of their unbelief, but according to the motive-influences by which they seem to be determined.

TREVOR. I agree with you that the division by subjects would be mechanical and illogical, but not as to the equal liability to unbelief of all subjects of human knowledge; for as a rule incredulity originates and thrives in direct ratio as the supposed knowledge to which it is related transcends our personal experience. . . . I have here drawn up a list of Skepticisms, if I may be allowed the word, by which we can guide ourselves in our investigations. Some of them we must reject because the essential attribute of Skepticism is wanting to them.

1. The first we may term the Skepticism of ignorance. This is the kind spoken of by Diderot in his *Pensées*:—‘Celui qui doute parce qu'il ne connaît pas les raisons de crédibilité n'est qu'un ignorant.’² It is this sort of Skepticism which forms the basis of much of the crude and noisy vapouring on the subject current among the lower orders in our large towns, and which is destined to entire extinction or large modification before the advance of education. With Skepticism such as this, uninformed and unenlightened, our enquiry can have nothing to do.

2. Closely akin, yet governed by another cause, is the Skepticism of cynicism. This is the Incredulity of men who, though not unacquainted with the methods and results of scientific reasearch, are from mere intellectual indolence, or, more rarely, from unaffected contempt, utterly indifferent to the existence or reality of Truth and Knowledge. Diderot terms this ‘l'indolence du Sceptique.’

3. The Skepticism of pure inquiry: in other words, the

¹ Compare Cousin, *Études sur Pascal*, p. 47. ‘En effet, comme l'a dit M. Royer-Collard: “On ne fait point au scepticisme sa part,” il est absolu ou il n'est pas; il triomphe entièrement ou il périt tout entier.’ But see below, chapter on ‘Twofold Truth,’ vol. ii. Evening I.

² *Pensées philosophiques*, *Éuv. comp.*, Ed. Garnier, i. p. 137.

provisional acceptance of certain Truths as such, while searching and waiting for further enlightenment. This, as has often been remarked, is the necessary attitude of Science—indeed progressive Science is inconceivable without it. Most of the so-called Skepticism which distinguishes the leading Scientists of our day is of this kind—a cautious reception of such scientific facts and hypotheses as seem to have most warrant for them, rather than a conscious and decisive adherence to suspense for its own sake.

4. The Skepticism of negation ; by which I mean the continued denial of all the facts of experience and existence, until the unbeliever gradually reduces himself to semi-extinction or half-consciousness. This is generally the form which Doubt and Free-speculation have taken in India when they are found combined with Pessimism :—The philosophical denial of the facts of existence as uncertain, together with a morbid estimate of them considered as positive ills, passing into a stage in which existence itself becomes the greatest of evils, and requiring to be abrogated as far as possible by an excessive self-abnegation which is called knowledge, but which is in reality self-annihilation. Of course, this complete negation may easily assume the aspect of Dogmatism : because, as the Greek Sceptics truly saw, negation can be as haughtily self-satisfied, imperious, and exacting as the most rigid and tyrannical affirmation.

5. The Skepticism of suspense or genuine Pyrrhonism ; by which I mean, either (1) the deliberate assertion of premisses and principles which inevitably, though it may be unconsciously, lead to open and confessed uncertainty ; or (2) the distinct adoption, wholly or partially, and after full enquiry, of intellectual suspense as the only possible goal of philosophic research.

The last is properly speaking the only species with which our proposed inquiry is concerned, though we may find it needful to include sometimes the Skepticism of pure inquiry. . . . Whether our scheme is to comprehend the Skepticism of negation will depend on our starting point. Shall we commence with a complete survey of ancient Skepticism, or confine our attention chiefly to modern Skepticism, *i.e.* from

the Christian era? In the latter case we shall not require to investigate at any length pure negation, as that is a form of speculation to which the Indo-Germanic races of Europe are averse; though even among our modern Skeptics we sometimes find philosophical Skepticism passing into a profound, intuitive, and unquestioning mysticism.

HARRINGTON. For several reasons I think we must limit our inquiry to the moderns. Besides the fuller interest attaching to names which come nearest our own time, modern Skepticism is as a rule less defiant and extravagant, and therefore, to the modern intellect, less repellent, than the complete suspense of the Greeks, or the extreme negation of the Hindoos. . . . Perhaps, however, an outline of Pre-Christian Skepticism would enable us better to appreciate the contrast between the unbeliefs of the old and those of the modern world.

TREVOR. That I would engage to furnish; indeed, any detailed examination of modern Skeptics which did not include a survey of their predecessors among other races and religions would be obviously imperfect.

ARUNDEL. I also think we must confine ourselves chiefly to the moderns. The field is amply sufficient for amateur philosophers as we are to start with, and it is a mistake for young beginners in Philosophy-culture as in Agri-culture—to take too large a farm. . . . Recurring to your classification of Skepticisms. While I think it intelligible and useful, there is one exception which I must take to it. In your 5th or genuine Skeptic class you appear to include unconscious unbelievers. You surely cannot be in earnest in this, for if we are to pronounce Skeptics all who unknowingly maintain irreconcilable beliefs, our survey will include the majority of the human race. We ought to be careful in this as in other cases, when, *e.g.* heresy is impugned, not to impute to any one tenets which he does not openly avow.

TREVOR. I don't think you quite comprehend my definition: what I mean is, that we should regard as virtual Skeptics, not only those who profess to be doubters, but those also who, whether consciously or not, assert principles which can only lead legitimately to Skeptical conclusions. You

would not hesitate to affirm *e.g.* that a man who refused to credit the normal and healthy action of his senses, who declined *i.e.* to believe his eyes, when operating under favourable conditions, was possessed of a skeptical tendency; or again he who should choose to deny the universality of the Law of Identity or Excluded Middle must, if a sane man, be a doubter. The Theologian, for instance, who should lay down as equally true the contrary propositions that the universe is governed by God and that it is ruled by the Devil, must, if a reasonable being, be considered a Skeptic. Similarly, the Philosopher who maintains that $2 + 2$ make 4 in philosophy, but 5 in theology, must also lie open to the imputation of doubt. Our main attribute of Skepticism is hesitation and suspense—the withholding assent in the presence of contrary beliefs. Hence, in my opinion, if a man maintains dogmas not merely irreconcilable, but of such a nature that the affirmation of the one postulates the denial of the other, even though he has never realized his intellectual position, we must say that he has all the needful qualifications of Skepticism. The Greeks had a synonym for Skepticism, *Isostheneia*, which implied the maintenance of an equilibrium between contradictory tenets or dogmas.

HARRINGTON. I am inclined to think you are right, Doctor. Your distinction will allow us to comprehend William of Ockam and other mediæval thinkers, with their favourite tenet that what is true in Philosophy may be false in Theology; as well as such a thinker as Kant with his Antinomies and Categorical Imperatives. All such thinkers in my opinion distinctly enunciate Skeptical principles, though they would strongly deprecate the title of Skeptics.

TREVOR. I confess I have some little doubt as to the propriety of including in our list eminent examples of men who were Skeptics during a part of their lives, but afterwards became founders of dogmatic systems; *e.g.* such men as Augustine and Descartes. No doubt these may be included under our 3rd Class of Skepticisms, although their unbelief was not *consciously* adopted as a basis for the dogmatic superstructure erected upon it.

ARUNDEL. By all means let us include these. Independ-

dently of the general consideration, that our plan should embrace every species and every outcome of modern Skepticism, there is for me at least the profound interest of watching such intellectual Pilgrims, after being like Bunyan's Christian half swallowed up in the Gulf of Despond, recovering themselves and finding a firm footing on the other side.

HARRINGTON. I also think we ought to consider them, provided we bear in mind the temporary and limited nature of their Skepticism. As a rule, we cannot be too careful in estimating a man's genuine opinions by the half-formed convictions of his youth. The absurdity of this is incidentally illustrated by the story of the man who was exhibiting the supposed head of John the Baptist, and the objection being made that the skull was not that of an adult, immediately answered that it was his head when he was a little boy. Most growing men would deprecate being judged by their 'little-boy skulls.'

MISS LEYCESTER. Meanwhile, I am longing to ask why we should make ourselves responsible for the definition of what has been so long in existence. Cannot you tell us the best of the many definitions which Greek Philosophers at different times propounded on the subject?

TREVOR. For the best Greek definition we must, I think, apply to Sextos Empeirikos, the Prince of Greek Skeptics. That given by him appears to me an admirable example of terse and compendious definition, and is of itself a proof of the eminent fitness of the Greek tongue for philosophical exposition. It is literally 'the power or art of making antitheses both of phænomena and of Noumena,'¹ or if for the sake of the ladies I may venture a paraphrase, 'the art of putting in mutual opposition both the perceptions of the senses and the ideas and conclusions of the intellect.' This is, I think, sufficiently exhaustive, especially with the proviso which Sextos is careful to make, that such opposition may occur in any manner whatsoever. The Greek Skeptics

¹ *Pyrr. Hyp.* book i. chap. iv. 'Ἔστι δὲ ἡ σκεπτικὴ δύναμις ἀντιθετικὴ φαινομένων τε καὶ νοουμένων,' which Buhle in his Translation of the Hypotyposes thus well renders, 'Die Skepsis ist das Vermögen die Sinnenerscheinungen und Verstandesobjecte einander auf irgend eine Weise entgegensetzen.'—P. 5.

were not, I am bound to confess, very scrupulous either as to the nature or degree of the required antithetical.

ARUNDEL. Very true, Trevor, my small acquaintance with them enables me to bear witness to that. But what has always amused me in this definition, is the cool determination of your friends the Greek Skeptics not to be satisfied with any conclusion, no matter how it is come by, or what its demonstrative cogency might happen to be, and so proclaiming themselves the 'Irreconcilables' of philosophy. For this reason the definition of Sextos, though an admirable description of Pyrrhonism, appears to me too extreme to mark the more moderate Skepticism we are likely to meet with among modern free-thinkers.

HARRINGTON. I also agree with you that Sextos's definition is too exclusively Greek; it says nothing of denial or negation *per se*. It will be useful for us to bear in mind the distinction that, while Skepticism together with all other Greek terms for philosophical unbelief imply inquiry and suspense, rather than denial; our English usage of the word comprehends the latter as well. It seems a pity that we do not avail ourselves of terms in our own tongue which would express the difference between negation and suspense. We use the words *disbelief* and *unbelief* as synonyms; but it would be advantageous to distinguish between *unbelief* as the mere non-affirmation or position of neutrality, and *disbelief* as implying dissidence in the sense of hostility.

TREVOR. Our use of the word Skepticism to mark both suspense or tacit negation of, and open rebellion to dogma arises in this way: men start from positive dogma as from a normal condition or standard of things. Hence the mere refusal to recognise it—its non-affirmation—is held to be blameworthy; while distinct opposition to it implies only a greater *degree* of culpability: so that in this altered meaning of Skepticism compared with its use in Greek philosophy, we have an incidental illustration of the effect of Christian dogmatism in modifying the signification of philosophical terms. . . . No doubt, at first sight and from the point of view of modern unbelief, the definition of Sextos seems extreme, yet we shall find that it includes tendencies common

to all Skeptics, and moreover has a special application in Christian Skepticism to the continual opposition of the two great antitheticals, Faith and Reason.

ARUNDEL. I suppose then we must agree to accept it: meanwhile I am trying to realise the social and personal qualities of the men who devised this curious confession of philosophic faith. What a disagreeable contradictory set of people they must have been! Imagine having to live with a human being whose religious creed and 'whole duty of man' consisted in finding antitheticals to everything you or any one else might affirm, no matter how transparently obvious it might be. As to their boast of attaining *Ataraxia* or philosophic calm, they could only effect it in the same way that Irishmen enjoy quietness, 'who are never at peace but when fighting.' If the Greek Skeptics wanted a kind of philosophers' coat of arms, I would suggest two surly curs growling over a bone.

MISS LEYCESTER. Except that the surly curs, notwithstanding their ostensible occupation and their audible growls, are careful to affirm the non-existence of all bones. Hence your simile, Mr. Arundel, is more applicable to the contentions of creeds and sects over some disputed dogma; to which indeed it has been applied.

HARRINGTON. This *antithetical* character in social and humble life is very neatly and literally discriminated by the epithet 'contrary' which in the country you often hear applied to contradictory people. You remember Charles Lamb's humorous description¹ of an individual of this species among his relations:—'He hath been heard to deny upon certain occasions that there exists such a faculty at all in man as *Reason*, and wondereth how man came first to have a conceit of it, enforcing his negation with all the might of *reasoning* he is master of'—words by the way eminently applicable to every self-contradictory Skeptic, as *e.g.* Pyrrhôn.

TREVOR. You are not quite fair to my poor Skeptics. The antitheses of Sextos's definition need not necessarily have been of their own devising; indeed the main purpose for which a Skeptic would require an antithetical would be

¹ Elia—'My Relations.'

self-defence. These antitheses they merely used as points from which to compute their own position. They sought for contradictions and contraries, as a man might wish to discover contentious neighbours, in order to keep as far away from them as possible. They marked extreme opinions as they would the circumference of a circle of which they meant to occupy the unmoving and immoveable centre. They wished to determine the mean of pure neutrality between dogmas of every kind. Hence a complimentary estimate would assign to them in Philosophy the position which Aristotle assigns to Virtue in Ethics—the mean between two extremes. I do not see why Sceptics should have a distinctive coat of arms or emblematic Trade-mark any more than other philosophers; but supposing one needed, what could you have better than that suggested by Lucian¹? —‘Justice with equally poised scales’—an emblem, by the way, which Montaigne adopted as his philosophical escutcheon,² and which Diderot³ made the centre-piece of the banner which he devised for advanced Sceptics.

HARRINGTON. But Lucian’s emblem merely represents Justice in her static condition impartial and unbiassed. She has a dynamic position as well when she holds the uplifted sword ready to strike. It would be an ill day for lawyers and their clients if the indecision of Justice were, like that of Sceptics, her perpetual, never-ceasing characteristic.

ARUNDEL. Bad for lawyers, Harrington!—not for their clients; who would to their own incalculable advantage speedily cease to exist. But instead of a balance, I would suggest another emblem for Scepticism, bearing indeed some affinity to it as well as to a mean position between two extremes, but not being quite so honourable or safe for those who trust it—I mean the fate which a very familiar proverb assigns to a man who tries to sit between two stools.

TREVOR. To your objection, Harrington, I would reply

¹ *Vitarum Auctio*, § 27. *Opera*, Ed. Didot, p. 153.

² Cf. *Pascal*, par Faugère, i. 353.

³ *La Promenade du Sceptique*. *Œuv. Comp.* Ed. Garnier, i. 217. ‘Cette troupe n’avait point eu d’étendard, lorsqu’il y a environ deux cents ans un de ses champions en imagina un. C’est une balance en broderie d’or, d’argent, de laine et de soie, avec ces mots pour devise : *Que sais-je ?*—’

in the words of Pascal,¹ 'Justice and Truth are two *points* so subtle, that our instruments are too dull to touch either of them exactly,' though of course the needs of social life make some approximate and partial justice necessary. As to your remark, Arundel, you must remember that a proverb or illustration is not an argument. Anyhow we are not the heralds of Skepticism but the historians of Skeptics. . . . Returning to our subject, I may assume that we are satisfied with the definition of Sextos and with the limitations of our subject which I have ventured to suggest. In that case, I will, if you have no objection, commence my promised paper:—

On the General Causes of Skepticism.

Thus saying, Dr. Trevor took a roll of MS. from his pocket and read as follows:—

Skepticism in the fullest sense of the term must be admitted to be inherent in the human mind, inasmuch as it is a definition of one of its most ordinary and necessary operations. It is not a little curious, when we examine the derivation of the word, to find that with all its present implication of doubt and uncertainty, it is an outcome of the sense of all others, whose perceptions are supposed to be most direct and immediate, and on that account most certain—the sense of sight. This fact is significant (as Miss Leycester has just reminded us); for the undoubted progress of a word from one meaning to another, and its final settling down in a given acceptation, must, I conceive, have something corresponding to it in the laws and processes of the human mind, or in the facts of nature or history. For the purposes of this essay, I must, however, ask leave to use the word Skepticism in the sense in which we customarily employ it in English, as indicating both free inquiry and a consequent tendency to incredulity (negation), or acquiescence in uncertainty (suspense). To narrow the term in the inquiry I now propose to institute, to the technical signification it acquired in the schools of Pyrrhôn and Ainesidêmos, however useful for classification, appears to me unworthy of the philosophical inquirer; who sees in the entire growth and evolution of any mental movement, and not merely in its mature phase of development, subjects of the highest interest: and to whom Skepti-

¹ *Pens.* ed. Havet. i. 35. Comp. i. 38, 70.

cism commends itself in its true philosophical aspect, as a mode of thought which in varying degrees has characterised some of the greatest intellects, both of ancient and modern times.

The causes of Skepticism are twofold: general and special. By general causes, I mean those that are always and everywhere in operation. Causes which depend on the constitution of the world, on the nature of the human faculties, and their methods of acquiring and communicating knowledge. It is to these that I purpose in the following remarks to confine myself. But in passing, I may observe that special causes as well may, and often do, exercise an enormous influence on the Skeptical development, either of a particular epoch or of an individual. In the first case the extent of dogmatism, or at least philosophical quiescence in the preceding period; the mental activity actually current in philosophy, theology, or politics; the personal influence or teaching of some great epoch-making thinker, constitute special causes which must be taken into account: while in the case of the individual, his own education and training, or perhaps some special idiosyncrasy or intellectual bias, or the tendency of the thought of the day, either or all may have contributed to form in him a Skeptical mind. Of these causes, all more or less obvious, and most of which we shall have again to consider during the course of our investigations, I do not now purpose saying anything more.

I. Turning to general causes of Skepticism, I conceive the first to be the constitution of the world—the infinite extent and variety of the laws and operations of the universe. Fully believing as I do the truth of the old maxim, '*Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius in sensu,*' I always go to the world without for an explanation of the world within. I expect to find in the macrocosm a reflection of the microcosm:—

Im Innern ist ein Universum auch.

When I adopt this course in this instance, what do I find? Why I find innumerable phenomena, infinite in variety, immeasurable in extent, and, so far as my conception of time allows me to judge, in duration as well. I find this wondrous array of phenomena apparently moving in a stately and regular procession, and governed by unalterable laws; and yet beneath all this apparent uniformity and harmony, further research enables me to detect a diversity almost as infinite. I discover the action of one law modified in a countless variety of modes and degrees by that of another. I find one effect, by which I mean the outcome of any cause or causes,

sometimes aided, sometimes thwarted, oftentimes perverted, perhaps entirely destroyed by another; so that the general result of the action and reaction in every conceivable mode of all these countless laws, processes, modifying agencies, &c., is to produce on the mind a most embarrassing *tout ensemble* of causes and effects, activities and passivities, order and disorder, law and lawlessness; so that the cosmos assumes the appearance of an ill-regulated chaos, and the universe seems a tangled skein, inviting, and at the same time defying disentanglement.

Nor is this feeling of embarrassment, which arises from the contemplation of the universe as a whole, greatly lessened if we confine our attention to one single phenomenon, and select for the purpose that which seems to us most obvious; for in every such case, immediately underlying the phenomenal aspect, we discover ulterior agencies, qualities, relations, &c., which on examination turn out to be just as inscrutable as if the phenomenon itself were veiled in the most impenetrable mystery. When a man's mental faculties, well awakened by study and reflection, and unrestrained by prejudice or bias, are brought to bear on a world of this kind, what wonder is it that he should feel uncertainty, embarrassment, and disappointment; that the universe should seem to him as to the Greek philosopher, an ever-flowing river; or as to the Hindoo thinker, a mere visionary unsubstantial pageant; or as to the Hebrew Skeptic, a 'vanity of vanities'! What marvel if his final mental attitude in the presence of so many conflicting facts and assurances, were the *epoché* or suspense of the ancient Skeptics, or the *je ne sçay pas* of their modern successors. The effect may perhaps be illustrated by the supposed case of a thoughtful, imaginative child, who, after being confined within four walls until he was eleven or twelve years of age, should then be suddenly hurried through rapidly changing scenery, or through the crowded streets of a large town.¹ We can in some measure appreciate the feelings of strangeness, wonderment, and doubt with which he would survey such a bewildering succession of different views; and if, as we have assumed, he were a boy of an imaginative turn of mind, we might perhaps succeed in persuading him that he was surveying not an actually existing series of realities, but the fitful changes

¹ Similar illustrations are frequently employed in philosophy, sometimes, it must be admitted, in the interests of varying, nay, even opposite systems of Thought. Thus the famous cave simile of Plato's *Republic* (vi.), adduced as a picturesque argument in behalf of Extreme Idealism, is employed by Bacon to advocate reasonable Skepticism. *De Aug. Sci.* book v. chap. iv. *Works*, by Ellis and Spedding, i. p. 645.

of an unreal dream. It is only the dull listless acquiescence produced by habit, and slavish deference to the opinions of others, that rob us of that feeling of combined strangeness, awe, and wonder which ought to be the ordinary and befitting attitude of thoughtful men in presence of the innumerable unsolved problems of the universe. I confess I have never seen the effect which this infinite manifoldness is calculated to produce on reflective and imaginative minds treated with the importance it merits. It appears to me to operate as a producing cause of more than one of the so-called eccentricities of the human intellect. I certainly find no difficulty in tracing both mysticism and pantheism to its influence. While as to Skepticism, I believe it to warrant the whole of the inquiring and most of the uncertain spirit implied in the term. Indeed, nothing seems to me more appropriate than the attitude of the cautious, searching, doubting inquirer in such an universe as I have attempted to describe. It is on a boundless plain that men need to grope their way (and what is Skepticism but groping?), and not when confined by strong boundaries and prominent landmarks on every side.

II. Now, add to this infinite extent and variety of the world without the correspondingly measureless activities of the world within. Conceive a being placed in such an universe gifted with powers of thought and reason, and with an unquenchable desire after knowledge, endowed with keen, eager senses and analytical faculties, capable of investigating to a greater or less extent most of the varied phenomena by which he is surrounded; but at the same time from the very keenness of his faculties, from the enormous, I might almost say infinite, sweep of their imaginative and speculative powers, utterly incapable of any full, absolute demonstration of one single truth, and what can be more evident than that the inevitable destiny of such a being must be a continual, never-ending search: that, in a word, the more critical the faculties, the more comprehensive the vision of such an intellect, the greater will be the impossibility of obtaining a perfect unimpeachable demonstration; just as the more powerful the telescope the greater the immensity of space which it reveals, or the more profound the geological and astronomical research the more immeasurable becomes the recession of time. Nay, that inherent infinity which pertains to time and space, appears to me an essential property of the human reason as well—I mean that its desires and hopes are so boundless, its cravings for truth so multiform and insatiable, its appetite for knowledge so omnivorous and inappeasable, that its tendencies we may certainly affirm (in harmony with the wisest

and profoundest thinkers of all time) to be towards the infinite.

In order further to exemplify this, let us consider the conduct of the human intellect:—1. When it claims to be in possession of the truth: 2. When it deals with problems confessedly insoluble.

1. In the first place, let us assume that on some one given subject the intellect imagines itself to possess ultimate irrefragable truth. Does anyone acquainted with its nature and tendencies suppose it will be perfectly satisfied with that conclusion, without further inquiry and speculation? for let the fact itself be as obvious and unimpeachable as possible, the questions may still be asked, 'Whence is it?' or, 'Why?' or, 'How is it so?' By the first two queries, we attempt to seize a link in the infinite chain of causation, and if the attempt succeeds we try to grasp the next link, and so *ad infinitum*. Or putting the last question, 'How is it?' in order to get at the mode and circumstance of a supposed truth-presentation, and what an endless vista of speculation and possibility is immediately suggested to the still unsatisfied intellect. Does *e.g.* the conviction it possesses of such a truth and its ultimate certainty depend upon the manner in which it is perceived, or is it, so far as we are able to judge, entirely independent of all such human relations? And whether its perception be related to the intellect or not, yet it must be relative to a number greater or less of other collateral truths, and such a fact immediately challenges comparison and discussion. Or perhaps the intellect will endeavour, simple and undecomposable as the truth may seem, to analyse, and, if possible, resolve it into its primary constituent elements; and each of such elements may conceivably be made the subject of further analysis and decomposition; so restlessly eager, so insatiably curious does the human mind approve itself, not only with respect to the supposed truth in itself, but also with regard to its origin, its composition, and its relation, real or feigned, to other truths. In a word, no proof or demonstration of any given truth can be even hypothetically conceived, so complete and comprehensive that all further research would be deemed useless or impertinent.

A striking proof, were any needed, of this proposition, is at once afforded us by the well-known fact, that there is no truth so simple, self-evident, and indubitable, as not to have been again and again called in question by different thinkers and schools of philosophy. The reliableness of our sense-perceptions and the facts of consciousness have been repeatedly impugned, both in ancient and in modern times. The non-existence of a material world has been a fundamental article in the creed of more than one philosophical

system. The *ego* itself has been reduced by various modes to inanition and intellectual extinction; and whereas nothing seems at first sight more axiomatic and final than the primary truths of arithmetic and geometry, yet thinkers of all ages have not only speculated eagerly on the whence and the why of such truths, but have even taxed their imaginations to the extent of conceiving worlds in which $2 + 2$ might make 5. If these well-known facts are insufficient to prove the inherent Skepticism of the speculative intellect, this can only be attributed to the very self-same tendency, and is, in truth, a strong confirmation of its existence.

2. But if the human intellect in presence of truths generally supposed to be indubitable and compulsory, reveals a Skeptical bias, we find precisely the same disposition manifested in its mode of dealing with problems confessedly insoluble. Its unwillingness or inability to concede an absolute negation is just as strong as its indisposition or powerlessness to grant an unconditional affirmation. Among the numerous questions which have engaged the attention of the human mind, there are many which are not only, on account of our present imperfect knowledge, incapable of receiving even an approximate solution, but of which we are unable to conceive, with every allowance for the attainments of the future, the bare possibility of their ever receiving such a solution. Let us take as an instance the origin of the universe. I must confess myself quite unable to conceive, even hypothetically, a theory on the subject of so simple and undoubted a character, as to exclude all further speculation and inquiry. And yet upon this inscrutable matter a countless variety of theories have been propounded, from the mythological fables of remote antiquity to the nebular hypothesis of our own day.¹ And, probably, unless the nature of the human intellect changes considerably from what it is at present, there never will come a time when speculation on such an abstruse subject will finally cease, from the recognition of the patent fact, that anything approaching a complete solution of the problem is a self-evident impossibility.²

¹ These words were written some years ago, but no one acquainted with the most recent results of astronomical research, will require to be told that the nebular hypothesis has now received its quietus, leaving apparently no theory to occupy its place. At present, so far as Physicists are concerned, the Universe is an orphan.

² 'Cependant c'est une des principales et des plus ordinaires maladies de l'homme d'estre travaillé d'une curiosité inquiète pour des choses qu'il ne peut sçavoir, et qu'il lui est vraisemblément plus avantageux d'ignorer que d'en prendre connoissance, puisque Dieu a limité la sphère d'activité de son âme, qui ne peut pas pénétrer jusques-là.' *La-Mothe-le-Vayer, Soliloques Scept.*, Ed. Liseux, p. 2.

Or take another question—the exact mode in which our sensations are formed. It is hardly too much to say that from the very nature of the case an adequate explanation of this mysterious fact is simply inconceivable. The requisite and only possible conditions of successful investigation are manifestly unattainable. Nor can I conceive any advance in the sciences of Physiology and Psychology sufficiently great as to remove this inherent impossibility. And yet there is scarce any subject-matter of human inquiry which has received so much attention from psychologists on the one hand and physiologists on the other. Indeed, most of this labour has been expended without any great prospect of a satisfactory result, so far as definite knowledge is concerned, perhaps without even expecting the final solution of so profound an enigma.

In a word, the mental energies of men in these and in the numberless other cases which might have been adduced, seem to me like a wild beast perpetually measuring with restless paces the extreme limits of the cage from which it has nevertheless long since ascertained there can be no escape; or like a watchful army surrounding a fortress which it cannot but admit to be impregnable, it is yet continually belying its admission by its conduct, for it is always on the look-out for some unguarded corner or weak position by which an entry may haply be effected. It should, however, be remembered as some set-off against such hopeless enterprises and unrealised desires, that these ceaseless attempts to accomplish impossibilities are not only the intellectual instincts of our race, but are incidentally productive of good results. Weaker fortresses, themselves once deemed impregnable, have been forced to succumb in some degree to such unsleeping vigilance. Besides, soldiers ever on the alert attain a continual increase of efficiency, and if, notwithstanding all their efforts, they fail to achieve what is impossible, they must admit, *if they can*, such failure to be nothing less than inevitable.

A further cause for the inability of our faculties to attain complete demonstration is to be found in the individual and isolated character of every perception or idea we possess. Each act of sensation or reflection is a single independent fact of consciousness, having its own individual colouring, characteristics, and extent. So that not only are our faculties limited in respect of their own inherent powers, but they are further limited as regards their participation in any common stock of universal Truth. The individual differences which characterise our powers of perceiving and of thinking were known to and acknowledged by the

philosophers of Greece many centuries ago. It formed, indeed, a part of the creed of every eminent Greek thinker from the time of Protagoras and his aphorism, 'Man is the measure of all things,' to the final elaboration of the doctrine in the schools of the later Skeptics. Nor were they backward in applying such a cogent argument to refute dogmatic conclusions and general systems of belief, which were avowedly based on the common consent of humanity. Within a recent date this individuality of sense-perceptions, or 'personal equation,' as it has been called, has been recognised by scientists of our own day, and has become in certain astronomical experiments a necessary part of the calculations pertaining to them. But in point of fact this 'personal equation' is true not only of the *modus operandi* of the senses, but of all the definitions and determinations of the intellect—the nature and extent of every idea, the quality and scope of every imagination, the meaning attached to words and propositions; in a word, to every part and outcome of the apparatus which man employs as a reasoning being. Hence each individual has his own private mirror, in which is reflected each part and parcel of his knowledge. And when we bring all these reflections together in order to establish, as we think, universal and impregnable truth, we cannot be surprised if the whole should present the appearance of a piece of glass cut into numberless facets, and that any object reflected by it should be diverse and multitudinous rather than uniform and identical.

Nor would the behaviour of the human intellect be, I conceive, greatly altered were its limitations to some extent removed, and its present faculties immeasurably increased both in number and efficiency. If, *e.g.*, like Voltaire's *Micromegas*, we were gifted with a thousand senses instead of five, our fate would probably still be that so plaintively described by the inhabitant of Sirius: 'Il nous reste encore je ne sais quel désir vague, je ne sais quelle inquiétude, qui nous avertit sans cesse que nous sommes peu de chose, et qu'il y a des êtres beaucoup plus parfaits.'¹ Nay, we have good warrant for assuming that such an enlargement in the number and scope of our faculties would only produce a corresponding increase in the number of questions to be solved and, *ipso facto*, of difficulties in their solution. Hence the possessor of five senses, if a skeptic, would, were his senses increased to a thousand, probably become in direct arithmetical ratio two hundred times more skeptical than before. Let us suppose for a moment that we were endowed with some such enormous increase in the number,

¹ *Micromegas*, *Hist. philosophique*, chap. ii.

variety, and power of our senses and mental faculties as that suggested by Voltaire; that we were able, for instance, to comprehend by methods now inconceivable the real causes and modes of working of all the great physical forces by which we are surrounded; that we could perceive the molecular changes that take place in electricity and magnetism as readily as we can see the movement of our own limbs; that we could hear the sap percolating through the cells and capillary tubes of all kinds of vegetation, from the tiniest herb to the loftiest tree, as easily as we can hear the rush of water through a drain-pipe; that we could see and number the vibrations of light or sound-waves as readily as we can reckon our paces; that we could feel the changes in our brain-substance which are said to be the invariable antecedents of all our different states of consciousness as quickly and keenly as we feel the pain of a blow; that, lastly, we could trace those subtle links which form our mental associations with no more difficulty than we can number the links of a chain we hold in our hands, and that all dialectical processes were as vividly presented to our inner senses as the most crude, mechanical operation might be to our bodily senses, and the inevitable result of such a stupendous addition to our faculties and modes of knowledge would be a proportionate increase in our bewilderment, and an enlarged scope for curiosity and incredulity. So that the truth of the Hebrew Skeptic's maxim is amply attested by the whole history of Skepticism, 'He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow,' or as Shelley in his magnificent play has expressed the same sentiment, by making the furies reproach Prometheus:—

Dost thou boast the clear knowledge thou waken'dst for man?
 Then was kindled within him a thirst which outran
 These perishing waters; a thirst of fierce fever,
 Hope, love, doubt, desire, which consume him for ever.

Instead, then, of supposing that an extension of our present powers would operate as an antidote to Skepticism, we must, I suspect, proceed in the very opposite direction. What is needed is not the extension, but the still further limitation of our reasoning faculties. We with our five senses, elaborated and enhanced by the gifts of reason and imagination, are in point of fact only too well equipped to find perfect satisfaction in the result of our investigations. It is a melancholy instance of the mixed nature of our divinest gifts that the very faculty by which we reason is that which enables and incites us to doubt, that the means we adopt in order to construct is like a builder's scaffolding, equally

available for purposes of destruction, and that those nations and individuals are freest from Skepticism which are closest akin to brutes and idiots. Hence we may term doubt the Nemesis of faith, the inevitably reactionary consequence of dogmatism. It presupposes reasoning and intelligence, it postulates systematised beliefs, convictions which have attained a greater or less degree of coherence and stability. It is therefore the outcome, not of ignorance, but of culture; the characteristic, not of the childhood, but of the mature age of mankind. No traces of Skepticism appear in Greek or Hindoo philosophy until long after the formation and establishment of numerous systems of belief and speculation, and in most languages of uncultured nations there is no word for doubt.

III. Another cause of Skepticism may be found in the necessary relations between human reason and its creature and instrument, human language. This is, of course, a very large subject, and I cannot do more than point out a few instances in which the unavoidable uncertainty pertaining to the use of language seems to be a prolific source of Skepticism.

1. Let us first glance at the mode by which we acquire knowledge. We shall find, I think, that it affords a proof both of the necessity and uncertainty of human language. To the child or uneducated adult the object of an act of perception is indistinguishable from the perception itself. The tree, *e.g.* which is seen, is the same object as the image of it imprinted on the retina or retained in the memory; and this confusion is shown in the language employed, which for the most part makes no distinction between the outward object and its ideal representation, calling both by a common name. But no sooner is this unavoidable conjunction of the real and ideal analysed, than it is seen that a discrepancy may and often must exist between the actual object and its mental representation. The senses, *e.g.* cannot always be depended upon for giving a perfectly accurate account of the phenomena submitted to them, and therefore the terminology which assumes and seeks to express such accuracy must be faulty and unreliable. Hence the continual mistakes made by the senses in the judgments of perception may be said to constitute the first chapter in every systematic treatise on Skepticism. Nor is it easy to see how with the possession of senses of much greater accuracy, or of a language in which all mental abstractions were duly differentiated and distinguished from real objects, the danger of some such confusion could be altogether averted.

Moreover, a man's language, with all its immense variety of

terms, forms, direct meanings, and connotations, is, as I have before hinted, essentially individualistic. Therefore the group of sensations, qualities, &c., which he expresses by a single term may and generally must be either greater or less than the corresponding group to which his neighbour nevertheless applies precisely the same term. For example, the cluster of sensations to which I affix the names, sun, tree, house, will not be exactly the same cluster in all its parts and relations as that to which another man applies the same words. And if this inequality exists in our sense-perceptions with their definite modes of presentation, its probability will be much greater in purely mental abstractions, in which the convergent ideas are or may be both indefinite and voluntary.¹ Nor is there any mode of inter-communication between man and man by which this difference in their perceptions and ideas can be infallibly determined. Almost the very first words employed in Greek philosophy to express what afterwards became known as Skepticism indicated and implied this inevitable difference between the meanings of the same word when employed by different persons. We find also that most words, in this respect reflecting the state of mind of their originators, represent not single, uniform, clearly defined ideas, but rather clusters or groups of ideas. When, *e.g.* we take any good dictionary in hand, we observe around each principal word or root, like satellites round a planet, a crowd of synonyms, derivative terms, correlated ideas and expressions. What does this phenomenon signify if not the puny efforts of language to overtake the rapid advance and extension of human knowledge, the endeavours of the finite and limited to adapt itself to the wants of the infinite?

2. A second cause of the uncertainty inherent in language, and therefore of its aid to Skepticism, may be found in the use of general terms. Let us take, for example, such words as red, sound, colour, smell, &c. In these and similar terms it is plainly impossible, with all the adjectives, adverbs, or other qualifying terms we can bring together, to mark distinctly every degree or gradation of our perceptions of their object, still less of their real actual existence. Hence we perceive that, regarded as the only

¹ On this ambiguity the elder Mill has some remarks in his *Human Mind*, i. p. 141. Of course the fact here pointed out is still more glaringly true of nations and races using different tongues. On the variation in extent of signification between correlated terms in different languages see *Geiger, Ursprung u. Entwicklung d. Menschlichen Sprache*, i. p. 14. Compare on the same point *Sextos Empeirikos adv. Grammaticos*, Kuhne's edition, pp. 38, 39.

medium of communication between man and the universe, language labours under a twofold impotency; it is incommensurate with the infinite nature of the external world on the one hand, and with the immeasurable capacities and desires of the human mind on the other. Man with all his naming and defining powers, his entire equipment of dictionaries and grammars, his access to various languages, may still be compared to a child introduced into an enormous museum with a pocketful of labels, and told to mark and classify the innumerable objects which it contains. The child-like man in the museum of Nature finds his task beset with difficulties. Sometimes one label has to do duty for several, or it is found needful to affix two labels to a single object. Ultimately the labels fall short of the endless requirements, and though new supplies are furnished from time to time, yet the objects being innumerable in themselves, while new qualities and relations pertaining to them are continually being discovered, the supply of labels must needs be relatively limited. So that the full naming and classification of all is found to be impossible. And even when most pains have been taken, the designation and arrangement of the best labelled articles are discovered on close investigation to be very imperfect.

3. Another circumstance which makes language an involuntary instrument of Skepticism is the fact that, by an association easily explicable, we are led to believe that every word or name must express and postulate a real object. Accordingly when exigencies of speculation demand the invention and employment of such names as the infinite, the absolute, fate, chance, &c., we are almost irresistibly compelled to believe that these terms stand for real existences, and it is only when we try to comprehend and realise such abstractions that we discover our mistake. This tendency is, moreover, increased by the use of the substantive verb in most modern languages as the copula in predication.¹ When we come to discuss our modern Sceptics we shall find that most of them are Nominalists, *i.e.* they maintain that these general abstractions are only names; and we shall, I think, be further convinced of the service which Skepticism has thus rendered by its nominalistic tendencies to the cause of real science, and to the prevention and refutation of religious and philosophical superstition.

4. A fourth cause of the uncertainty which belongs to language may be found in its perpetual change and flux. Not only is

¹ Compare Mill's *Human Mind*, vol. i. p. 175.

every living language continually undergoing slow but perceptible modification, but every word of which it is composed is subject to constant variation from one shade of meaning to another. Instances of so familiar and acknowledged a truth are needless ; but the fact itself, even if it stood alone, would serve to show the hazard of building demonstration or absolute truth on the frail and fluctuating foundation of human language.

IV. Another and most powerful stimulus to Skepticism is found in the innate love of freedom and independence which is a well-known characteristic of all original minds. 'There be,' says Bacon in his *Essay on Truth*, 'that delight in giddinesse, and count it a bondage to fix a belief ; affecting free will in thinking as well as in acting.'¹ In truth, what Bacon seems to regard as a mere want of stability and an occasional eccentricity in human speculation, is of much greater scope and importance ; for the mutual opposition of necessity and free will is found to operate in the region of mental just as much as in that of moral science, in speculation as well as in action. Skepticism may therefore be termed the vindication of the absolute freedom of the human intellect. From his earliest infancy the mind of every man is exposed to a never-ceasing pressure from without of ostensible necessities, each of them having for its object the coercion, I might almost say the enslavement, of his intellectual faculties. In the first place the external phenomena of his own personal experience force themselves upon his intellect as an imperious necessity ; next follow extra-sensible phenomena, which he is compelled to accept on the overpowering evidence of others ; then there are certain conventional beliefs of social tradition and authority ; and finally, certain dogmatic systems of philosophy and theology, until the intellect which was at first free and unrestrained is at last so thwarted and circumscribed, so cut and hewn, so forced and trained, that it bears just as little resemblance to its natural state, or that which it might conceivably attain by its own spontaneity and self-development, as the stunted shrub of our lawns and pleasure grounds does to the oak of the forest. Even granting, as we must, the educational value of many of these superimposed necessities, nay, further, the impossibility of conceiving any intellectual development without their aid, it is obvious to a reflecting mind that this enormous accumulation of extrinsic doctrines is greater than is really needed by or than can be thought useful to the average intellect. Moreover, the mental formation here spoken of labours under the defect of not being a

¹ *Essays*. Ellis and Spedding's *Works*, vi. p. 377,

man's own building. He is thus compelled, so to speak, to live in a house over whose plan, materials, and construction he has never exercised the least control, and which is probably utterly inadapated for his means, tastes, or necessities. As a rule it is overwhelmingly large, and contains numberless rooms and stories, passages and corridors, for which he has no use, and of which he does not even know the meaning. It is against this weighty incubus of authority, this overgrown structure of beliefs and opinions, that an original mind so vehemently recalcitrates. Such men as Augustine, Descartes, Locke are not satisfied with the conventional ideas and systems thus forced upon them. Finding within them an independent spirit and an architectonic talent, and being possessed of ample means, they refuse to live in any house but *their own*—that which they themselves have built from their own plans, with their own materials, and adapted primarily for their own wants. Accordingly, with the true restless Skeptical instinct, they go to work and examine this huge superstructure of knowledge (so called) in order to arrive at whatever amount of solid foundation and good material they may discover beneath ; and though the whole of the old building may not be found to merit destruction, and much of the old material may again be used, yet the new house will be their own work, its erection will have satisfied powerful instincts, and it will subserve their own individual tastes and wants.

Besides, to minds of the class we are now considering—restless, independent, and, philosophically, somewhat libertine—every dogma assumes a specially offensive character. It purports to be an absolute boundary, or limitation of their faculties, beyond which research is impossible, and therefore impertinent. The effect of such a haughty assumption is immediately to challenge doubt and inquiry. An arbitrary restriction is placed where perhaps none existed before ; or what was hitherto a mere boundary line has suddenly assumed formidable dimensions and become an impassable barrier. The disagreeable feeling created by this restraint is increased by the consciousness that, *in itself*, the intellect is altogether free and unimpeded, that no bound can, *in and by its own nature*, be placed to the range of its speculation and imagination. Hence comes the struggle between Skepticism and Dogmatism—the free will and necessity of philosophy. Hence the irresistible impulse on the part of Skeptics to test the strength of every dogma submitted to their notice, no matter how ancient or well assured its foundations are assumed to be, or how sacred and awful the sanctions by which it is surrounded. Nor to

the type of men now under consideration do these external compulsions become less irksome by the fact that by an invincible necessity they are compelled to submit to many of them,¹ or that they find a ready acquiescence with the bulk of humanity; for it is obvious that the minds which persistently search, and are determined to abide by the issue of their search, must always form a small and inappreciable minority of the human race. For my own part I am quite ready to concede provisionally the trustworthiness of many of our foundations in the present day of science, ethics, and religion; still this admission cannot blind me to the fact that even were our fundamental beliefs utterly and inherently absurd, yet if they were set forth and taught with skill and discrimination, invested with prestige, and enforced by authority, the mass of mankind would accept them fully and unreservedly; for belief as a rule is not a matter of personal search or knowledge, but of mere custom and habit.

It will no doubt be objected that the human reason, though it has a right to inquire, has no right to push its investigation to the extreme of self-annihilation or stultification. It ought, as some would say, to moderate its excessive demands, and there would then be some probability of its rightful claims being conceded. To this objection there are two replies: first may be urged the unfortunate but inherent tendency of every struggle after freedom to exceed the limits which prudence and moderation would assign it. As Cowper tells us:—

. he who values Liberty, confines
His zeal for her predominance within
No narrow bounds²

And, for my part, I have no hesitation in admitting, much as I prize the Skeptics, that their impatience of the least possible restraint, or perhaps only apparent restraint, has occasionally hurried them into extreme speculative licence. Such cases I regard with the same half-sympathetic, half-deprecatory feeling with which I look upon the excesses of the French Revolution, or any

¹ 'J'avoue,' says one of the lesser lights of French Skepticism in the last century, 'qu'il y a des idées si vraisemblables, qu'elles nous laissent à peine le tems, et presque jamais la force de douter: elles subjuguent notre esprit: mais cela ne sauroit prouver qu'elles sont vraies.'—*Le Pyrrhonisme raisonnable*, par (Louis) de Beausobre, p. 39.

² In this respect, Le-Vayer compares Skepticism to dram- or wine-drinking:—'Non culpa vini sed culpa bibentis.'—*Œuv.* iii. part i. p. 315.

other great struggle after liberty.¹ Skepticism, as a philosophical mode of thought, can no more be considered responsible for the extremities of her unwise votaries than Luther can be made answerable for the extravagances of Carlstadt, Mirabeau for the excesses of Robespierre, or Cromwell for the fanaticism of Harrison or Lilburne. Besides which, a further justification of excessive Skepticism may be found in the fact that it has to contend generally with a dogmatism still more excessive ;² and as Sextos Empirikos remarks—not without a touch of humour—for an extreme disease an extreme remedy is needful. Indeed I would venture to say that for every extremity to which Skepticism has been pushed dogmatism is primarily responsible. For what system of belief has ever been authoritatively promulgated in the world that did not demand the most unconditional submission on the part of its adherents, and that not only to the system as a whole, but to every individual portion, every minute detail pertaining to it? It is not enough that we adore the idol from afar, but we are compelled to draw near and kiss its feet. Happily in the present day, though as yet very slowly, this injurious exigent temper of dogmatists is beginning to be relaxed, and men are gradually learning the great lesson of toleration, and we may be sure that when taught by experience and moderation they cease to exact, as a harsh creditor does a debt, a full and uninquiring submission to dogmas, whether philosophical or religious, Skepticism will, in its turn, moderate its own demands, and be content with a high degree of probability, where it might otherwise have insisted on absolute demonstration.

V. In his definitions of the various kinds of philosophy, Christian Wolf has made the fear of committing error the *primum mobile* of Skepticism. Whether it is the only or even most general cause is, I think, open to doubt ; but that it does exercise on some minds a very distinct and perceptible influence, is, in my

¹ Compare Schiller's glowing utterances :—

‘Der Mensch ist frei geschaffen, ist frei
Und würd' er in Ketten geboren,
Lasst euch nicht irren des Pöbels Geschrei
Nicht den Missbrauch rasender Thoren.’

² Sextos explicitly lays down the rule, that the extent to which Skeptical arguments are carried should be duly proportioned to the strength of the dogmatic reasonings against which they are arrayed. Cf. *Pyr. Hyp.* iii. chap. 23. This was, in theory, required in order to maintain the perfect equipoise of negation and affirmation on which Pyrrhonic suspense was based. But it does not appear that Skeptics are more moderate and self-restrained in controversy than the most vehement of dogmatists.

opinion, beyond controversy. To the majority of mankind the reception of new, or the criticism and possible modification of old ideas, is rarely considered a matter of personal responsibility, and that, sometimes, of the gravest kind. Their ordinary behaviour in such cases seems to be this :—When a man has new ideas or items of knowledge submitted to him, if they happen to run in the groove of his own predilections and training, or are propounded by an authority to which he is accustomed to defer, he quickly gulps them down without examination or thought ; but if they are of quite another kind, or come to him from a suspected source, he, with just as little heed, immediately discards them. As to anything like a critical examination of ideas long received, probably not one in ten thousand ever thinks of instituting such an inquiry ; partly, perhaps, from an instinctive dread of that ‘first step’ to philosophy which Diderot, in some of his latest words, affirmed to be incredulity,¹ but chiefly, as I think, from a profound and unaffected indifference to the state of their mental furniture and possessions. Indeed, among the many marvellous phenomena pertaining to humanity, not the least, in my opinion, is this almost incredible facility of belief. We find men, not only the ignorant and untrained, but those possessed of a considerable amount of culture, continually accepting without question, and pronouncing without hesitation, opinions on the most important subjects ; thus manifesting as to the number, quality, &c., of their most sacred convictions, a recklessness and indifference bordering on contempt. As an inevitable result, the minds of most men are full of irreconcilable and undigested notions and beliefs, resembling a ‘Happy Family Cage,’ in which animals, which naturally cherish the most violent antipathy to each other, are compelled to dwell in a kind of hollow and unreal peace.² The objection has been made

¹ Cf. Madame de Vaudeul : *Mémoires*. ‘Il reçut le soir ses amis ; la conversation s’engagea sur la philosophie et les différentes routes pour arriver à cette science ; le premier pas, dit-il, vers la philosophie, c’est incrédulité. Ce mot est le dernier qu’il ait proféré devant moi.’ *Œuv. Comp. de Diderot*, édition Garnier Frères, i. p. lviii. May it not be said of this *first step* also, ‘Il n’y a que le premier pas qui coûte ?’ Menagius refers the proverb to Aristotle, Ἀρχὴ τῆς σοφίας ἀνωρία. *Menagiana*, p. 285.

² Persons accustomed to psychological introspection must have frequently observed how long, even in matters of common life, an indistinct consciousness of error may exist in a semi-dormant state in the mind, until some day the truth suddenly flashes on us, or is forcibly suggested by fuller information from without. Miss Martineau’s *Autobiography* gives an interesting example of this phenomenon :—‘It seems to me now that I seldom asked questions in those days. I went on for years together, in a puzzle for want of its ever occurring to me to ask questions. For instance : no

to Wolf's cause of Skepticism, that the man who should refrain from pronouncing an opinion on obvious subjects from fear of error, would be acting as wisely as a dyspeptic who should starve himself from fear of indigestion; but the answer to the objection is easy, and is, indeed, implied in the estimate I have just propounded of the mental condition of the bulk of mankind. In other words, mental or intellectual indigestion is a disease not, perhaps, impossible, but of the rarest possible kind. For even when attention is called to the fact that within the compass of a single human mind, the lion is, metaphorically speaking, lying down with the lamb, and the bear with the calf, no sense of alarm is excited by the incongruous companionship; no intellectual nausea or feeling of disagreement is created by the close juxtaposition of such different and conflicting elements. And yet, for the interests of humanity, it is perhaps as well that mental dyspepsia should be so very rare; for imagination recoils before the contemplation of the terrible consequences which would ensue, supposing the effects of receiving crude and incompatible notions into the mind were as distinctly baneful to its own health, as the reception into the body of incongruous and indigestible food is prejudicial to its welfare.¹

There is, however, a certain type of intellect which regards belief and its voluntary attestation as a matter of the gravest import. Men of this kind not only submit every new article of faith to the most rigorous examination, but they extend the same treatment, so far as possible (due allowance being made for the many subtle disguises which mental ideas are able to assume), to their accumulated stock of convictions and beliefs as well. To every

accounts of a spring-gun answered to my conception of it—that it was a pea-green musket used only in spring. This absurdity lay by unnoticed in my mind till I was twenty. At that age I was staying at Birmingham, and we were returning from a country walk in the dusk of the evening when my host warned us not to cross a little wood for fear of spring-guns, and showed us the wire of one. I was truly confounded when the sense of the old mistake, dormant in my mind till now, came upon me.' (Vol. i. p. 31.) It is needless to add that the vitality, at least pertinacity, of these half-latent, half-conscious errors, is greater in proportion to their affinity with authority; especially in things beyond the scope of immediate verification.

¹ On the subject of this paragraph see some valuable remarks in Ritter's *Philosophische Paradowa*, p. 220, &c. The mutual antagonism of the different contents of the mind he regards as the origin and justification of Skepticism, by reconciling which the mind progresses through doubt to certainty. He, however, implies that this reconciliation can never be quite complete, so that knowledge must always exist *between* Skepticism and Dogmatism—suspended, like Mahomet's coffin, between earth and heaven.

demand for assent, no matter whence its alleged source, such men instinctively oppose an attitude of mental hesitation. Are they to commit themselves, they immediately ask, by their own voluntary act, to definitive conclusions which subsequent consideration may perhaps fail to verify? No prudent man likes to put his hand to a paper which may, possibly, in after time compromise him, monetarily or otherwise. But, in every case where a man deliberately records his full and undoubting belief in a given dogma, he is, so to speak, putting his hand to his own intellectual 'will and testament' on that specific point.¹ He delivers his creed or conviction as 'his own act and deed.' It may easily happen, among the numberless uncertainties in which most truths are enveloped—and, especially, if his intellect be of the highest type, *i.e.* capable of growth—that a few more years of inquiry may fail to establish satisfactorily the truth on which he has so confidently pronounced; nay, more, he may even discover that, so far from having strong arguments in its favour, most of the ratiocination on the subject seems to his maturer and more balanced intellect to militate directly against it. What is the unfortunate man to do? Honestly, he can do nothing less than retract; and retraction is not a pleasant process either for the individual himself or for those who witness it. We can, then, understand the extreme caution which characterises not a few susceptible minds on this important point. Hesitation and doubt appear to them positions of much less danger than rash and immature assent. This state of uncertainty may be irksome to those who feel compelled to maintain it—it certainly involves an amount of prejudice and suspicion which only the strongest minds are able to encounter. Still their fear of possible error; their dread of affirming deliberately and definitively what a more enlarged knowledge might discover to be false; their philosophical reluctance to sacrifice future investigation to the more pressing needs (which are, after all, only assumed) of the moment; their intense and, perhaps, morbidly acute feeling on the subject of Truth; their full conviction of her sacred, inviolable, and eternal nature; all these considerations induce

¹ Compare the neat epigram of Ausonius (*Epig.* iv. 222):

'Heu quantum in terris dominatur opinio! verum
Nec nescire putas, et dubitare vetas.
Qui dubitat non errat, adhuc in utrumque paratus
Error opinando, nec dubitando venit.'

So Quintilian speaks of dogmatists, 'qui velut sacramento rogati, vel etiam superstitione constricti, nefas ducunt a susceptâ semel persuasione discedere.'—*Inst. Or.* xii chap. 2.

them to prefer the hesitation they know to be real to the ill-founded certainty they feel may be false. It would, in my judgment, be a mistake to suppose that such persons—or, for that matter, any real, sincere Skeptics—*willingly* prefer an attitude of suspense to that of undoubting conviction; but they know the inconveniences entailed by the former position, whereas they are unaware of the mischief which would result from the hasty adoption of unverified conclusions. Their feeling might, perhaps, be expressed by the familiar quotation that it is better to

Bear those ills they have,
Than fly to others that they know not of.

As an interesting example of the state of mind induced by the special influences I am now considering, I may point to the case of Arthur Hugh Clough, of whom his biographer tells us:—‘His scepticism was of no mere negative quality, . . . but was the expression of a pure reverence for the inner light of the spirit, and of entire submission to its guidance. It was the loyalty to truth as the supreme good of the intellect, and as the only sure foundation of moral character.’ To most people who have never reflected on Skepticism, and who share the ordinary prejudices on the subject, this position of Clough’s, which might easily be paralleled from our projected gallery of Skeptics, would no doubt appear highly paradoxical. Misled by the calumnies and imputations which dogmatists of all classes and creeds have lavished upon non-believers, they are accustomed to suppose that all Skepticism necessarily implies an intentional hostility to truth, and are hence unable to conceive how it can, and often does, originate in a diametrically opposite feeling; *i.e.* in a profound veneration for truth, and a sensitive dread of the smallest approach to error. Nothing can better illustrate the cruel tyranny which dogmatism has in all ages attempted to exercise than the fact that such a position as that we have now investigated should be held up for the contempt and execration of mankind, and should be deemed a reason for consigning men, who were actually gifted with a keener sense of truth than their neighbours, to a martyr’s death.

VI. One more general cause I notice in deference to a widespread belief that it is largely operative in the production of Skepticism—I mean the desire of novelty. Of course this is often only the kind of reproach which ‘Conservatives’ in philosophy, as in politics, are wont to hurl at their ‘Radical’ adversaries, and, so

¹ See *Life and Letters*. vol. i. p. 15.

far, might have been passed over by us ; but as the same reproach is made by others, who are not unfriendly to philosophical Skepticism, it may be worth our considering on what grounds it is based, and how far it is justified. Now, in determining the value of this feeling as a motive for Skepticism, we must remember that it holds true of intellectual as of physical nosology, that the self-same symptoms occasionally betoken both an excess and a defect of functional activity. They may express either debility or exuberance of power. Hence we must discriminate between cases in which the desire for novelty is the fruit of inordinate vanity,¹ and constitutes the sole or main reason for the adoption of any belief, and others in which it is an essential characteristic of an original and independent intellect. It is chiefly in the latter sense that I accept it as a contributory and occasional incentive to Skepticism ; but so far from regarding it as blameworthy, I consider it not only justifiable, but an absolutely necessary ingredient in every genuine philosopher. For a very small acquaintance with the history of civilisation and human progress is sufficient to prove how much the desire for novelty in inventions and scientific researches, the wish to add a single new item to the sum of human knowledge, has effected for mankind ; not to mention the kindred thirst for change, the reformation of old abuses in religion and politics, which has contributed so materially to human civilisation and advancement. That there are instances among recognised Skeptics in which the feeling in its perverted form as a mere passion for eccentricity may be discovered, I have no wish to deny ; —we shall, in the course of our researches, have opportunities of studying more than one example of it—though even in this case I would willingly urge as pleas for mitigation of judgment, the probability that, like ambition, it may be ‘the last infirmity of noble minds ;’ and the difficulty of adjusting precisely the boundary line where the praiseworthy quality we call originality passes into the obnoxious passion which we term love of novelty. All I contend for at present is, that this much-abused feeling is in its truest aspect pure, generous, and unselfish ; that it is a necessary element in every great enterprise, and in most characters. Whereas—

¹ Such cases, *e.g.*, as the ‘self-conceited man’ of Bp. Earle’s *Microcosmography* :—‘His tenent,’ says the bishop, ‘is always singular and aloof from the vulgar as he can, from which you must not hope to wrest him. He has an excellent humour for an heretick, and in these days made the first Arminian. He prefers Ramus before Aristotle, and Paracelsus before Galen, and whosoever with most paradox is commended.’—*Microcosmography*, Bliss’s Ed. p. 32.

and here I pack into one sentence what has filled many a learned tome—few things have more contributed to the retardation and hindrance of human progress and civilisation than the opposite feeling to that we are discussing, *i.e.* the dread of novelty.

I have thus enumerated most of the predisposing causes of Skepticism, so far as they are, or may be, general; leaving those that are special and personal to be considered when we come to treat of particular Skeptics. I have, as you have doubtless noticed, avowedly taken up the defence of extreme Skepticism, not only as being theoretically my own position, but because I deem it right, in the examination of any intellectual tendency, to urge everything that can fairly be said in its defence. No other course seems to me either philosophical or ingenuous. I am well aware of the browbeating to which Skepticism, in common with other suspected modes of thought, has been compelled to submit from its enemies—like a dangerous witness in the hands of an unscrupulous advocate; but from a select circle of philosophers, as I trust we may, without vanity, assume ourselves to be, there is little danger of any other than a strictly impartial and respectful treatment. Our position in our proposed *séances* is this:—Given a certain mode of thought, underlying, to a greater or less extent, all philosophy, theology, ethics, and physical science, and, occasionally, in particular persons and epochs, assuming a bold and aggressive attitude, what can fairly be urged in its behalf by its most uncompromising defenders? Such is the question I have tried to answer generally in this essay, and to which a more particular and detailed reply will be afforded by our coming researches. Such, also, is the spirit in which it appears to me our subject should be approached; for we must never forget that Skepticism, like every other natural tendency of the intellect, requires an intelligent and sympathetic treatment. Indeed, it has a right to this, even from the hostile point of view which regards it as an eccentricity; for in these days, when humane and improved methods of investigation are applied to all forms of mental disease, it seems unjust to exclude the aberrations of the philosopher from kindly and judicious treatment. Deviations from conventional beliefs have, intrinsically, as much claim as those from ordinary human practice to be treated as natural phenomena, and made the object of careful psychical investigation. Those who approach our Skeptics in this scientific and considerate spirit may find much in them to reprehend; but they will also find much to extenuate, much to compassionate, and, what cannot be said of ordinary types of mental disease, much that seems deserving of

commendation and imitation on the part of every thinking man.

ARUNDEL. Thanks, Doctor, for your very elaborate Essay, in which, I should be inclined to say, as Leibnitz said of Hobbes that he was '*plusquam nominalis*,' you have amply approved yourself to be *plusquam Skepticus*. But, candidly, your argument appears to me to prove too much; for, if the constitution of the universe, the nature of human faculties—not to mention your other causes—all tend to and involve Skepticism, instead of Skeptics being, as you admit they are, in an enormous minority, they ought to be in an overwhelming majority; nay, it is doubtful whether, under your hypothesis, such a weak, inconsistent being as a dogmatist has any right at all to exist.

TREVOR. I might answer your objection by referring to Thucydides, who, as you know, says that 'Search for truth is intolerable to most people, and they prefer accepting ready-made opinions;' with which you may take the well-known proverb that 'Opinion rules the world,' and as Aristotle tells us, 'Opinion is not search, but assertion.' That the many are dogmatists no more proves the necessity or expediency of such an arrangement than the fact that the inhabitants of the earth are 'mostly fools' proves a providential leaning towards folly. Both wisdom and Skepticism have always been in a deplorable minority. I will not insist upon the conclusion thence derivable in respect of their possible identity, though Pascal maintains that Pyrrhonism derives its strength and justification from the fact of its possessing so many enemies. I will only say that the verdict of the majority which is adverse to the one is equally adverse to the other. A clergyman ought, I think, to be the last man in the world to insist on the argument of the '*Vox populi*' being equivalent to the '*Vox Dei*' or '*Vox veritatis*.'

'Rien ne fortifie plus le Pyrrhonisme que ce qu'il y en a qui ne sont point Pyrrhoniens: si tous l'étaient, ils auroient tort— Cette secte se fortifie par ses ennemis plus que par ses amis.' *Pensées*. Ed. Havet. vol. i. p. 30.

MISS LEYCESTER. Besides, Mr. Arundel, we must remember what the Doctor told us as to the existence in most men's minds of contradictory opinions and belief, and the rarity of intellectual dyspepsia. I own I was much struck with that part of the Essay. The infinite diversity of human minds, the miscellaneous nature of their contents, and the easy slipshod way in which opinions are popularly accepted, have always appeared to me matters of great interest. In itself, the fact of such diversity may be said to be in harmony with the constitution of the physical world and the spontaneous tendency to variation therein manifested. I wonder, by the way, if Herbert Spencer's 'Instability of the Homogeneous' could be applied to the human intellect (at least of the Skeptical type), so that at the very moment when a man had reduced all his beliefs and conceptions into consistency and harmony, a new attempt at differentiation should spontaneously result.

HARRINGTON. According to Dr. Trevor's paper, it is but rarely that the 'instability' in men's minds has the 'homogeneous' to operate upon. No doubt there are intellects as instinctively impatient of homogeneity, in the sense of fixed beliefs, as the most sensitive of chemical or organic compounds can possibly be in their own respective provinces; but that all intellects are so constituted is a proposition which I should be loth to accept, as it would make Skepticism the normal condition of the mind. As a matter of practical life rather than of speculation, I think a transference of the majority from dogmatists to Skeptics, even if possible, were greatly to be deprecated. I grant that much more inquiry and, if need be, of wholesome uncertainty than at present exists would be beneficial to intellectual progress; but it seems to me that the instincts of Skepticism, when pushed to extremes, are repugnant to law, order, and good government. The excess of individuality, for instance, which it tends to promote would be fatal to the easy and quiet working of all our social systems. Of course, we may easily have too much of mere stolid acquiescence; but as long as human nature is what we find it to be, men will prefer the repose of a feather-bed to the tortures of the rack. I was

about, when Florence turned the current of my thoughts, to offer a criticism, on this very point, of what I take to be the lawlessness of unbounded Skepticism. That the human mind is limited, we must all admit; but, instead of attempting the impossible task of surmounting these obstacles, of trying like the dove in Kant's simile to transcend the atmosphere in which we float, might it not be advisable to remember that, under *any conceivable hypothesis*, such obstacles must exist, and the fact that real liberty is only found within the due limits of law? Remember Goethe:—

Vergebens werden ungebundene Geister
Nach der Vollendung reiner Höhe streben,
In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister
Und das Gesetz nur kann uns Freiheit geben.

TREVOR. Let every man roam in such a '*Beschränkung*' as Goethe marked out for his own movements, and I, for my part, will never more urge the need of further intellectual liberty. But you must do me the justice to remember that I did not—indeed, I could not—deny the limitations of the human faculties; all I wanted to show was the tendency of the mind, in certain stages of its development, to ignore those limitations, and vainly endeavour to surmount them. I look on these efforts as inherent in its very nature, and only partially controlled by subsequent experience of their futility. The questions of children, *e.g.* as to objects about them are much more profound and penetrating than the inquiries of grown people. The child's fearlessly inquisitive nature points to the original tendencies of its faculties; the man's more cautious and restrained investigations prove their repression by experience. As to your '*feather-bed v. rack*' illustration, I must remind you that it is Skeptics that claim the feather-bed as a welcome escape from the rack-tortures of the many conflicting beliefs and systems of dogmatism. This is the meaning of the *Ataraxia* or impassive calm which the Pyrrhonists claimed as the necessary outcome of their Skepticism; and Montaigne only puts this into his own quaint humour, when he exclaims: 'Oh, what a soft, easy, and healthy pillow is ignorance and incuriosity for the repose of a well-formed head!'

ARUNDEL. There is another remark which I should like to make on a part of your argument in which you appeared to me to push your principles to a suicidal extreme. You represented the coercive force of our sensations, together with the confirmatory evidence derived from others, in the light of a despotic tyranny, serving not to train but to cramp the faculties (though you did not tell us what senses without sensations could possibly mean). But by so doing you admitted, in my opinion, that dogmatism has so far a stand-point and a *raison d'être*. Some years ago I picked up, at a second-hand bookstall, a small German work called 'Pyrrho and Philalethes,'¹ and I was much struck with an illustration of the author's as to the force of this consensus. He supposed a number of men to have seen for the first time the *Ornithorhynchus paradoxus*, and he points out the effect upon their minds, under circumstances so favourable to incredulity, of the combined influences of their own actual sensations and the consentient testimony of their fellow-observers, and dwells upon the substantial agreement as to the abnormal phenomena which would be produced in the minds of all; whence he ultimately deduces the similarity of human organisations, both physical and mental, and the irresistibly compelling power of external objects when brought into contact with them. This 'consensus,' or 'common sense,' which is the real foundation of dogmatism, seems to me to fall short very little, if at all, of absolute certainty, and therefore must, in my opinion, be always victorious over extreme idealism and rampant Skepticism.

TREVOR. Your position as to the worth of 'common sense' is different from Harrington's. You, like all dogmatists, want to make it the foundation for systematic belief, although I think you cannot help acknowledging that the superstructures laid upon it are often disproportionately great. Harrington, if I understand him rightly, regards it as a kind of common nexus, useful for binding men to each other, or as a kind of oil tending to prevent friction in the working

¹ *Pyrrho und Philalethes ; oder Leitet die Sceptis zur Wahrheit und zur ruhigen Entscheidung?* Herausgegeben von D. Franz Volkmar Reinhard. Salzburg, 1812.

of our social machinery. Now, I am not disposed to deny the existence of this power or its value as a lubricating agent. All I question is, its claim to be considered a sufficient foundation for dogmatic belief in the sense of absolute demonstration. Extreme Sceptics, like Sextos Empeirikos himself, never denied the evidence of their senses, or the despotic power of phenomena *as such*. What they protest against is making the impressions of one or more individuals tests of unconditional certainty. Had a modern disciple of Sextos been among the jury assembled round the ornithorhynchus, his verdict would probably have been something of this kind:— ‘I agree with you that this is a wondrously strange animal—a compound of bird, beast, and fish; and I admit that your evidence respecting it agrees with my own conclusions; nevertheless, we must not attribute, even to our collective judgment, an infallibility which it cannot possess. What we observe of the animal constitutes but a small part of the knowledge we might conceive ourselves to possess about it—at least, what the thing is in itself we can never know. We might term it (as Leibnitz termed matter) a “well-founded phenomenon,” and our united conclusions respecting it have a high degree of probability; but that our observations are to be accepted as so absolutely certain that they cannot be vitiated by the least possibility of a mistake or imperfection of any kind, is a proposition I am unable to accept.’

Of course, in the last resort, the sole judge of truth must under every circumstance be a man’s own faculties; and the confirmatory witness of others, even when attainable, is by no means universally reliable. To a man, *e.g.* afflicted with colour-blindness no amount of external testimony would prove that the colour he saw was not what he supposed it to be, and in my profession we have the utmost difficulty in making people accept the evidence of the clinical thermometer and such scientific tests as against their own sensations. Moreover, looking at the question from a still broader point of view, there is hardly any doctrine of theology, philosophy, or science so false and perverted that it cannot count its adherents by scores and perhaps hundreds; and here we again touch the question of the right of the majority

to coerce a minority on a subject of speculation and belief.

MRS. HARRINGTON. If I may be permitted a small criticism on Dr. Trevor's glorification of Skepticism, I should like to point out how all the great leaders of human thought—those who have originated new movements in religion, and, so far as I know, in philosophy as well—have not only not been Skeptics, but have been removed by the greatest possible distance from Skepticism. They were not only dogmatic, but indomitably and passionately so. It was this intensity of personal conviction that gave them their enormous power over their fellow-men, and enabled them to produce the profound impression they have left on the page of history. Indeed, I cannot myself conceive the possibility of a man, who has no strong fervent convictions of his own, carrying out any great enterprise, or being accepted as a leader by his fellows. In all the great concerns of life men desiderate a vigorous grasp of principles and a stern determination to put them into action.

TREVOR. Perhaps, Mrs. Harrington, you will give us a few examples of such dogmatists.

MRS. HARRINGTON. I was thinking at the moment of some of the great leaders of religious thought: such men, for instance, as Loyola, Calvin, Luther, and Wesley.

TREVOR. I fear I must take exception *in limine* to your first two instances. Their religious fervour I readily grant, but that its exercise or the influence thereby acquired has been uniformly beneficial to humanity I emphatically deny. Loyola I take to have been a religious fanatic who combined the unprincipled astuteness of a Machiavelli with the superstitious piety of a St. Dominic. He was the founder of a system which has more than any other outcome of Romanism retarded the cause of progress and freedom. Calvin, whom a friend of mine calls 'the grand inquisitor of Protestants,' has bequeathed to humanity two legacies: the atrocious martyrdom of poor Servetus; and a religious system, which, if it has pretensions to logical coherence, has none to justice, mercy, or common sense. Whatever benefits he has exercised on Christianity have been purely accidental, and must

be ascribed to the fact that men are often better than their creeds, and human instincts stronger than speculative dogmas. Wesley's influence, though in many respects beneficial, is not without a considerable alloy of narrow-mindedness and hierarchical ambition, and does not deserve, in my estimation, a high rank among civilising and enlightening agencies. - With regard to Luther, I take it that his best work was of a Skeptical, or, at least, a solvent and destructive character. He created infinitely more doubts than convictions, and made more disbelievers in Romanism than converts to Lutheranism. I should, therefore, without much hesitation class him with other illustrious leaders of men, in whose intellectual composition a pretty large percentage of Skepticism is clearly traceable. Hence, in opposition to Mrs. Harrington—whose theory is, however, based on a widely-extended prepossession—I should say that the most eminent names on the rolls of science, philosophy, and religion are names of men who have possessed the faculties of critical insight and consequent incredulity in a large measure. Indeed, it seems to me that the fountain of human reason, like the pool of Bethesda, must first be disturbed by some heaven-sent messenger, before it can fully exercise its curative and miraculous properties. Take such men, *e.g.* as Sokrates, Descartes, Galileo, Giordano Bruno, Locke, Hume, Kant, and Mill, and you will find that whatever systematic convictions they ultimately became possessed of were based on methods essentially Skeptical. Nor in the majority of these cases was the Skeptical stage merely temporary and preparatory; but throughout their whole intellectual career, doubt trod on the heels of certainty:—to use the expressive simile which Sextos employs to denote the connection of Ataraxia to suspense,—‘as the shadow cleaves to its substance’—a function, I may add, which it is the beneficent prerogative of doubt to discharge, not merely in individual cases, but in the history of philosophy and progressive science as a whole. I would further remark that the religion which of all others has most swayed the hearts and intellects of civilised men owes, humanly speaking, a large measure of its success to the undogmatising character and

work of its founder. The dogmatic teaching of Jesus Christ was mainly ethical and unspeculative, and *ipso facto* imperfectly dogmatic; and it is to this freedom and flexibility in its original structure, as regards purely theological or speculative beliefs, that I attribute much of its early success. Had the prophet of Nazareth, for example, deliberately enunciated some such confession as the Nicene Creed to the Galilæan peasantry, instead of the Sermon on the Mount, Christianity would have been strangled by dogma in its cradle.

HARRINGTON. With much of what you have said, I fully agree. But, if you will excuse my saying so, there seems a tendency to sophistical reasoning in your remarks on Luther. A man is not a Skeptic in the true sense of the term, who changes his dogmatic system. The Protestant Luther was in point of fact much more dogmatic than the Augustinian monk. The area of his beliefs was narrowed, but the greater intensity of his new convictions more than compensated for such circumscription. There ought, I think, to be some method of assessing the total amount of a man's faith qualitatively as well as quantitatively; for it is evident that one man may expend as much or even more energy on a few dogmas than another will distribute to a larger number; the concentration of intellectual force inevitably adding to its vigour and intensity. Hence we find, as a rule, that the narrower any man's creed, the greater is the tenacity with which he cleaves to it; just as a river runs with greater vehemence when confined by high banks than when it is spread out over level margins and a flat country.

MISS LEYCESTER. What we want, and what some inventor, in the remote future, may be able to supply, is a *Pistometer* or faith-measurer, with a duly graduated scale from the 'zero' of Nihilism or utter Skepticism to the 'boiling point' of extreme credulity and superstition. Such an instrument, if we could only get it, would be most useful for our present researches; for we might then determine in degrees, minutes, and seconds that approximation to *zero* which would constitute a title to our gallery of Skeptics.

TREVOR. Even then, Miss Leycester, we should have to take frequent observations and strike an average before we

could obtain any reliable result. Not even the barometer, in our own fickle climate, would show a greater number of changes than such a pistometer would indicate in the great majority of cases to which it was applied; and were these variations committed to paper, like the lines in a meteorological diagram, their zig-zaggedness would, I have no doubt, startle some people who have never studied the winds, tides, and general fluctuations which characterise so many human intellects—especially of the restless, inquiring kind. As to Harrington's remark about Luther, I quite concede that his dogmatism after the final 'set' or determination of his creed was more intense than ever before. But, meanwhile, the undermining of his old faith was accomplished by agencies which I should call Skeptical; and what I wanted to point out was that these influences, though their action was only temporary in his own case, produced probably a greater general effect on the world at large than the strong dogmatism by which they were succeeded.

MRS. HARRINGTON. But how do you account for the ill-fame which has always been awarded to Skeptics, and for the undoubted fact that, as Rousseau said, 'men will rather be willingly deceived than believe nothing at all'?¹

TREVOR. More than one reason might be assigned for the supposed ill-repute of Skepticism. 1. Human nature as a whole has, as Bacon puts it, a stronger leaning to affirmations than to negations, though he stigmatises such a partiality as unjust.² 2. Every majority agrees in ascribing ill-motives to the minority. 3. Skepticism, like treason, is only in disfavour as long as it is unsuccessful; when it achieves its object, its name is changed. Hence successful Skepticism is reformation. You remember Sir John Harrington's couplet:—

¹ Le doute sur les choses qu'il importe de connaître est un état trop violent pour l'esprit humain; il n'y résiste pas long-temps, il se décide malgré lui d'une manière ou d'autre, et il aime mieux se tromper que ne rien croire. (Rousseau, *Emile*, liv. iv. p. 311.) Cf. G. C. Lewis's *Influence of Authority in Matters of Opinion*, p. 10.

² 'Natura intellectus humani magis afficitur affirmativis et activis quam negativis et privativis, cum rite et ordine æquum se utrique præbere debeat. *De Aug. Sci.* v. chap. 4. *Works*, Ellis and Spedding, i. p. 643.

Treason doth never prosper. What's the reason?
For if it prosper, none dare call it treason.

Only a few decades ago, disbelief in such things as witchcraft was stigmatised as Skepticism. But, for my own part, I do not believe that in the unconscious common sense of the world at large, which occasionally overrides popular opinion, and which expresses itself by epigrams, proverbs, and satirical innuendos, rather than in formal declarations and creeds, Skepticism does occupy such an inferior position as is commonly supposed. For one proverb or epigram against Skeptics, I would undertake to produce six against opinionists. I have made a collection of a few of these gems, which you might like to look at—beginning with the severe apophthegm ascribed to Theognis, 'Opinion is to men a great evil,' and ending with the definition of *Dog-matism*, as wise as it is witty, of Douglas Jerrold, '*Puppy-ism full grown.*' Moreover, we have in most modern languages the same disdain of overbearing dogmatism expressed by such words as 'opinionated' or 'opiniâtreté,' 'conceited,' 'eigensinnig,' &c. &c.

As to Rousseau's assertion, it can only be accepted with considerable qualification. I am fully aware that men will sometimes hold, in a kind of half acceptance, beliefs which are not the genuine convictions of their reason, but the suggestions of their profit or interest. I also recognise that strange power which some men have of coercing, and, if need be, of fully suppressing, the dictates of their reason. But such cases appear to me exceptional. I am unable to conceive how a man, at once honest and intellectual, would rather believe what was false than remain in suspense. In other cases voluntary self-deception is easy enough, *Si vult decipi, decipiatur.*

HARRINGTON. You have a remarkable instance of the subordination of (supposed) genuine conviction to the impulses of affection in Cicero's well-known preference, '*Mallet cum Platone errare, quam cum istis recte sentire.*' I confess nothing fills me with greater despair for the interests of truth and the welfare of humanity than to observe the readiness with which gifted men sacrifice, so far

as we can judge, their highest faculties and endowments at the shrine of personal advantage or ambition.

MISS LEYCESTER. I am afraid, Dr. Trevor, that you have misunderstood the quotation from Rousseau. It is the possibility of *ultimate deception* that he puts in opposition to complete negation, not the conscious believing what is false. He is speaking of beliefs which are important. Take as an illustration belief in the existence of Deity. Although such an existence be not absolutely demonstrable, yet the majority of the human race would infinitely prefer to accept such an important belief—even with the bare possibility of being mistaken—than to have no belief at all on such a momentous subject. That, I think, is Rousseau's meaning.

TREVOR. In that case I don't think that his dictum much concerns us. A belief that is adopted merely as a *pis-aller*, to escape a worse alternative, can never assume consistently or rightly a very dogmatic character.

ARUNDEL. I presume, Doctor, we may charge you with indulging in a little irony—though the notion, I am aware, is not uncommon among Skeptics—in that part of your Essay in which you maintained that the best cure for Skepticism was mere ignorance. You are the last man in the world to put forth in sober earnest a plea for irrationality.

TREVOR. I assure you I was never more in earnest in my life.

ARUNDEL. But do you really affirm, as your deliberate opinion, that men would be better satisfied and not so Skeptical by knowing less rather than more? Take, *e.g.* Newton's great discovery of the law of gravitation. Do you mean to say that this has not benefited and satisfied mankind, making clear what was before obscure, and bringing such various and complicated processes and phenomena under the dominion of an immutable law?

TREVOR. Undoubtedly it is my deliberate conviction that inquiry and Skepticism tend to increase in a direct ratio with knowledge, and I think that the converse of this rule is equally true; I am, of course, far from wishing humanity to relapse into barbarism. Our divine inheritance is light and knowledge; and if such light must by immut-

able law have its attendant shadow, if knowledge gives rise to an appetite whose craving it cannot appease, we must, I will not say be content, but we must rejoice in an heritage belonging to beings whose capacities and powers, great as they are, are in aspiration and imagination incomparably greater than any conceivable method or material by which they can be satisfied. In the part of my paper to which you refer, I was considering the prevention or cure of Skepticism from the standpoint of those who regard it as an evil. For myself, as I have just hinted, so far from looking at it as an evil, I conceive it may have, and be providentially intended to have, a much larger proportion of good than of evil, of benefit than of injury, of joy than of sorrow.¹ But conceive Skepticism from the common point of view, as a defect to be remedied; which to most dogmatists would seem the lesser of the two evils, unbelief or ignorance? I have no doubt they would agree with me (reasoning for the time from their point of view), and reply—ignorance. Moreover, that this voluntary limitation of knowledge and inquiry is the popular antidote to Skepticism is shown by the advice of zealous dogma propagandists, who do not scruple to recommend, in cases when ignorance is not a native product, an artificial preparation of the remedy; their advice to doubters being, as a rule, ‘Shut your eyes,’ ‘cease to inquire,’ &c. &c.—the climax of which tendency is contained in Tertullian’s extravagant dictum ‘credo quia impossibile;’ a declaration, by the way, which I fear is still the primary article of faith with many religious enthusiasts. Clough has described this idea of ‘duty,’ as it is curiously called, very neatly:—

Duty?—’tis to take on trust
 What things are good, and right, and just;
 And whether, indeed, they be or be not,
 Try not, test not, feel not, see not.
 ’Tis walk and dance, sit down and rise
 By leading, opening ne’er your eyes.

¹ For some thoughtful remarks on the nature and use of Skepticism, see Hinton’s *Man and his Dwelling-place*, book ii. chap. iv.

Stunt sturdy limbs that nature gave,
 And be drawn in a Bath-chair along to the grave.
 'Tis the stern and prompt suppressing,
 As an obvious deadly sin,
 All the questing and the guessing
 Of the soul's own soul within.¹

Besides, I had another object in that portion of my paper; I wished to show the fallacy of the widespread belief that Skepticism may be cured by an increase of our knowledge, or of the extent or power of the faculties by which we attain it. As to your illustration, Arundel, of the benefits which have accrued to mankind from the discovery of gravitation, I have no wish to call them in question; but if you include in your enumeration of such benefits the complete satisfaction of the speculative intellect—and that is the point in question—then I must profess my inability to agree with you. Newton's discovery no doubt enables us to co-ordinate and arrange a number of facts and phenomena, and thereby to predict others; but that it affords a sufficing answer to even moderate inquiry, I emphatically deny. Before the discovery the human intellect stood face to face with a number of phenomena, the order and regularity of which it had succeeded in dimly apprehending. Since the discovery we have, instead of the phenomena, a law, as it is called, whose operations we are able to formulate in certain well-known ratios, but which is, in its nature and mode of operation, as inscrutable and mysterious as we can conceive anything to be. What then, I would ask, has the discovery effected as a complete satisfaction of the intellect, and thereby as an antidote to Skepticism? It has but removed the difficulty one stage farther off, and in so doing, has, by introducing other collateral problems which the mere contemplation of the phenomena would never have suggested, really added to the difficulties of the question to be solved.

MISS LEYCESTER. But in your enumeration of the different causes of Skepticism you have apparently confined yourself to those that are plainly intellectual. Now a good deal of the modern unrest which is allied with Skepticism

¹ *Poems*, p. 183.

seems to be derived from emotional or sentimental causes—ill-regulated passions, excesses of various kinds, listlessness and *ennui*, dissatisfaction with existence, and a consequent distrust of its teachings, apparently for no better reason than that it exists; such a state, *e.g.* as was represented by Werther and Wertherism in Germany, and in France by such writers as Alfred de Musset, Lamartine, &c.

TREVOR. The omission was purposely made. I fully acknowledge that the kind of Skepticism you speak of exercised a most potent and unhealthy influence in Germany, France, and England at the close of the last and commencement of the present century. Traces of it may, I have no doubt, be found in each of those countries, especially in the two former. But, to tell you the truth, I did not think it deserving a place by the side of intellectual causes. That there are puzzles in the universe which the human intellect cannot solve is an intelligible proposition, and it is one compatible with the noblest and most untiring search after truth; but that men worthy of the name should, in an access of petty childish passion, oppose themselves to the obvious laws and experience of the world, seems precisely like the act of a petulant child who beats the inanimate object that has hurt it. I should, therefore, draw a distinct line of demarcation between intellectual and sentimental Skeptics, and should refuse to consider the latter as worthy of our attention. The Abbé de Baunard, in his tolerant and sympathetic work, ‘*Les Victimes du Doute*,’ has made a division between Skeptics in philosophy and poetry, or between those of thought and of life. Our own proposed distinction between intellectual and sentimental Skeptics seems to me preferable; though so intimate is the cohesion between the reason and the feelings that we shall find it impossible always to eliminate the latter as secondary agencies in the production of Skepticism.

MISS LEYCESTER. It is a remarkable instance of Goethe’s versatility, that the two creations which in modern times best typify the emotional and intellectual Skeptic, Werther and Faust, are his.

HARRINGTON. As to Faust, let Goethe have all the glory

you can lavish on him. He is the eternal type of the eager, curious questioner and doubter. But, with regard to the creation of Werther, I agree with Trevor, and with a much greater thinker than either of us—I mean Lessing—it is almost beneath contempt. He is the most despicable being that ever a gigantic genius set itself to excogitate. The only satisfactory part of his maudlin career is his suicide, of which I should say that no act of his life became him like leaving it. Existence has surely trials enough, even for wise men, without adding to them the imaginary sorrows, the mawkish sentimentality, of brainless fools.

MISS LEYCESTER. I cannot say I have the least respect for Werther; still I think you are too severe on him and the class he represents. Even allowing that his mental distractions, his antagonism to human experience and social laws, were caused by disordered passions, yet the passions as much as the intellect form part of a man, and certainly are not inferior to it as incentives to action as well as to belief. A conspectus of human motives to thought and action which should altogether omit the passions would seem, therefore, to be partial and inadequate. Besides, we must not forget the numberless beauties which 'Werther' contains, independently of its plot-interest.

TREVOR. Mere accessories, Miss Leycester, of an unworthy and repellent subject. It would have been impossible for a man like Goethe to have treated any subject without leaving on it the marks of his own creative and artistic genius. As Stella said of Swift, 'He could have written beautifully about a broomstick;' but in the case of Werther these embellishments are like an elaborate flower decoration of a ghastly corpse. No matter how skilfully it is effected, nothing can disguise the livid pallor of death, or conceal the incipient traces of corruption.

ARUNDEL. I doubt whether Goethe intended Werther to be regarded as a type or victim of Skepticism; at least the creation on his part of a separate personage to represent the restlessness which comes of human passion is altogether unnecessary, for Faust represents, not only intellectual unbelief, but also the unrest begotten of passion and desire as

well. It is, in my humble opinion, a mark of Goethe's genius—of the full all-roundedness of his character—that he should have united the intellectual and emotional disquiet in a single personality, instead of making Faust an intellectual machine without body, parts, or passions.

TREVOR. Though I know that in doing so I shall avow myself a heretic, I entirely dissent from your view of Faust as a perfect artistic representation of intellectual unbelief. There is too much alloy of human passion in his composition. I am quite unable to conceive that a man of his mental power, independence, and knowledge should have surrendered himself to sensuous enjoyments as an escape from the puzzles of existence.

MISS LEYCESTER. What, Faust without Gretchen! Oh, Dr. Trevor!

TREVOR. I am fully aware of the prejudices my proposition must encounter; still, my ideal of the intellectual inquirer pure and simple is precisely 'Faust without Gretchen.' I know what will be urged as to the loss of human interest, but that I consider as an imperfection to be alleged only by those who regard it exclusively from a dramatic point of view. That is not altogether the position from which I contemplate it. I ask myself what would be the probable action of an intellectual inquirer who was bending all his energies to solve the problems of the universe, or to discover truth; and I conceive it *à priori* improbable that he would be content to abandon the intellectual search, and to try to find his pearl-bearing oyster by a hasty and ill-considered plunge into the wild sea of human passion. My own ideal of intellectual Skepticism is the Prometheus of Aischylos, or, for that matter, the reproduction of it by Goethe. There we have research and inquiry for its own sake, uncontaminated with baser motives. Moreover, in the Skeptical drama of 'Hamlet,' where the attention of the hero is absorbed by the *pros* and *cons* of a difficult duty, the love-interest is distinctly subordinated, even if it can be said to have any real existence.

MRS. HARRINGTON. I think you have overlooked a fact which serves to show that Goethe himself could not have set

great store on the passion episode of Faustus, for we must remember that it is Mephistophiles that introduces him to Gretchen.

TREVOR. Faust's passion, though forming no part of the original legend, is more than an episode; it is the plot of Goethe's drama. No doubt Mephistophiles inveigled him; but my contention is that the allurements, besides being diabolically suggested, is incongruous, for it is physical, not intellectual; and, given a thinker who had penetrated so fully into the problems of existence and the nature of their only conceivable solution, it is extremely improbable that he should have been taken by such a bait. As Coleridge said on this very point, 'Between sensuality and thirst after knowledge there is no connection.' I don't mean to say that intellectual Samsons have not oftentimes met with their Delilahs, and been shorn of their strength, but not when they have been of the exalted type of Faustus. As an illustration of the incongruity, conceive, *e.g.* Aischylos making Prometheus submit himself to the tyrant of Olympus for the sake of the love of one of the sympathetic daughters of Ocean!¹ or imagine Shakespeare allowing Hamlet to forego his high emprise, and permitting the 'native hue' of his 'resolution' to be blenched, not by the inherent difficulties of his position, but by the charms of Ophelia!

ARUNDEL. Your argument, Doctor, is characteristic of an inveterate old bachelor like yourself.

TREVOR. As to that, I do not wish to impugn the wisdom of married people generally; but I should certainly distrust the wisdom, if not the sanity, of the professed searcher after truth who sought to find in marriage an adequate solution of the puzzles of the universe. Hymen is doubtless represented as a lamp-bearer, but I never heard the most deliriously enthusiastic of his votaries ever affirm that his torch is identical with the lamp of truth and knowledge.

¹ The marriage of Prometheus with Hesione, though incidentally mentioned by Aischylos, forms no part of the older myth. Comp. Welcker, *Die Aesch. Tril.* p. 12.

ARUNDEL. But Aischylos had a semi-divine Titan for his hero—Goethe only aimed at creating a man. Take the case of Abélard; does not the romance of his life enhance our interest in him as a thinker?

TREVOR. No doubt Abélard is an actual example of the delineation which Goethe employs in Faust; a man in whom the passion interest is on a level with the intellectual, though I am not aware that even he ever regarded Héloïse as a complete answer to his intellectual difficulties and doubts; but, observe, he stands alone in the history of philosophers. We shall have ample proofs, in the Skeptics on our proposed list, of the preponderance of intellectual over sentimental or passion interests, and so far a justification of our resolution to confine ourselves to the former, and eschew the latter as too unimportant for consideration.

ARUNDEL. In other words, we must divest ourselves of humanity, and attire ourselves as high priests of philosophy. Well, I am quite willing—as a temporary experiment.

HARRINGTON. Another reason why we should limit ourselves mainly to intellectual causes of Skepticism is, that sentimental causes are not susceptible of discussion, which implies and demands reasoning. Besides which, they are merely personal. Hence I quite approve of Trevor's ideal of the true intellectual Skeptic, as Faust without Gretchen, Abélard without Héloïse, and Hamlet who, in the interests of a higher pursuit, has buried his love in the grave of Ophelia.

After a short silence, which none of the party seemed disposed to break, Harrington said: 'Well, as we seem to have discussed sufficiently the main points of Dr. Trevor's Essay, I propose we retire to the drawing-room, and, as an appropriate recreation after the dissonance which naturally pertains to Skepticism and discussion thereupon, solace ourselves with musical harmony—and tea.'

Before the party broke up, it was arranged that the next meeting of the friends should take place at Hilderton Hall, on which occasion Dr. Trevor promised to read the first of

his papers on 'Pre-Christian Skepticism,' taking in the Skeptical elements in Greek thought up to the time of Sokrates. Further, they decided for the present to hold their meetings fortnightly, in order to complete before the approach of winter their survey of Pre-Christian Skepticism—the preliminary portion of their inquiry.

EVENING II.

GREEK SKEPTICISM.

I.

‘Es giebt schwerlich ein besseres Bildungsmittel des philosophischen Talents überhaupt, und eine zweckmässigere Vorbereitung, um insbesondere den Geist, die Tendenz und das Verdienst der Philosophie unsers gegenwärtigen Zeitalters richtig zu fassen und zu würdigen, als das Studium des Skepticismus der Griechen.’

BUHLE, *Preface to Translation of ‘Sext. Emp. Pyrr. Hyp.’* p. 1.

‘Initio est philosophandi genus dogmaticum; mens adhuc non satis philosophando exulta, neque disputando bene exercita, rarissime dubitat.’

SIEDLER, *De Scepticismo*, p. 15.

‘Toutes les fois donc que l’esprit humain est sur le point de s’endormir dans l’un de ces systèmes, le scepticisme vient l’éveiller en sursaut et le forcer à continuer sa route, jusqu’à ce qu’il trouve quelque nouvel asile dont il est chassé encore.’

A. FRANCK, *De la Certitude*, p. 70.

‘Πάντων μὲν γὰρ αἴτιος τῶν καλῶν ὁ Θεὸς· ἀλλὰ τῶν μὲν κατὰ προηγούμενον, ὡς τῆς τε διαθήκης τῆς παλαιᾶς καὶ τῆς νέας· τῶν δὲ κατ’ ἐπακολούθημα, ὡς τῆς φιλοσοφίας. τάχα δὲ καὶ προηγουμένως τοῖς Ἕλλησιν ἐδόθη τότε πρὶν ἢ τὸν κύριον καλέσαι καὶ τοὺς Ἕλληνας. Ἐπαιδαγωγεῖ γὰρ καὶ αὐτὴ τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν ὡς ὁ νόμος τοῦ Ἑβραίου εἰς Χριστόν. προπαρασκευάζει τοίνυν ἡ φιλοσοφία προδουλοιοῦσα τὸν ὑπὸ Χριστοῦ τελειούμενον.’

CLEMENS ALEX. *Strom.* lib. i. chap. v. Ed. Potter, vol. i. p. 331.

· EVENING II.

PRE-CHRISTIAN SKEPTICISM (GREEK).

I.

It was arranged between the Harringtons and the Rector of Hilderton that on the day appointed for their next meeting they should drive over to Hilderton early, and, having lunched at the Rectory, should take a walk over the downs, in order to show Miss Leycester, who had never been in Wiltshire before, its characteristic features. This they accordingly did. The day was beautifully fine, more like midsummer than the middle of August; and, attracted both by the beauty of the weather and congenial society, Dr. Trevor and his sister accompanied them. Arundel took his friends to the top of the highest down in the neighbourhood, whence they were able to note the peculiarities of a Wiltshire landscape. From a narrow spur of the downs, the summit of which was crowned by a clump of firs—a ‘piny promontory’—which overlooked two broad, fertile valleys, he was able to point out no fewer than eight church towers and steeples, including the famous spire of Salisbury Cathedral. Of these, however, Dr. Trevor was only able, with the aid of his spectacles, to discover five.

‘I hope, Doctor,’ said Arundel, jocosely, ‘you don’t dispute the fact that we are able to see eight?’

TREVOR. I don’t dispute the fact that such is your expressed belief, and I will add that its truth is rendered additionally probable to me by independent evidence. As to the demonstration or absolute certainty of the alleged fact, that is altogether another matter.

HARRINGTON. I have no doubt if Sextos Empeirikos were here he could assign many plausible reasons, not against the individual belief of each of us in the testimony of his or

her senses, but against a too hasty inference in the direction of a general and unimpeachable certainty.

MISS LEYCESTER. But must not absolute truth be, in ultimate analysis, always individual and personal? The certainty of others, communicated orally or in any other manner to us, seems to me different not only in degree but in kind from the certainty imparted by the actual operation of our own healthy senses. For instance, we can see eight towers from this spot—Dr. Trevor is only able to see five. Although we are six to one, and he believes our united testimony, yet the impression of our spoken words is surely a more indirect and *ipso facto* imperfect evidence than the witness of his own visual organs, if perfect, would have been.¹ What an enormous difference there is, especially in respect of clearness and sharpness of definition, between the impression conveyed to us by the most elaborate description of a landscape or a picture and that which we receive by gazing on it ourselves!

HARRINGTON. Very true, Florence. But have the goodness to remember that the absolute certainty you claim as a personal prerogative is similarly claimed, and with just as much right, by everyone else.

TREVOR. Miss Leycester has opened up a wide and interesting subject, viz. the nature and limits of operation of the old saw of Protagoras, ‘Man is the measure of all things.’ But if we pursue our present conversation we shall perhaps encroach on our subject of this evening.

Here the conversation took another turn—as to the derivation of the names of villages and hamlets in South Wilts.

Dr. Trevor’s dinner-hour was five o’clock both in winter and summer; consequently the friends were able to assemble in the library and commence the evening’s discussion at a comparatively early hour.

The company had seated themselves in the inclosure

¹ Compare Voltaire, *Dict. Phil.* art. ‘Vérité.’ ‘Celui qui a entendu dire la chose à douze mille témoins oculaires, n’a que douze mille probabilités égales à une forte probabilité, laquelle n’est pas égale à la certitude.’

formed by a noble bay-window, overlooking the church and village of Hilderton, when the host, who had been called away for a short time, re-entered the library, reciting :

Up! up! let us a voyage take;
 Why sit we here at ease?
 Find us a vessel light and snug,
 Bound for the Eastern seas.
 I long to see the Eastern light—

not the fitful and evanescent aurora borealis of Montgomery's poem, but the genuine *ex oriente lux*.

HARRINGTON. True, Doctor; and what makes it of momentous interest to us, the source of much of that light and warmth we enjoy in the West.

MRS. HARRINGTON. A voyage to distant countries without moving out of our easy-chairs, or out of sight of Mr. Arundel's picturesque church-tower, will be very interesting. But what shall we say is its especial object? What are we to load home with? Shall we compare ourselves to the Argonauts, and say that we are in search of the Golden Fleece, *i.e.* truth?

ARUNDEL. Better suppose it a natural fleece, and then we can say we are gone 'wool-gathering.'

HARRINGTON. Nay, Arundel; we can easily devise a cargo more complimentary to ourselves as navigators. Suppose we say that we are looking for a few of those fragments of truth which Milton in his 'Areopagitica' tells us are scattered 'to the four winds;' or for some reminiscences of that primæval revelation which, according to Clemens of Alexandria, is a necessary assumption in order to account for the varied wisdom of Greece.

TREVOR. I do not see that we want mythology or patristics to suggest the object of our voyage. We are bent on tracing a certain natural production—for the nonce we may suppose it botanical—called Skepticism. We have not a few species of it at home, at least within reach, which we are about arranging in our herbarium; but we happen to know that abroad there are several varieties we do not possess, and which have distinct and interesting features of their own.

Greece, for instance, is the native home of several species, of which we may enumerate *Dialectica*, *Academica*, and *Pyrhonica*. In India we meet with a tropical variety, not, however, unknown in Europe, called *Skepsis negativa* or *mystica*, while Palestine will furnish us with a kind which we may call *Hebraica* or *Theologica*. Our voyage is, therefore, purely scientific. We desire to study the several species in their own localities, in the climate and general environment which gave them birth, as well as to bring home a few specimens for purposes of comparison and to complete our collection.

HARRINGTON. Ours is, in fact, a kind of *Challenger* expedition, only directed to mental instead of physical discoveries. By the way, we shall have to make some intellectually 'deep-sea soundings.' The depths of Hindoo speculation are somewhat abysmal.

ARUNDEL. Well, we must get down so far as our instruments will allow us, and guess the rest. I think it is true of all intellectual as of some mineral products, that they are not found of any value below a certain depth, so that exploration beyond that point becomes useless. Many of the results of metaphysical investigation, when profound, as it is called, are worse than worthless. Hence I would have some philosophical systems treated like the shafts of an old disused coal-mine, *i.e.* fenced round with barricades, to hinder the approach of the too curious or unwary passer-by.

HARRINGTON. No doubt many of those intellectual mines have been pretty well exhausted at different times, and no promising result could be anticipated from further research. Nevertheless, there must be no barricades; we must avoid placing any limit to human enterprise. The worst of these extremely profound metaphysics you speak of is, that to examine the ore we must, so to speak, descend ourselves to the bottom of the mine, after enduring the customary inconvenience of donning the miner's own costume and carrying his 'farthing dip' in our hands; for it is only when these learned profundities find us in their own recesses, and enveloped in the darkness in which their lives are spent, that they are able to say, 'Behold the metal! See it gleam-

ing in the dark,' when perhaps we are able to perceive nothing except 'a darkness that may be felt.' In such a case, I feel inclined to say, 'Well, if you really have it, dig it out and carry it to the surface, and we will examine and test it by daylight, and so ascertain its value.' Of course, the reply is invariably, 'Your intellect is shallow and superficial,' &c.

MISS LEYCESTER. I don't think your fencing round these exhausted systems, if there are any, would be very efficacious. There are minds on which an unintelligible profundity exercises the same morbid fascination as certain persons find in a material precipice. Directly they see it, they feel impelled to cast themselves, like intellectual suicides, into the fathomless depths beneath. Nor do I think it reasonable that you should expect those deep miners in metaphysics to reveal the secrets of their prison-house. Did you ever know any hierophant, guardian of sacred mysteries, or esoteric teacher who was ready to dig out and bring his secret lore to the earth-surface and the sunshine, and thereby expose it to the prying gaze, and perhaps ridicule, of mere ordinary mortals? . . . But, if we are afraid of losing our personal identities in the extreme depths of Hindoo negation, we had better provide ourselves with a 'Davy lamp' in the shape of Greek suspense before we descend into their abysses.

TREVOR. By all means, we will first visit Greece, and light our exploring torches with 'Greek fire.' For that matter, there is no philosophical enterprise for which a preliminary training in Greek philosophy would not qualify us; there is no kind or phase of pure intellectual research of which you have not there distinct and definite indications; . . . and we must remember that nine-tenths of the writings of these ancient sages are no more. I have often thought that, if we had extant every page written by them, every possible scheme of philosophical speculation would have been ere this completely exhausted, and all we degenerate moderns could do would be to con our several lessons, and draw our supply from this ancient fount of universal wisdom. . . . But before we take up our ideal standpoint in

Greece, there is a preliminary duty which I hope we all possess sufficient strength of imagination to discharge.

HARRINGTON. And what may that be, Doctor?

TREVOR. We must transport ourselves, without the material aid of a magic carpet or anything of the kind, into the midst of the scenery, language, thought, culture, and religion of ancient Greece, 500 B.C.

MRS. HARRINGTON. But how is that possible, Dr. Trevor, with all these pleasant surroundings of English civilisation in the latter half of the nineteenth century before our eyes?

TREVOR. Quite easily. We have only to shut those organs of physical eyesight which, pretending to guide, so frequently mislead us, and open instead those of our mental vision which have done such enormous service in the history of human development. No sooner do we do this, than presto! (with a wave of his hand) the whole scene is changed! We are seated in the vestibule of a Greek country-house. Around us are, not rose trees, rhododendrons, and laurels, but olives and myrtles interspersed with fig and pomegranate trees from which the fruit has been recently collected. We are attired in the flowing, picturesque garb of old Greece, and look as if we were enlarged and vivified copies of the Elgin marbles. I am addressing you in the purest Attic dialect—the only language, in my opinion, becoming a genuine philosopher. . . . You cast a glance down the valley yonder, and there, where Arundel's steeple stands (or rather stood a moment ago), you trace the columned portico which marks the entrance to the Temple of Athéné, of considerable local celebrity. The trees in the churchyard (or rather what were so) are the olives within the sacred inclosure of the temple. Around are the wretched flat-roofed hovels of the Attic peasantry. Those people you hear shouting in the distance are bringing home, not the harvest of barley-fields, but enormous clusters of luscious grapes—the produce of those vine-clad hills you see around you—

ARUNDEL (interrupting). For goodness' sake, Doctor, have some pity on our more sluggish imaginations. It is not everyone that is gifted with the power of conjuring up

at a moment's notice such a transformation scene as you are depicting.

TREVOR. Well, you must contrive to make as close an approximation as you can to my ideal picture. What I want to get rid of is that overpowering sense of incongruity that besets us when we try to realise the men and thoughts of other times. . . . I once knew a man—a clergyman—who lived in a delightful spot in the Midland counties. Although he wore the clothes and spoke the language of an English gentleman of our own day, he was in reality an ancient Greek—to his very finger nails. His thoughts, studies, occupations, imaginations, were all Hellenic. His mornings were usually devoted to Greek philosophy, his evenings to Greek poetry; he modelled his sermons on the Attic orators, and read Greek romances when he was inclined for such recreation. I have heard him accidentally address his old housekeeper in Greek, and I verily believe he used to think in Greek. His subjective prepossessions coloured not unnaturally his objective environment. Transformed by his vivid imagination, the scenery of his neighbourhood had become to him redolent of classical associations. . . . Alas, poor man! The whole fabric of Hellenic idealisation which he had elaborated with so much care, was destined to fall before the ruthless advance of modern civilisation. The Midland Railway came and cut a branch line through his glebe, not two hundred yards from his front door, and about a dozen times a day the snorting of a steam-engine and the roar of a passing train rudely woke him from his classical dreams. The consequence was that his picturesque illusions—the illusions of the greater part of his life—were utterly destroyed. Where he had imagined a Temple of Hêrê, stood an uncouth railway embankment. The iron-road cut through the grove he had conceived to be inhabited by Athênê and her nymphs. The secluded and tree-margined pool which had suggested itself as an admirable habitat for Naiads and Dryads was partly dried up and wholly defaced by the hideous railway bank. Not even his imagination, powerful as it was, could conceive modest nymphs disporting themselves in a narrow segment of not over-clean water within a few yards of continually passing

trains loaded with Birmingham artisans. If he went indoors and tried to read Greek tragedy, and conjure up its scenery and surroundings, the incongruity was too painful. The roar of a train and the puffing of an engine sounded in his ears like the mocking laugh of a horrible demon. The neighbourhood which I used jocularly to call *Græcia Minor* was completely changed: in the words of Byron—

'Twas Greece, but living Greece no more.

He bore the anguish of the change for a short time, then he resigned his living and fled in disgust. He is now ending his days in Southern Greece; but even there, in the native home of his intellectual *idôla*, he fails, as he has told me, to realise his favourite classical associations so vividly as he used to in his old English parish.

HARRINGTON. I can imagine few products of modern civilisation more painfully out of harmony with a dreamy, classical idealism than a locomotive. Its resistless, headlong progress is the very incarnation of brute force. Its swiftness is a type of the eager, rushing disquietude of modern existence, and a complete contrast to the normally quiet, slow processes of Nature, as well as to the ease, calm dignity, and refinement of Hellenic life and thought.

ARUNDEL. Nevertheless, as a votary of modern civilisation, and, I fear I must add, *material* progress, I should like to experience the change which passing trains would entail on my parish and neighbourhood. Hilderton is, I am afraid, not likely to be transformed in that way. . . . Meanwhile we are diverging from our subject. . . . Where do you intend us to meet the stream of Greek philosophy? I presume you do not mean to take us to the fountain-head of Homer or Thales?

TREVOR. I might easily find a precedent for making Homer my starting point; for the Greek Skeptics actually attempted to discover their principles in the '*Volks Evangelium*,' as they have been termed, of the Homeric poems—on the same principle, no doubt, which impels all Mahometan sects to discover a *locus standi* in the Koran, and the many varieties of Christians to hinge each its own faith on the

Bible. Homer is, I need hardly say, the most unconsciously dogmatic author in existence, and all the quotations adduced to prove his Skepticism are mere general remarks on the mutability of men and human affairs. . . . Our present brief sketch of Hellenic free-thought begins about 500 B.C., and ends about 200 A.D., thus comprehending a period of seven hundred years.

MISS LEYCESTER. I have lately been refreshing my memory on the history of Greek philosophy. Its most marvellous feature seems to be the rapid growth which it manifested between 700 and 400 B.C. In the comparatively short space of three centuries, those old Greeks appear to have originated, developed, and almost exhausted systems of speculation closely akin at least to those that occupy our attention now. I presume that such a fact has no parallel in the history of any other nation, ancient or modern.

TREVOR. Undoubtedly not, Miss Leycester. It is the most marvellous phenomenon to my thinking in the whole history of human thought, and the due and orderly sequence which characterises these early speculations is not their least wonderful feature. I have sometimes thought that a man accustomed to the questions of children, and to the study of the growth of the human intellect, might almost map out the early stages of Hellenic thought without reading a page of Greek philosophy. There you have, in easy and natural sequence, the physical, concrete perceptions of the child succeeded in imperceptible gradations by the logical forms and verbal convictions, abstract terms, and metaphysical ideas, nascent doubt, and deliberate Skepticism of the grown man.

HARRINGTON. With a little abatement of Skepticism being considered as the *only* goal of Greek thought, the advance you have sketched is substantially correct; but we must take heed of a misconception on this point. Students of Greek philosophy, insufficiently versed in its relation to early Greek history, are inclined to exaggerate the specific range and importance of each particular thinker or school of thought. They look over the pages of Zeller, Ritter, or Tennemann, and finding a number of names duly marshalled in order, every one under his own proper school, like natural

history species each under its own genus, they rush to the conclusion that such names or schools represent successive waves of thought or definite philosophical systems which swept over the whole mental surface of ancient Greece. They forget that Greece at this time consisted of half-civilised tribes, differing from each other in political constitution, social habits, religious beliefs, and to some extent in language as well;¹ that, moreover, the dissemination of physical ideas or philosophical theories by oral teaching must have been, under the circumstances, partial and imperfect; and that it was quite possible for Thales to have taught at Miletus or Xenophanes at Elea, without the names of either thinker reaching Sparta or Athens during their lifetime.

ARUNDEL. Your warning is not unneeded. I remember having myself just those ideas of the regular succession of Greek thinkers whom I afterwards found to have been in many cases contemporaries; I used to think of them as related to each other as the kings of England or of some other country. When one ceased reigning, the next began to reign. . . . Not a few students of Greek philosophy would, I think, be greatly benefited if they would study it so far as possible in connection with chronology and history—with Clinton's 'Fasti,' for instance, at their elbows.

MISS LEYCESTER. But what causes can be assigned for this rapid development of early Hellenic speculation? It seems admitted that we cannot bring in extraneous sources or incitements, such as, *e.g.* an acquaintance with Egyptian or Indian civilisation. Is there anything known of the early inhabitants of Greece that would throw light on the subject?

TREVOR. Unhappily, not much. The origin and early history of Greek thought are enveloped in dense mythological darkness. We only know, or rather suppose, that different branches of the Aryan race, emigrating from Asia, settled in different parts of Greece at a very remote period. But these

¹ On the limitations imposed by these local characteristics in the progress alike of Greek Literature and Philosophy, compare Ritter, *Gesch. der Phil.* i. p. 177; and Bergk's exhaustive article on Greek Literature. Ersch and Grüber, *Encycl.*, vol. lxxxii., series i.

different tribes—Pelasgi, Hellenes, Leleges, and minor peoples—stand in the same relation to the Greeks of the fourth century B.C. as the Celts, Saxons, Danes, and Normans stand to the ordinary English or Welsh men of our own day. It seems clear, however, that the earliest manifestations of Greek thought are discovered in the Ionian colonies,¹ whence we may draw the twofold inference which is, moreover, confirmed by history: (1) That Greek speculation in its earlier stages was closely allied with Greek commerce. (2) That the mixture of races, the ordinary effect of expatriation, must be considered favourable to the growth of Hellenic thought and civilisation. I may add that most historians attempt to discriminate between the thought tendencies of Ionians and Dorians, making the speculations of the former incline towards physical, those of the latter (represented by Pythagoras) to ethical, research.

MRS. HARRINGTON. You say that colonisation and commerce exercised a favourable effect on Greek speculation. Would not the same causes facilitate and render likely the influence of foreign thinkers?

HARRINGTON. For my part, I am so fully convinced of the native self-sufficiency of the Hellenic tribes, that I view with jealousy every attempt to make even the rudimentary commencement of their intellectual and artistic achievements the borrowed wealth of their neighbours.² The slight admixture of foreign elements perceptible in the speculations of a few Greek thinkers, *e.g.* Pythagoras, seems to me fully accounted for by the fact that the chief Greek philosophers were themselves great travellers. Unlike modern thinkers, who, for the most part, pass their life in their studies and promulgate their opinions by the aid of the press, their Greek

¹ This is as true of its literature as of its philosophy. Speaking of the enormous influence exercised by these colonies in the development of Greek literature, Bergk says, 'Es ist fast keine Stadt, oder Insel, mag sie auch noch so klein sein, die nicht irgendwie thätigen Antheil an der Pflege der Literatur genommen hätte.' Art. on 'Greek Literature.' Ersch und Grüber, vol. lxxxii., series i.

² Compare Zeller's emphatic words. 'Wenn es je ein Volk gegeben hat, das seine Wissenschaft selbst zu erzeugen geeignet war, so sind dies die Griechen. *Phil. d. Griechen*, i. 40; so also Professor Prantl, *Geschichte der Logik*, i. p. 6.

prototypes shifted their abode from one town or country to the other, and wherever they went they opened what Aristophanes calls their 'thought-shop,' and were prepared to discuss and give their opinion on any question brought before them, whether of speculation or practice, with as much insouciance as a grocer in our day serves tea and sugar to his customers. They were equally willing to argue with, instruct, and exhort any chance passer-by, or even to learn of him if he proved himself competent to teach. In this particular, the modern parallels of the old Greek philosophers must not be sought in such men as Kant, Hegel, or John Stuart Mill, but rather in missionaries or travelling preachers like Whitfield or Wesley; and nothing proves, I think, the rare susceptibility of the Greek mind for speculation, as well as, at this time, their intellectual freedom, than that the careers of such animated circulating libraries (for in those days men were books) as Xenophanes and Pythagoras should have been possible. Of course, we are not surprised to find that the personal contact with men of different races, customs, and beliefs, which such peregrinations entailed occasionally, induced, as in the case of Herodotus,¹ a certain amount of disbelief in travellers' wonders. For that matter, geography has always been a favourite armoury for Skeptical weapons.

TREVOR. I must now begin my paper; but, before I do so, there is one observation I should like to make by way of general admonition as to the manner in which our researches should be pursued. In treating of any particular Skeptic, we must take his Skepticism, whenever possible, for what he himself professes it to be; avoiding, in all doubtful cases, the constructive or inferential Skepticism which is so common with dogmatic writers on the subject. Nor must we attempt to make any particular phase of unbelief fit in with a man's whole system of thought, congruity being a far rarer attribute of the human intellect than is commonly thought. Nor, again, must we undertake or sanction that easy conversion of Skeptics into dogmatists which consists in the transformation of their negations into the direct affirmations of their opposites—changing their *minuses* into *pluses*, to use an

¹ Comp. Grote, *Greece*, vol. i, p. 357.

algebraic expression—and thereby ignoring the numberless intervenient positions of neutrality or suspense which are easily conceivable in such circumstances. Professing, as we do, to render some account of the unbeliefs of philosophers, we must concede, at least theoretically, that a *tabula rasa* is not an impossible condition of mind for even profound thinkers. And we must abstain in every such case from inscribing on its virgin surface the writing which it seems to us, for whatever reason, ought to be found there.

ARUNDEL. Allowing that to be desirable as the aim of our researches, it appears to me that we shall find its practical realisation very difficult. A man's mind is so compounded of beliefs and unbeliefs, of convictions, probabilities, and uncertainties of every degree of assurance and doubt—and these are blended together so indissolubly, oftentimes, like the lights and shadows in a painting, being different aspects of the same truth—that it is almost impossible to eliminate any single conviction or non-conviction without doing violence to the rest.

TREVOR. The difficulty you speak of lies, I think, in us, rather than in the objects of our studies; that it is, if I may be allowed the terms, subjective rather than objective. Partly by natural instinct, but still more by prejudices of education and habit, we have acquired an almost invincible tendency to sum up a man's intellect by its positive rather than by its negative characteristics, to formulate creeds rather than to enumerate doubts and uncertainties. Hence any such operation as the summing up of a man's unbeliefs is assumed to be impossible. You cannot, it is urged, make a sum-total of a collection of cyphers. But in this method of putting the matter there lies a fallacy which is readily detected when we consider the nature of belief, viz. that it is a certain relation or attitude of the mind towards a given object or idea.¹ The primary fact of the possession by the mind of such a relation is entirely unaffected by its nature, which may be affirmative, or negative, or neither. In regard, therefore, to commonly accepted or current beliefs, the denial of any specific article

¹ 'Le doute comme la croyance est un mode, une forme de la pensée. *Bartholmess Huet*, p. 13, note.

of faith is by no means an unimportant fact—a pure negative to be denoted by a cypher. It expresses a positive relation just as much as an affirmative does. Hence a man's disbelief or his unbelief, his mental hostility or indifference to any given proposition, are just as susceptible of enumeration as his beliefs are, and a non-credo may be compiled as readily as a creed. Indeed the advance of a community in intellectual progress is often better described by its negations or cast-off beliefs, than by the affirmations it has substituted for them; just as the progressive growth of an animal that casts its skin every year would be more distinctly marked by a collection of such exuviae, than by the record of its actual present dimensions. Besides, the prevalent conception of the human mind as a kind of vessel containing so many articles of faith or knowledge, whence unbeliefs are held to imply its emptiness, is misleading; for in reality a mind stored with reasoned unbeliefs may be fuller of truth than one bursting with unverified convictions. To which I may add the fact that many forms of negation have taken, especially in the East, a positive and dogmatic aspect. What we regard, e.g. as the *creed* of the Buddhist is in reality a *non-credo* of progressive Skepticism commencing with the external world, and gradually eliminating all objects and modes of knowledge until it ends with a denial even of self-consciousness.

HARRINGTON. It is just this unceasing equipoise of affirmation and negation that constitutes, in my opinion, the peculiar and surpassing excellence of Hellenic speculation—the sublime indifference to every interest and consideration excepting truth. This it is which has made its thought the fullest and most comprehensive, the most calm and unimpassioned, the purest and most Skeptical of all the great products of human culture and mental activity.

ARUNDEL. In your high estimate of Greek thought I concur—generally. I have at least only two faults to find with it as a whole—(1) It puts everything too much in a *lumine sicco*, a dry light of pure intellectualism. (2) It does not take sufficient account of human infirmities; makes little allowance for our natural sympathies; and that is one reason why when in its prime it influenced social life so unfavourably from an

ethical point of view. A union of extreme æsthetic and artistic development with moral depravity, like the marriage of a goddess to a satyr, is to me a painful object of contemplation. A cold light, like that of the moon, merely sheds a weird, ghastly paleness over vegetation. The light that nourishes, expands, vivifies must be accompanied by heat. Unfortunately truth itself is in this respect frequently like moonshine, as Schiller says:—

Sie geben ach nicht immer Gluth
Der Wahrheit helle Strahlen.

Greek thought seems to me to have been a truth of this kind. Unsited to weak, erring men and women, it was admirably adapted for a nation of philosophers.

HARRINGTON. Which Greece, immediately before and after the death of Sokrates, actually was. . . . I think you regard Greek thought too exclusively from a religious point of view, Arundel. No doubt its main characteristic is enlightenment—an intellectual clarifying process; but surely there is no real deficiency in its stress on natural weaknesses nor in its recognition of them. In every department of its artistic and literary energy—in its sculpture and painting, dramatic and lyric poetry—you have ample proofs of this. In fact, the Greeks could not ignore what was so clearly and indisputably *natural* as the emotional, wayward, and erring side of humanity. That Hellenic thought and art do not constitute a religion, as we commonly understand the term, and that the Dialogues of Plato and the Tragedies of Sophokles do not produce on minds trained by Christianity the soothing or ascetic influence of the Psalms of David or the Gospel of St. John, is doubtless true; but it is equally true that we have no right to expect them to do so. Nor do I think your quotation from Schiller applicable to Greek culture. At least it is an application he could not have sanctioned. What you make an objectionable feature in Hellenic thought was to Schiller a positive merit; so he says, in his well-known ‘Götter Griechenlands’—

Finstre Ernst und trauriges Entsagen
War aus eurem heitern Dienst verbannt.

But instead of bemoaning such a defect, or regarding it as light without heat, he, on the contrary, thinks that it is we with our excessive other-worldliness, and our repression of the joyous naturalism of the Greeks, who have caused to disappear the life-warm forms of Hellenic Nature personation.

Ach! von jenem lebenwarmen Bilde
Blieb der Schatten nur zurück.¹

But what is the second charge you bring against Greek thought?

ARUNDEL. Precisely what, if you agree with Schiller's 'Gods of Greece,' you may consider a merit. Hellenic life and morality, the *ζῆν κατὰ φύσιν*, is too nakedly animalistic, in my opinion, to be adopted in any state of really high civilisation—I mean a civilisation in which matter and material interests are distinctly subordinated not only to intellectual but to spiritual culture. The very quality that gave excellence to the art-conceptions of the Greek impaired his moral character.

HARRINGTON. But may not the idea of purely intellectual self-development, the elimination by natural reason of the mere animal in man, which occupies no inconsiderable space in the best Greek literature, form a corrective to excessive animalism, as potent and as valuable as the Christian theory of asceticism and self-denial?

ARUNDEL. Possibly in the case of a few select minds—certainly not in the average Greek man or woman. To Christians Nature and her laws are subordinated or largely modified by religious restraints, by the conception of a holy God and a sinless Jesus, by the inherent sublimity of a spiritual existence. But what could the Greek have as a corrective of the pure animalism which is the undoubted outcome of many aspects of Nature? His whole Pantheon was only a collection of varied forms of sensualism.

¹ It should, perhaps, be noted that Schiller's interpretation of the relation of Hellenic thought to Nature varied at different times. In his earlier works, e.g. '*über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*,' he complains that the Greek interpretation of Nature was too intellectual, and insufficiently emotional. But later, in his *Ode to the Gods of Greece*, he allows that there was a correspondence between the suggestions of Nature and the emotions of man that is no longer possible in our time.

TREVOR. I think you are unjust in denying self-abnegation as well as a capacity for heroism and virtue of the highest order to the Hellenes; though the precise mode of evolution those virtues took was more akin to the self-development of philosophical morality of our own times than to extraneous commands or sanctions of a religious nature.

ARUNDEL. The self-development you speak of which may exist among those who do not profess to owe any part of it to Christianity seems to me oftentimes an unconscious but real plagiarism from its spirit. The self-mortification of Christ—the lesson of the Cross—has been before the world for so many centuries that it has won its way unnoticed into philosophical and other systems which would otherwise have hardly admitted it as an obligation. Take Comtism, for instance, with its plagiarised Altruism: originally it was meant as a substitute for Christianity, while all that it actually did was to copy it, even to its superstitions.

HARRINGTON. What you have alleged seems not improbable; only do not, in your tribute to the secret and unacknowledged power of Christianity in the modern world, be guilty of injustice to the Greeks, or, for that matter, to any heathen virtue. Take, *e.g.* the characters of Antigone and Electra. In these you certainly have the noblest self-denial inculcated without any morbid excess or obvious self-interest to detract from its merit; while in Sokrates you have a magnanimous and self-sacrificing devotion to truth and freedom, unparalleled, except in the case of Christ himself, in the history of humanity.

MISS LEYCESTER. I was just on the point of instancing Antigone—a very favourite character of mine—as an example of heroism and self-sacrifice that, if displayed in the interests of Ecclesiastical Christianity, might have procured her posthumous beatification as well as a place in the '*Acta Sanctorum*;' probably, however, she is destined to a longer immortality in the beautiful drama of Sophokles.

TREVOR. Our discussion has lasted somewhat long if regarded in respect of the time it has taken up. As to its subject, the free thought of the Greeks, no discussion could

be deemed too long, and it would be hard to imagine one sufficiently exhaustive, to do it justice.

I will now begin my paper.

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A definition of Skepticism that should be at once sympathetic and philosophic would be, as I hinted in my last paper, the vindication of intellectual liberty; the assertion of the absolute freedom of human faculties. Such a definition need not express the necessary limitations which would by every thoughtful mind be attached to the actual exercise of that liberty. All that is affirmed by it is that the nature of the intellect, the irrepressible tendency of the human mind, is towards freedom. If this definition be accepted, we may expect to find, among every community capable of the requisite culture, some degree of that effort after liberty which implies, if it does not necessitate, Skepticism. Not that we are to suppose that we shall anywhere discover unrestrained speculation to be a characteristic of the many. Neither the history of human thought nor our own personal experience warrants such an anticipation. The needs and sympathies of man as a social being are far too strong and irrepressible to allow many such anomalies and eccentricities. What we may fairly expect is to see free thought and Skeptical tendencies occasionally asserting themselves in spite of the numberless restraints and hindrances which community of interests, customs, thoughts, and sympathies will always try to place in its path. The history of the intellectual progress of any cultured race that was absolutely devoid of the least attempt to assert the inherent freedom of the mind, and to repudiate some or all of the social or other restraints by which its free instincts have been brought into subjection, would be as anomalous as a political history of a freedom-loving people which should contain no rebellions, no efforts for more liberty, no attacks on tyranny or despotism, no assertions, in a word, of the inalienable right of every nation to enjoy as great an amount of reasonable freedom as possible. In our proposed survey of pre-Christian Skepticism, this is what we shall actually find. In Greece, in India, in Palestine—and, had our investigation taken a wider scope, other countries and modes of thought might also have been included—the requisite allowances being made for variety of race and diversity of culture and circumstances, we meet with precisely the same phenomena. Occasionally there is an assertion more or less vehement of the free-born instincts of humanity, a repudiation of ordinary sources and means of knowledge, a dissent

from commonly accepted beliefs, a stubborn restlessness which despises the dull acquiescence, the flat stagnation of the usages, ideas, and sympathies of the many, which insists upon the thinker's own individual right to investigate and determine every subject-matter of belief or knowledge with which existence brings him in contact. Such a survey of different species of Skepticism as we now propose to institute is not merely beneficial in itself, but is absolutely necessary to the due and worthy treatment of our subject. It will reconcile us to the fact that Skepticism, notwithstanding its singularity and the consequent ill fame it has acquired from the sequacious majority of humanity, is a purely natural phenomenon—the common and inalienable property of all human thought. And while we infer from such a generalisation the fundamental similarity of the human intellect, and its methods of acquiring knowledge and reacting upon it when acquired, we shall conclude, from the hardly less marked diversities which distinguish different types of Skepticism, that such a general uniformity, like that of nature, may coexist with a considerable variety of particulars. Moreover, we here contemplate the genus of which Christian Skepticism may be regarded as a species; the general law of which it is a particular manifestation; and its adequate consideration will enable us to assimilate to a large extent the modern free-thinkers we purpose to discuss with their pre-Christian brethren. Nor is it less advantageous to contrast the workings of the human mind under varying conditions of inherent proclivity and external environment. Just as a naturalist finds it beneficial to study an animal or plant under different aspects and from opposite points of view—as, *e.g.* first in a state of freedom, next in that of captivity—so, taking as our subject of investigation the human intellect, we first of all learn its general attributes, its inherent proclivities in a state of nature, and having thus considered its habits, caprices, and eccentricities in its untamed condition, we shall be better able to appreciate the qualities manifested by it in a state of domestication and subjection. We shall not, therefore, be surprised to find that notwithstanding all efforts to coerce it, to moderate its eccentricity, to subdue its self-willed spirit, to reduce it to tameness and obedience, to put a yoke on its neck and force it to accept an extraneous authority—as, *e.g.* that of the Christian revelation—to compel it like another Samson to do service in the prison-house of ecclesiastical dogma—distinct symptoms of its original wildness and passionate love of liberty *will* occasionally manifest themselves.

1. We commence our philosophical voyage with Greece for more

than one reason. Not that it is the earliest labourer in the field of free thought—for it is certain that Hindoo Skepticism is of a date long anterior to Thales, the father of Greek philosophy—but it is undoubtedly the most remarkable. With other nations and races pure Skepticism is an incidental and occasional phenomenon. With Greece it is the normal condition of all her most eminent thought. To recur to our former simile, while the wild animal is in most cases completely tamed and domiciled, at least only occasionally breaking out into wild gambols and eccentricities—the reminiscences of its natural condition—in the case of Greece it is always untamable; the indomitable spirit, the inborn love of absolute freedom, is a quality never quite suppressed. Hence ordinary historians of Greek philosophy appear to me to labour under an enormous misapprehension when, following their usual *à priori* conceptions of growth and evolution, they try to show that Greek thought is essentially dogmatic, that its progress consists in a gradual formation and coherence of systematic tenets and beliefs, and hence that Skepticism is a passing phenomenon in its earlier growth, and serves to mark later on the senile weakness and decrepitude of its old age. Whereas the very opposite is the truth. For Hellenic speculation not only ends in Skepticism, but begins in Skepticism. The unlimited freedom of thought of which Skepticism is a necessary expression proves not the acute but the chronic and constitutional *disease*, if you will have it so, of most of the great Greek thinkers. Nor can it be said that the doubt with which Greek thought begins is of a tentative and rudimentary character. There is little or no difference in point of quality and fulness of development between its first appearance and its final manifestation. The unbelief of Xenophanes and Parmenides is almost as pronounced as that of Pyrrhôn Ainesidemos and Sextos Empeirikos.

Nor, indeed, could it be otherwise. Freedom is the essential property of Hellenic thought and aspiration at every period of their noble history. It is alike the motive principle and goal of all the intellectual and practical activities of old Greece. In her religious conceptions and political institutions, in her literature and in her artistic development, freedom is the chief predominating influence. Such being the case, we need not be surprised, nay rather we might fairly expect, that this inherent and strongly marked tendency will occasionally overshoot itself and become excessive; that liberty will degenerate into licence, that freedom of thought will sometimes become sophistical and self-contradictory, that Skepticism will become aggressive and overbearing, and analytical methods verge on intellectual suicide. Given a people like the Hellenes,

with their keen sensibility, their full receptivity, their vivid imagination, their eager, inquiring spirit, and their high culture, and a greater or less degree of Skepticism might have been predicated beforehand as one of their chiefest characteristics. Hence Greek speculation is, more than that of any other race or people, permeated by pure positive Skepticism, and it has thus, as we shall find, been the fountain whence all other European Skepticism has drawn its arguments. Perhaps it would be hardly too much to say that Skepticism is precisely the form of Greek thought which has proved itself most endued with vitality and which is most in vigour in the present day.

One word as to the plan I shall pursue in what must necessarily be a rather long essay: I purpose to consider in chronological order the chief persons and schools of Greece which are especially distinguished for free thought, without taking note of offshoots or tendencies of a dogmatic character which have occasionally started from Greek Skepticism. Our present concern, we must remember, is not so much with Greek philosophy as with the free-thinking elements contained in it. Nor is it necessary that we should take account of all even of the great names that traditionally belong to the history of our subject, for frequently these are names of disciples who reproduce, without noteworthy modification, the views of their still more celebrated masters. It will be enough that our survey should comprehend every main species of Hellenic free thought from the Eleatic school to the time of Sextos Empirikos.

*The Eleatic School.*¹

Greek *thought*, properly so called, commences with the Eleatic school and with its founder Xenophanes. It is at this period, *i.e.* that it begins to manifest that aptitude for reflection and abstract reasoning which afterwards distinguished it. Hitherto it had been occupied with material theories as to the origin of the universe. But it deserves mention as a presage of the marvellous development it was destined to make, that even these preliminary essays mark the bold, comprehensive spirit which is

¹ The usual authorities on Greek Philosophy are well known, and therefore need no specific enumeration here; especially as those on whom most stress is laid are referred to in the foot-notes. On the subject of the Eleatics, the best work is S. Karsten's *Philosophorum Græcorum Veterum Reliquiæ*. The fragments are quoted, unless otherwise mentioned, from Karsten's work, or from Mullach's *Fragmenta Philosophorum Græcorum* (Paris, Didot).

the characteristic of all Hellenic speculation. For they indicate that advance in human thought, and the use of philosophic terms, by means of which the universe—the sum of all existence—is grasped in a single act of cognition, and embodied and expressed in a definite word or phrase.¹ That water, fire, air should be conceived as potent or primary influences need not occasion surprise; but that any such single element should be supposed capable of producing by growth, or change, or evolution, the whole sum of existing phenomena, is, no doubt, a very wonderful fact. To this physical stage of Greek thought succeeds in due course its metaphysical stage. Material elements are found unsatisfactory, and in their stead ideal conceptions, verbal definitions or abstractions are put forward as the underlying principle of all things. This stage is reached in ‘the infinite’ or ‘undetermined’ of Anaximander, and in ‘number’ as the symbol of order and succession in the case of Pythagoras. It is at this point that the Skeptical philosophy of Xenophanes and his school meets us, and by means of its free, expansive spirit, its incisive method, and its general suitability to the intellect of the Hellenic race, Greek thought received an impetus and a character which were destined to mark the whole of its subsequent course.

The few facts known concerning the life of Xenophanes are; That he was a native of Kolophon, an Ionian colony on the coasts of Asia Minor, and the birthplace of several other writers more or less known in the early history of Greek literature. Of the date of his birth we have no certain record. It may be said to range from B.C. 538 to B.C. 477,² with perhaps a slight preponderance on the part of the best authorities in favour of the latter. When he was twenty-five years of age he was driven by some cause, probably political, from his native city. He wandered, in the manner then common to Rhapsodists³ and travelling philo-

¹ Grote has called attention to the faculties for observation and combination, which are implied in such abstractions as *κόσμος* and *φύσις*. On the former word, see Humboldt's interesting note in his *Cosmos*, vol. i. p. 51 (Eng. trans. Bohn). It is said to date from the time of Pythagoras, but Prof. Curtius has well observed that abstract thought was already apparent in the grammar of the Greek language long before it manifested itself in the books of their philosophers. (*History of Greece*, Ward's translation, i. p. 24.)

² Comp. Welcker, *Der Epische Cyclus*, pp. 401, 402; Clinton's *Fasti Hellenici*, vol. ii. pp. 11 and 35; Ritter and Preller, *Historia Philosoph.* p. 81. Cousin in his *Fragmens Philosophiques* gives his date 617 B.C. The whole question is discussed by Karsten in his work above mentioned.

³ The resemblance of Xenophanes to the Rhapsodists is still further

sophers, to Zankle and Catana, whence he migrated to Velia or Elia on the coasts of South Italy. At this celebrated home of free thought he settled for some years, if not for the rest of his life, and established the famous Eleatic school. The date of his death is as uncertain as that of his birth. If we may accept the evidence of a poem which purports to have been written by himself, he was alive in the reign of Darius, when he must have been over ninety years of age.

The Skeptical method may be said to consist generally in the aggressive action of the critical and inquiring intellect upon a given belief or body of beliefs already in existence. Hence, as a needful preliminary to a due estimate of any Skeptical thinker, we must determine as far as possible the amount and coherence of those current opinions and beliefs to which he feels compelled to oppose himself. In treating, therefore, of Xenophanes and his successors in the same school, our first endeavour must be to ascertain what were the chief convictions of an Ionian or Dorian Greek of average culture and information in the sixth century before the Christian era. First and foremost we must place that great body of mythological tradition which we find expressed in the poems of Homer and Hesiod. It is difficult for us to realise the exact position which these myths occupied in the mind and heart of the old Greek. Nothing analogous to them exists in modern European civilisation. They formed the common and prolific soil of his ideas, his convictions, and his phantasies. They furnished the nutriment of his religious beliefs, his literature and poetry, his intense love of art and natural beauty, and even, to some extent, of his political opinions. 'Such was,' says Grote,¹ 'the intellectual and imaginative reach of an ordinary Greek. . . . It was an aggregate of religion, of social and patriotic retrospect, and of romantic fancy, blended into one indivisible faith.' Added to this general mythological dogmatism, there were numerous special influences of a similar kind. Not only had each tribe its own collection of local myths and traditions, the cherishing of which was deemed indispensable to genuine patriotism, but it also pos-

shown by the structure of his poems, and his habit of reciting them publicly.

¹ Grote's *History of Greece*, 4th edit. vol. i. p. 411. It may, however, be needful to warn the reader that all general estimates as to Greek religion must be received with caution, and with due allowance for differences of date, locality, &c. Comp. Grote's *History* with Welcker, *Griechische Götterlehre*; and for an admirable *résumé* of the subject, see Petersen's article on *Greek Mythology* in vol. lxxxii. sect. i. of Ersch and Grüber.

essed one or more sacred localities, each with its own history, its peculiar cultus, and its consecrated hierarchy.¹ Another centre of Greek belief of a private and esoteric kind is to found in the old mysteries of Orpheus and others, with their dread and unutterable rites of initiation, their mysterious modes of nature-worship, the full and unswerving allegiance to certain definite dogmas exacted of their votaries—all veiled under the garb of an inviolable secrecy. We may readily suppose that the operation of such select and incommunicable beliefs was of a comparatively limited nature; still for systematic elaboration and coherency the mysteries and the beliefs generated by them probably far exceeded the more fluctuating traditions of popular mythology. Such were, so far as we are able to determine, some of the more prominent centres of Greek dogmatic faith at the period of which we are writing. The tenacity with which the Greeks clung to their religious beliefs is sufficiently attested by the whole of their history, so that whatever influence the Skeptical teaching of Xenophanes and his numerous successors can be shown to have obtained, must not be ascribed to any such causes as a facile adoption and lax retention of religious and mythological dogmas.² Contemporaneously, however, with the formation of this not inconsiderable mass of current beliefs, such as probably existed in the time of Xenophanes, there were causes at work which not only rendered the disintegration commenced by the Eleatics comparatively easy, but which served to prove the native susceptibility of the Greek mind for critical processes and Skeptical conclusions.³ First among these must be placed the keen and inextinguishable love of inquiry and discussion which was a primary feature of the Greek intellect. In no other nation, ancient or modern, was this love for intellectual gymnastics—reasoned argument for its own sake, and irrespective, for the

¹ Of course, anything like a national homogeneous faith the Greeks could not be said to possess, either now or for many centuries to come, and therefore they had no general religious creed or system of dogmas. To this cause, among others, Zeller ascribes the intellectual freedom of the Greeks, *Phil. d. Griechen*, i. p. 45. We must, however, not forget that the influence of an hereditary priesthood, the oracle at Delphi, the worship of a Pan-Hellenic Zeus, and a vague floating tradition derived from the common origin of the different Hellenic tribes, partly compensated for this want of dogmatic fixity.

² The contemptuous tolerance which the Roman Empire in the plenitude of its power extended to foreign deities, was dictated by its comprehensive Imperial policy. The tolerance of Athens was the outcome of its intellectual freedom.

³ For some excellent remarks on the negative tendencies of the Greek Philosophy, see Grote's *Plato*, vol. i. pp. 242-244.

most part, of the conclusions to which it might lead—so fully developed. Neologianism, the propounding of novel doctrines,¹ which is the bugbear of our modern dogmatism, was to the old Greek thinker the welcomed opportunity for the renewed exercise of his mental faculties, and, at a later period, of his dialectical proficiency. It is only by bearing this characteristic in mind that we are able to explain the intellectual and religious tolerance which, on the whole, marks the mental history of Greece. Different attempts have been made to reconcile the incompatibility of a tenacious grasp of mythological belief co-existing with a freedom of thought and utterance which seems well-nigh unbounded.² But, except to note its existence and influence, this primitive struggle of reason and faith does not come into the scope of our present inquiry. We may, however, be sure that in most cases where these antagonistic forces were nearly balanced, the native bent of the Greek intellect would secure a victory for Reason rather than for her adversary.

2. But if the earnestness of Greek religious faith was necessarily opposed to free thought and inquiry, this very tendency was aided in no small measure by the diversity which was no less a main characteristic of that faith. An elaborate polytheistic system, or rather congeries of systems, composed of manifold traditions diverse in origin, form, and cultus,³ must have possessed within it

¹ This, and not the mere avidity for 'news' in our sense of the word, is the probable meaning of the character ascribed to the Athenians in a subsequent period of Greek history. Cf. the passages collected by Wetstein, *New Test.* Acts xvii. 21.

² Zeller has pointed out that the uniformity in religion, *i.e.* of any particular cultus, required by the Greeks was a uniformity of ritual, rather than of doctrine. (*Phil. d. Griech.* i. 46.) In the early development of religions, the ritual was regarded as the symbol of the worshipper's devotion, of his fulness of love, awe, or reverence; it was not then deemed the expression or exponent of his doctrinal judgments or his intellectual conclusions. It would be well for the peace of Christendom if this fact and its significance were borne in mind.

³ Even the cultus at a single shrine, as Prof. Curtius has remarked, frequently consisted of successive strata of religious usages and traditions; the newer overlying the older, as the beds of a geological formation. This was, indeed, the inevitable result of perpetual migrations and political changes. Never to destroy or suppress any worship, no matter what its origin or its nature, was an accepted maxim among the Hellenic tribes, as it was subsequently by the Romans. In either case, it was probably a silent acknowledgment of human ignorance, and of the unlimited possibilities of the universe. 'The unknown God' has ever had a far greater number of shrines and worshippers than is commonly supposed.

elements if not of antagonism yet at least of emulation and rivalry. Taking, *e.g.* the two highest Olympian divinities, Zeus and Hère, we have under each designation several myths differing not only in locality, but in form and substance as well. The worshipper at his own local shrine would, by the inevitable tendencies of human nature, claim for its deity or its cultus a superior degree of reverence and virtue than he would concede to a rival deity or shrine. These rivalries of different creeds and modes of worship, each claiming supremacy over the rest, could not but induce, in logical minds, reflections which might easily lead, if not to absolute denial of their collective authority, at least to a guarded suspicion of the grounds on which it was sought to be established. Certainly, the various mythological systems could not all be true; the four or more rival deities bearing the name of Zeus, *e.g.* could not each be the supreme ruler of the universe. The Hère of Argos—differing in origin, history, and worship, from her namesake of Samos—could by no possibility be deemed identical with her. Add to this the more peaceful, but yet unquestionable, rivalry existing between the deities of Olympus themselves, when they were fully recognised as differing in name and attributes from each other. No truth of Greek theology is more fully impressed on its literature from Homer to Menander. So long as the devout Hellene chose for his own particular worship one of the Olympian divinities, especially if the ruling deity of his tribe or family, he might fairly treat the others with more or less of neglect. It was not, therefore, a case like the different forms of Christianity, in which various sects possess a common ground of faith in the person and work of Christ. No such common indivisible nexus of belief can with any probability be assigned to the various successive and conflicting mythologies of Greece.¹ At an earlier period of her history, before the commercial and social intercourse of the various races and their colonies was greatly developed, no doubt each Æolian or Ionian Greek worshipped at his own local shrine, and believed his own popular or local myths, without troubling himself much about the religious beliefs of his neighbours; but with the rapid expansion of commerce and mental culture, such religious and philosophical isolation was no longer possible.

A similar impetus to free discussion and Skepticism was no doubt imparted by the variety of philosophical theories and opinions

¹ The primitive Aryan conceptions of which the myths of Greece are developments, were of a far more diversified kind than we are apt to suppose. Compare on this point Petersen's admirable article in Ersch and Grüber, sect. i. vol. lxxxii. p. 73, &c.

current among the Greeks from B.C. 450 to a late period in her history. At the time of Xenophanes, *e.g.* the several philosophers of the Ionic school had propounded their views as to the origin of the universe; and though it is conceivable that the diffusion of these early theories was limited, yet it is scarcely likely that there were not many Greeks dwelling in the centres of commerce, as, *e.g.* Miletus, to whom these and similar speculations were not fully known, and by whom they were not fully discussed. Hence, probably, arose in many cases temporary suspense, if not absolute Skepticism. Certainly such thinkers might urge, these incompatible theories could not all be true. If the 'air' of Anaximenes was the original element and source of all things, the same could not be predicated of the 'water' of Thales (the well-known conjoint operation of the four elements being the subsequent speculation of Empedokles). Besides which, opposition and dissonance were involved in the very rudiments of some of the earlier Hellenic thought-schemes. 'One said,' to quote Plato's words, 'that there were three principles warring in a manner with one another; and another spoke of two principles, a moist and dry, or hot and cold, &c.' It is needless to pursue this subject further; enough has been said to prove, what our subsequent investigations will serve to confirm, that, other things being equal, Skepticism generally flourishes most in communities in which religious beliefs and intellectual speculations are of the most diversified character, and in which their various claims and mutual relations are discussed with freedom and independence.

It would be easy to prolong these preliminary considerations as to the pre-eminent fitness of Greece in this portion of her history to advance the cause of speculative freedom. Tennemann and others have pointed out the effect, *e.g.* which its political division into a number of small states must have had in inducing or accelerating philosophical inquiry. For the mutual rivalry thereby engendered, the diversity of various usages and customs, the collision of conflicting interests and not unfrequently antagonistic institutions, constituted a soil for inquiry and mental progress of the most fertile and stimulating kind. In passing, I may as well point out that we have similar examples of the intellectual activity induced by the juxtaposition of a number of small free states in Italy during the Renaissance, and in Germany and Switzerland at the time of the Reformation. At a later period of Greek history,

¹ Comp. Sophistes, *Steph.* 242. A division of pre-Socratic thinkers into 'Dualists' and 'Monists' has recently been made by S. A. Byk in his *Vorsokratische Philosophie der Griechen*. Leipzig, 1876-77.

when preliminary inquiry had done its work, the concentration of Greek thought in the intellectual metropolis of Athens was no doubt necessary for maturing the fruits of Hellenic speculation, as well as for consolidating the free political institutions of the country.

Passing from the soil to the germs of free thought which Xenophanes implanted in it, I may observe, first, that he places himself in an attitude of direct hostility to the current mythological belief of the time. It would, indeed, appear that Xenophanes was especially a religious Skeptic, and that this is the chief characteristic by which he is known in the history of Greek philosophy.¹ Thus in one of the best known of the extant fragments of his works he strikes a blow at the polytheism which was the inevitable fruit of Greek mythology—

One God exists, among beings divine and human the greatest,
To mortal men related neither in body nor mind.

And, in direct contradiction to the various powers and attributes commonly assigned to the different deities, he says of the One in a pantheistic (not in a monotheistic) sense²—

The Whole understands and sees, the Whole, moreover, hears all things.

Similarly the material motion and personal interventions which were so liberally ascribed to the divinities of Olympus were no less distasteful to the first Greek Skeptic. Speaking of the single pantheistic principle of all things, he says—

Toilless, by pure exertion of will he ordereth all things.

And as regards motion—

Motionless quite, he for ever retains the self-same position,
Nor is it fit he should range from any one place to another.

The folly of polytheism is further portrayed—

Mortals absurdly suppose that the gods, like themselves, are born,
And, like themselves, are possessed of senses and voice and form.

¹ Zeller, *Phil. d. Griechen*, i. 452.

² Zeller well remarks that whenever a Greek philosopher expresses his dissatisfaction with the manifoldness of polytheism, we must, in harmony with the derivation of Greek mythology mainly from the processes and phenomena of nature, understand him to lean to a pantheistic interpretation of nature, rather than to an extra-mundane deity.—*Phil. d. Griechen*, i. p. 456.

And in another fragment, remarkable alike for the vigour and beauty of its language, and for the fact that it has frequently been made the basis of fable, Xenophanes points out the perennial source of all anthropomorphic conceptions of the deity—

If indeed oxen or lions, like men, were possessed of hands,
Or were gifted, like men, with the art and the skill of the painter,
Then horses in form of horses, and oxen in likeness of oxen,
Would paint the forms of the gods, and depict their figures on canvas—
Each, in a word, would fashion them after its image and likeness.¹

We are moreover assured, by another fragment, that the relation which existed between the popular mythology and the powers and operations of nature had not escaped his observation. He says—

The goddess whom men call Iris, by nature is nought but a mist cloud,
Adorned in purple and gold and crimson of marvellous beauty.

Nor is he content with inveighing against existing systems of Greek belief and worship in general terms; he boldly comes to particulars. Homer and Hesiod—the twin parents of the popular mythology—he accuses by name of rendering the gods contemptible—

To the gods have Homer and Hesiod attributed impiously all things
Whatsoe'er among men are reputed both vile and disgraceful.
The deeds of divinities they have portrayed as foul and unholy,
And liars, adulterers, cheats, are the vaunted lords of Olympus.

And in another fragment—

He is of men to be praised who sipping his wine is recounting,
Will or memory prompting, virtues most excellent worth;
Neither discoursing for ever on battles of Titans and giants,
Nor on the Centaur's deeds—fictions of mortals of yore.²

In a similar strain Xenophanes claims evolution rather than

¹ Cf. Montaigne, *Essais*, book i. chap. xxii. 'Il en est où chacun fait un Dieu de ce qu'il luy plaist: le chasseur d'un lyon, ou d'un regnard, le pescheur de certain poisson; et des idoles, de chasque action ou passion humaine.'

² This is necessarily a primary justification of every new movement of thought, whether in philosophy or religion. It is, however, sometimes employed to traduce such novelty; as when, e.g. Mahomet, in one of his earliest Suras, speaks of his unbelieving enemies, 'who, when our wondrous verses (signs) are recited to him, saith: "Fables of the ancients."'—*Koran*, Rodwell's trans. p. 17.

revelation, empiricism rather than intuitionism, as the source of human knowledge—

By no means at the beginning did the gods reveal all things to mortals,
But mortals themselves, by inquiry, in time have made gradual progress.

That he was not afraid to give his principles a practical application is shown by his reply to the Eleans, when they asked him whether they should sacrifice to Leukothea and bewail her or not. 'If you consider her divine, bewail her not; if human, sacrifice not,' was the characteristic reply of the Skeptic philosopher.

But it is not only with the religious ideas and beliefs of his time that Xenophanes wages war; he denounces with equal vigour the social customs and predilections of his countrymen. The peculiar combination of religious feeling with passionate admiration for human strength and beauty, which was so deeply rooted in the Greek mind, and which found vent in the games, is well known. We can, therefore, appreciate the boldness with which he attacks even these most cherished institutions of his country. In one of the longest of the extant fragments Xenophanes calls attention to this subject, and, after enumerating the various prizes bestowed on the victors in the different contests, and the national honour in which they were held, he proceeds with a singular mixture of self-confidence and what almost looks like cynicism—

These men have their rewards,
Though not so worthy as I; for better by far than the prowess
Either of horses or men is my great prowess of mind.
Surely perverse is this custom, and full of the grossest injustice,
Bodily strength to prefer excellent wisdom above.

More than one of the fragments have a reference to Xenophanes' general position as a Skeptical thinker, by which it would appear he entirely disclaimed for himself and the rest of mankind the possibility of knowledge; *i.e.* it must be presumed, in the sense of demonstration. The following verses are remarkable:

This, indeed, no one of men has known or can know in the future,
What I affirm of the gods or of all other matters besides;
For though a man should announce the greatest of possible Truths,
He could not possibly know it; in all things supreme is opinion.

Without attempting to educe from the fragments of Xenophanes anything more than a certain congruity of thought, it must be evident, I think, even from the rough paraphrases I have put before you, that they represent a thinker of keen and Skeptical intellect, coupled, moreover, with a moral fearlessness and disregard

for popular convictions which is not the inseparable accompaniment of a doubting tendency. It may help us to realise more vividly, even though the parallel be necessarily imperfect, the Skeptical position of Xenophanes, as well as to appreciate the noble tolerance of the Hellenic mind for all speculations of a philosophical character, if we imagine some self-elected apostle of unbelief dealing with the cherished opinions of our own age and country in a manner similar to that of Xenophanes. Imagine some such peripatetic thinker traversing our own island, and, in various public lecture rooms, calling attention to the inconclusiveness or the contradictions of our own most dearly cherished beliefs. Suppose him, *e.g.* to animadvert on the anthropomorphic conceptions of deity contained in the Old Testament, or to stigmatise the miracles of Moses or Jesus Christ as 'the fictions of our forefathers;' or, noticing the mixture of worship and wailing with which Christians observe Good Friday, to say that if Christ were God, he need not be wept for, and if man, he should not be worshipped; or, again, suppose him on witnessing the national enthusiasm which is evoked by the Derby, or the University boat-race, or the Eton and Harrow cricket match, to express his philosophic contempt for such exhibitions of mere material skill, and to call attention to the immeasurable superiority of mental power such as his own; or, finally, imagine him in general terms to assert the futility of all dogmatism by some such Skeptical axiom as 'Opinion is supreme in all things,' and we shall then be able to estimate the boldness of this remarkable thinker, as well as the wonderful forbearance with which, so far as appears, his utterances were received by his countrymen.

Nothing is more prolific than original and incisive ideas, when cast into a suitable soil. Like material seeds sown under favourable conditions, such spiritual germs not only repeat and continue their own individual type, but they originate new and hitherto unknown varieties in which the characteristics of the parent stock are half-developed, half-hidden in a new-born wealth of diversified form and beauty. That the influence of Xenophanes was of this creative, stimulating kind, is proved by the varied character of succeeding speculation, as well as by the long and prosperous duration of the philosophic school which he founded at Elea.¹

Of his immediate successor, Parmenides, comparatively little is known, even the main dates of his life being uncertain. It would appear that he was a native of Elea, where he lived for the

¹ See Note on School of Elea, Appendix B.

greater portion of his life. A tradition referred to more than once by Plato, states that at the age of sixty-five he came to Athens, accompanied by Zenon, who was then forty years old, and thus became acquainted with Sokrates, who must then have been quite young. The difficulty of reconciling this tradition with the chronology of Diogenes Laertius, as well as other conflicting statements respecting his teachers, may be found in the various Histories of Philosophy,¹ and need not be discussed by us. Like Xenophanes and the Rhapsodists of his time, Parmenides promulgated his philosophy in a poetic form. He would seem to have written a considerable poem on Nature,² of which, however, we possess only a few fragments.

We have seen that the speculations of Xenophanes represent the human mind in the process of testing and analysing current beliefs of all kinds, and ending with the discovery of their uncertainty.

In the philosophy of Parmenides we take a step further in the direction of free inquiry. He may be said to represent that stage in human thought when from the doubt and perplexity of phenomena a refuge is found in the results of introspection. The Reason and its verifying power are arrayed against the verdict of the senses; Truth against the fluctuation and uncertainty of human opinion; Being, absolute and all-comprehending, against the endless multiplicity of separate and individual existences. Here we have Skepticism placed at once on a firm metaphysical footing. The analysis of sense deliverances, the discovery of their occasional errors, the consequent protest against their authority, and the unreserved declaration of their untrustworthy character constitute indeed an important step not only in Skepticism but also in general metaphysical inquiry.

That this is Parmenides' position is shown by his teachings as they are to be gathered from the fragments which have come down to us. In one of these, probably his poem on Nature, the philosophic poet represents the young inquirer, urged on by vehement desires to obtain knowledge, after a toilsome journey entering timidly the temple where sits enthroned the Goddess of Wisdom. She welcomes the solitary traveller—

¹ Cf. Clinton's *Fasts*, ii. pp. 22, 448.

² This is probably the same work which Suidas calls *Φυσιολογία*. Most of the extant fragments seem to have been taken from it. The enormous interval which separates ancient Greek from modern scientific conceptions of nature may partly be estimated by the fact that Parmenides and Melissos include under it idealism of the most transcendental character. But to many philosophers, modern as well as ancient, the ideal is both nearer and truer than the real.

Cheer up, O youth!

For sure, no fate of ill hath impellèd thee thus to journey,
Albeit thy road from the dust of the well-trodden pathway
Traversed by human crowds, be apart in lonely seclusion.
Rather were justice and faith thy guides, and the keenest desire
Wisdom to learn, and the innermost soul of truth to discover ;
Human opinions also to shun, untrue and deceptive.
Such things mayst thou learn ; moreover, too, how it befits thee
By full investigation clearly to apprehend all things.

This important fragment throws considerable light on the position of early Greek thought in relation to the opinions of the many. Already have the votaries of philosophy to pursue a lonely road ; already are they warned of the difficulties of the way ; already are they told by the great teacher whose name became proverbial throughout Greece for pure, unselfish devotion to truth,¹ that the secrets of wisdom are disclosed only to patient and persistent inquiry. But perhaps the most remarkable point for us is the contempt urged for human opinion. We have already seen how systematically Xenophanes opposed himself to the prevailing current of Greek thought on philosophy, religion, and national and social habits. His disciple takes care to pursue the same path, even if his pronounced views on the subject do not indicate an advance on those of his master. For with Parmenides opinion is the synonym of error, and the fell adversary of truth. To guide one's footsteps by it is wilfully to choose the path of darkness, and reject that of light. At the same time it must be admitted that he does not, like Xenophanes, include his own views under the head of opinion, and, therefore, does not make his Skeptical estimate of it so positively suicidal.

In the succeeding verses he again touches this question, and urges, besides, the deceptiveness of all sense-deliverances :—

Away from this mode of inquiry steadily keep thy mind,
Nor be enticed by mortals to tread in their crookedest pathways ;
To wait upon sightless eyes, and give heed to hearingless ears ;
Nor list to deceiving words, but test by the firm rule of reason
The teaching I now impart, &c.

This open distrust of sensation and appeal from its conclusions to those of introspection mark, indeed, an important stage not only in the history of Skepticism, but in that of mysticism as well. It is the passing from the known, or what is so esteemed, to the

¹ Compare, on this and other points connected with the life of Parmenides, Steinhart's interesting article in Ersch and Grüber, sect. iii. theil xii.

unknown—the transition from the realm of fact, or what we are compelled to consider as such, to the region of fancy. The man who once consciously and determinedly takes this step, has crossed the Rubicon which divides the world of matter from that of mind. He breaks with older prepossessions, claims, and companionships, and starts in quest of new conquests. Columbus-like, he leaves the well-known coasts of the older continent, and spreads his sail on an unknown ocean in search of whatever he may chance to discover. But it is obvious that the final rejection of sense-deliverance constitutes the basis of its frequently concomitant rejection of human opinion. Ordinary opinion is founded in ultimate analysis on the verdict of the senses; it may, indeed, be defined as the collective sensation of a greater or lesser portion of humanity. Now, if one's own senses are to be distrusted, *à fortiori* must we refuse implicit credence to those of others. This argument from the fallibility of the senses is one which will again and again meet us in the course of our investigations. In some respects the unqualified renunciation of sense-deliverances on the part of Parmenides goes beyond the expressed opinions of the most developed Skepticism of the later Greek schools; as, *e.g.* Sextos Empeirikos, who admitted that a measure of belief in existing phenomena was irresistible.

Having attained his goal of pure reason or introspection, Parmenides discovers the truth for which he has so long been in search. This he describes in lines of which it is not easy to give an adequate rendering—

Come therefore, I will relate, do thou to my speech give hearing,
 What are the modes of research in order to apprehend knowledge.
 One of the twain is that 'Being exists' as perforce it must do,
 Pathway this of persuasion, for verity travels along it.
 'Being is not' is the other, and asserting non-being's existence.
 With the mind non-being thou perceiv'st not (quite unattainable this!)
 Neither with words, *for the self-same thing is Thought and Existence.*¹

Here Parmenides reaches the extreme limit of his own, I might say, of all purely idealistic, speculation. The evidence of the senses has been discarded as the judgment of an inferior and wrongly constituted court. Appeal is made to the supreme tribunal of the reason, which gravely decides: 1. That being or

¹ Mullach, *Fragments*, p. 118. The words are somewhat differently arranged by S. Karsten, *Philosophorum Græc. Vet. Operum Reliquiæ*, vol. i. part 2. Parmenides, p. 30.

existence is true. 2. That it is a creation of, and is therefore synonymous with, thought.

We may well pause here a moment to observe what a proof these early gropings after truth exhibit of what Grote calls the 'expansiveness' of the Greek intellect and the rapidity of metaphysical growth that marks Hellenic thinkers. Within a few centuries of the commencement of their mental existence, they have already scaled the extreme heights of speculation, and are breathing not only with ease, but with a sense of enjoyment, the rarefied atmosphere of those sublime regions, which most minds can, even after long preliminary training, barely endure. It was only after some centuries of arduous mental labour, of a large experience in the diversities and subtleties of human thought, that Germany was able to produce her Hegel; his great prototype Parmenides was one of the firstborn of the philosophic children of ancient Greece. In him Greek thought has by a rapid progress attained the extreme bound of metaphysical research based upon Skeptical principles. All further effort in this direction must be applied to mere detailed labour of examining the bearings of the road already traversed, investigating its different bends and turns, and mapping itself and its surroundings for the information of the wayfarers who are to come after. Already are the senses distrusted and their evidence questioned, already are the fluctuations and uncertainties of human opinion detected, and an appeal made from them to the independent and enlightened verdict of the reason. Already the phenomena of the universe are discounted, their numberless transformations, their varied and eternal movements, are pronounced an elaborate illusion, and in their stead a permanent Ens, or unchangeable source of existence, is posited. Already, in short, the Hellenic mind, in her great teacher, has attained sufficient strength for the severest exercise of introspection, and, in her calm self-concentration, measures the totality of existence by the standard of her own thought.

But both in their starting point and in their conclusion the views of Parmenides are in their essence Skeptical. It might, indeed, seem that his doctrine of the Ens was a dogma; and in his own estimation so, no doubt, it was. But we must remember that, in the inculcation of philosophical truth, more attention is deservedly paid to the method than to the specific conclusions which are derived from it. A dogmatic superstructure upon a Skeptical foundation is a mere castle in the air, destined to fall by the first breath of reason and common sense. Hence when Parmenides rejects phenomena, and substitutes in their stead a mere

metaphysical abstraction, he only succeeded, in reality, in replacing one uncertainty by a greater. Like the dog in the fable, he threw away the substance in order to grasp at the shadow; for he not only divested knowledge and existence of all sense-deliverances, but even of those mental discriminations and judgments by which alone reasoning on metaphysical subjects becomes a possibility; so that by his method the whole sum of human knowledge is reduced to a *vacuum*, without a single attribute to characterise it, and resting only on the trilateral basis of the word which he devised for it, like an inscrutable and invisible priestess on her tripod.

Such an all-inclusive idea suggests naturally *the One* of Xenophanes, and it seems probable that we must regard it, if not as derived from, yet at least as connected with, that abstraction.¹ In any case, both are outcomes of the vigorous, far-reaching, and comprehensive nature of the Hellenic intellect. Both are arrived at by similar Skeptical processes, while each concession marks a terminus and a climax in the metaphysical method of its respective teacher. For our purpose, therefore, both philosophers are in the same category. The denial of ordinary sources and means of knowledge is the same in either case. The rejection of popular opinions and convictions is common to both. The foundations are, as I have pointed out, distinctively Skeptical, whatever may be said of the towering, albeit unsubstantial, superstructures erected upon them.

Before I leave Parmenides, I must briefly consider the position he occupies in the Platonic 'Dialogue' which bears his name, especially as this will, in my opinion, be found to illustrate and confirm the judgment I have formed of him as an early pioneer of Greek Skepticism. The high estimate in which he was held by Plato is distinctly and repeatedly recorded in his 'Dialogues.' He was his true intellectual father, 'whom he revered and honoured more than all other philosophers together.' And yet in the 'Parmenides' this great teacher is represented as overthrowing, by means of the Sokratic dialectic, that very idealism of which he is in Greek philosophy the reputed founder. The One of Xenophanes, the absolute being of his own system, are tacitly, but clearly, proved to be either unfounded or self-contradictory, or else illusory.

¹ In the *Parmenides*, e.g. Sokrates attributes to that philosopher the doctrine that the All is one. Aristotle asserts that the Ens of Parmenides is derived immediately from the One of his teacher (*Met.* i. 5). Compare Karsten and Vatke's Monograph *Parmenidis Veliensis Doctrina qualis fuerit*, pp. 40, 41, &c.

Hence comes the question, 'How is this to be interpreted? Was it Plato's object to turn the doctrines of his "Father Parmenides" into ridicule? or did he purpose to prove that the idealism he himself most affected was in ultimate analysis unsustainable?'¹ The possibility of the latter alternative, strange though it may seem at first sight, will, I think, appear when we come to discuss the Platonic Sokrates. We shall then discover that however great may have been Plato's admiration for Parmenides or Sokrates, or any other great teacher, he placed a still higher value on the logical analysis, the negative dialectic, which was connected in his mind with those illustrious names, and which he regarded as the only method of discovering truth. In the 'Parmenides,' therefore, Plato seems to me to have had the twofold purpose in view: 1. To represent a well-known phase of that philosopher's method and teaching.² 2. To carry out his own merciless dialectic to its extreme limits, and thereby possibly to illustrate the advance which the Sokratic elenchus had made from its birth in the school of Elea to its popular enunciation by Sokrates and himself, for Parmenides is represented by Sokrates as having taught by the method of questions (*δι' ἐρωτησέων*).³ How far there may have been a secret intention of proving the superiority of dialectic over idealism, is a question I will not undertake to answer categorically. As I have said, I do not think it at all impossible in itself, while it is quite in harmony with the grim irony which is one main feature of the Platonic dialogues.

What I wish to insist on at present is the Skeptical character of Parmenides during the period of Sokrates and Plato, who, if they were not actual disciples, lived near enough to his time to be conclusive evidence as to his reputation among his contemporaries. I may add that the estimate thus formed continues with little variation throughout the whole subsequent history of Greek philosophy.⁴

¹ 'The arguments here put by Plato into the mouth of Parmenides are "nearly, if not quite," those used by Aristotle in attacking Plato, or, at all events, those which he enumerates as the Platonic system.'—Sir A. Grant, *Aristotle's Ethics*, i. p. 200. Comp. Prof. Jowett's *Introduction to Parmenides*, iii. pp. 227 &c.

² Readers of Plato will hardly need to be told that Parmenides is, in the *Dialogues*, the representative among the older Greek thinkers of a negative method combined with extreme idealism. Comp. Campbell's and Jowett's *Prefaces to the Sophistes*.

³ Plato, *Sophistes*.

⁴ So Timon calls him, Wachsmuth, *De Timone Philiasio*, p. 52.

Παρμενίδου τε βίην, μεγαλόφρονα τὴν πολύδοξον,
 "Ὅς ῥ' ἐπὶ φαντασίῃς ἀπάτας ἀνευρίκατω νόσεις.

Passing now from Parmenides, we come to the third of the great Elean triumvirate, for Melissus possesses neither the originality nor the suitability for our purpose that would entitle him to a separate notice.

Zenon of Elea, as he is generally denominated to distinguish him from his namesake the Stoic, was the son of Teleutagoras, of whom nothing further is known. He was the favourite disciple, and probably the adopted son, of Parmenides, whom he succeeded as the principal magistrate of his native city and the chief of its philosophic school. The precise year of Zenon's birth is uncertain: we have already noticed the tradition which represents him accompanying Parmenides to Athens about the year 460 B.C.¹ He was, therefore, probably born about 500 B.C. The main events of his life, so far as they can be determined from the doubtful and contradictory traditions of later writers, are narrated in histories of philosophy and classical dictionaries. Among these traditions there are, perhaps, two especially deserving of notice as being connected with our subject.

(1) That he met his death in a brave, but according to some unavailing, attempt to preserve the civic and philosophic liberties of Elea from the oppression of some foreign tyrant—a tradition to which the well-known dangers of prosperous Greek colonies from external interference, as well as the intense love of freedom which was the common characteristic of the Eleatic teachers, gives some slight measure of *à priori* probability.

(2) Zenon is regarded by the best authorities on Greek philosophy as the founder of dialectic,² and is also said to have been the first who wrote in dialogues. On both accounts he is a connecting link between the earliest phases of Hellenic thought and that aspect of it which will by-and-by come before us as the teaching of the Sophists and Sokrates.³

But, in treating of Zenon's views, we labour under some disadvantages as compared with his predecessors. In the cases of Xenophanes and Parmenides we were able to appeal to the writings of the men themselves; but in Zenon's case all that we possess consists of but a few fragments for which we are indebted to the unwearied activity of Simplicios. He is especially recorded as the

Comp. also Cicero, *Acad.* ii. xxiii. 74; Plutarch, *Adv. Colotem*, § 78, Reiske, v. x. p. 612; Galen, *Hist. Phil.* c. iii. (Kuhn, T. ix. 234); Seneca, *Ep.* 88.

¹ Clinton's *Fasti* give the date as 464 B.C.

² 'εὑρετὴν διαλεκτικῆς.' Diog. *Laert.* ix. 25; so also Aristotle.

³ Prantl. *Gesch. der Logik*, i. p. 9, &c.

first Greek philosopher who wrote in prose. I cannot help thinking that this fact has something to do with the disappearance of his writings. In an age when writing was almost unknown, and when both history and philosophy glided over the artificial roadway of hexameters like a modern railway carriage on steel rails, poetry was an indispensable vehicle for all oral teachings which were intended to achieve some degree of permanence. Circumstances seem to have changed after Zenon's time; at least, we possess a considerable number of fragments in prose pertaining to his successor Melissos, who, perhaps, lived at the transition period, when the memory, as the sole depository of human teaching, gave way to papyrus rolls. But the fragments of Zenon, though few, bear upon them undoubted marks of genuineness, for they harmonise thoroughly with the general characteristics of Eleatic thought as we find it in the fuller records of his fellow-teachers, as well as with the traditional estimate of himself which we have in such unquestionable authorities as Plato and Aristotle.

It will, perhaps, serve to clear the ground for my exposition of Zenon's arguments, if we glance briefly at the progress which the Eleatic thinkers have already made.

Our investigation of Parmenides left us with the abstraction *Ens*—the highest point to which Eleatic speculation has as yet arrived. But before proceeding further, it will be as well to note the process by which that metaphysical entity has been attained; and this is the more necessary because the arguments of Zenon come before us with more detail than those of his predecessors, as well as with a somewhat different bearing upon our subject. For if Xenophanes represents Skepticism in its relation to ordinary convictions, and Parmenides in its relation to ideal notions, Zenon, as explicitly setting forth the dialectic by which the ideal is attained, may be said to represent it in relation to language and logic. Indeed, language being the instrument and expression of thought, it is clear that Skepticism as a form of thought is closely connected with its history.

The natural and orderly sequence of Greek thought, from its commencement with the Ionic philosophy, is manifested, as I have already remarked, by the fact of its similarity to the normal growth of the human intellect. In both cases the external world is necessarily regarded as a confused chaotic mass of diverse and multitudinous objects, intruding themselves on the human consciousness by mere chance or the accident of surrounding circumstances, while the principles of order and connexion are but dimly discerned. This is the state so admirably described by Prometheus

before his gift of reason to mankind, when men, 'like infants, or the confused images of dreams, were wont to huddle up all things promiscuously.'¹ The first effort of humanity—and the effort is distinctly marked in Greek philosophy by the physical theories of the Ionic philosophers—was to ascertain the connexion or similarity among these numerous and different objects. This effort is in reality both contemporaneous and identical with the birth of reason, which fact, as you are aware, is beautifully expressed in the Greek language by the twofold meaning of *logos*, as signifying both 'reason' and 'discourse.' In other words, the human mind makes its first essays to knowledge by classification and verbal arrangement—a method which, even in its most rudimentary stages, involves and necessitates some not inconsiderable amount of logical division and abstraction.

Language was therefore—if the paradox be allowed—moulded by reason, and may be said to have philosophy interwoven into the very texture of its grammar and its syntax. The processes employed in the origination and definition of ordinary parts of speech—as common nouns, adjectives, verbal participles—could only have proceeded on a logical basis, and in conformity with logical laws. Hence, the man who first employed a common name, or marked by a single term the presence of a similar attribute in two or more different cases, was in reality the first metaphysician; while the man who, by dint of further linguistic and metaphysical progress, could abstract from any simple phenomenon its most prominent characteristic—as *e.g.* motion, as an idea or notion, from any moving body, could separate such characteristic from its merely relative or temporary surroundings, could elevate it into an unrelated unconditional entity, could, *i.e.* conceive and reason on absolute motion—was in reality a philosophical idealist of a high order.

We perceive, then, that this distinction of abstract and concrete, idea and sensation, is found in the very rudiments of human

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τὰν βροτοῖς δὲ πῆματα
ἀκούσαθ', ὡς σφᾶς νηπίους ὄντας τὸ πρὶν
ἔννοος ἔθηκα καὶ φρενῶν ἐπηβόλους

οἱ πρῶτα μὲν βλέποντες ἔβλεπον μάτην,
κλύοντες οὐκ ἤκουον· ἀλλ' ὀνειράτων
ἀλίγκιοι μορφαῖσι τὸν μακρὸν χρόνον
ἔφυρον εἰκῆ πάντα.

Prom. Vinct. 450–58. Paley's edition, p. 124.

On the intimate relation of reason and speech, compare Prof. Max Müller's admirable remarks, *Science of Language*, ii. p. 63.

language, and imparts to it a distinctly philosophical character. It matters not that the real originating influence was the imperative need of mankind, nor that the philosophy involved was unconscious, nor that language is in its primary construction what it is generally termed—a natural product. The fact remains that a process akin to philosophical abstraction of the severest kind is involved in its necessary and only conceivable development.

This will enable us, I think, to understand the position of the Eleatic philosophers. They represent Hellenic thought in its retrospective attitude. The task they set themselves was the unravelling the unconscious linguistic syntheses of preceding generations. Differing from their brethren of the Ionic school, they sought after truth not in large generalisations from natural phenomena, but by analysing the conceptions of the human mind as revealed by language. The presumption on which they based their method was either that language was itself a divine gift, and the source of all truth; or that its origin and development took place by means of precisely the same processes which the human faculties now employ in order to ascertain the truth. The conceptions and verbal abstractions of the past possessed the same interest for them as the fossilised skeleton of a primeval type would have for an anatomist who was investigating the most recent development of the species. The Greek verb 'to be,' for instance, with its various moods and tenses, is of course centuries older than Parmenides; yet, when he wanted an abstraction which would include the whole sum of existence, he could find nothing better than the present participle 'Ens.' Similarly, the unit must have existed from the earliest period of human thought; indeed, it is difficult to imagine a stage of human development so primitive as to be devoid of such a term; yet, when Xenophanes required a word which would serve to typify and express the whole indivisible sum total of existence, he could find nothing better than 'the One.'

No doubt to a modern English thinker, trained in the nominalistic and empirical philosophy of the present and last centuries, this stress upon pure metaphysical abstractions will appear grotesque and absurd. We are, I think, nationally impatient of a process which transfers the reality from the *res*, or sensible object, to the idea or subjective impression of it; and by means of which attributes, instead of being conceived as abstractions, become independent entities, and are thought and spoken of as having an existence prior to any special manifestation in a given sensation. We are almost unable to conceive a cultivated people gravely

arguing on the theory that such attributes as whiteness, greatness, likeness, otherness, were real entities by virtue of possessing which, things became white, great, like, or other. Yet this was precisely the state of Greek thought at the period on which we are now entering.

Nor was this all. These shadowy abstractions were not content with separating, like discontented offshoots or colonists, from the mother-State, but they further constitute themselves into an independent self-existing autonomy of their own; in other words, they assume the title and dignity of the absolute, together with the unlimited powers and jurisdiction implied in the term. Having thus achieved independence, their conduct is like that of other upstart races and individuals—they are eager to disown their humble origin. So far from owing their being to sensation or any other kind of physical parentage, they have, and have always had, an independent existence from all eternity. They, in fact, are the true mother-State—underived, continuous, indivisible. Physical relations, human experience, allied as they are to the actual phenomenal world, are indebted to the absolute for whatsoever they possess more permanent than their own fluctuating, short-lived existence.

You will not, I think, need to be reminded that there is nothing peculiar or eccentric in this evolution of abstract from concrete; nothing that you will not find in the speculations and language of every cultivated people. The process is, indeed, not only natural, but absolutely indispensable for even the smallest advance either in thought or language. Hence, these old Eleatics, with their refined abstractions and subtle dialectics, only traversed a road by which metaphysicians in all ages and countries have been compelled to travel; and, if they built castles in the air, we may remember that there are few profound thinkers, past or present, but have been compelled, occasionally, to find lodgings in them. Probably the main difference between an English thinker of our own time and a philosopher of the school of Zenon would consist not in any divergency as to the necessity of abstract thought, or its utility for linguistic and other purposes, but simply in their opinion of its ultimate reality. The English thinker would remember, in the most ætherial transformation through which he might watch a given abstraction, its undoubtedly physical origin; the Eleatic, whether consciously or unconsciously, would lose sight of that fact. Like two persons engaged in witnessing the performance of a conjuror, one would believe the tricks to be real, the other would know them to be illusory and deceptive.

Now the real bases on which the Eleatics and their successors built their airy fabric of abstractions seem to me to be two.

I. The abstraction is in every case nearer us than the parent concrete; for all ideas, once formed, have their abode and their being in the mind which conceived them. And this connexion is continuous and increasing, whereas the sensations to which they owe their existence are only observed occasionally and accidentally. The idea, *e.g.* implied in the common noun 'man,' or the abstraction 'motion,' is more inseparable from our mental being than are its physical correlatives—a given individual, or a body in actual motion. Hence, the idea claims an existence more complete and perfect in itself, and more indissolubly connected with our intellect, than the passing sensation from which it is derived.

II. The abstraction is not only nearer to us, but it is infinitely more enduring, than the concrete whence it is derived. No idea came more home to the Eleatic than the mere relative transitory nature of all the physical elements of human knowledge. Not only are all phenomena diverse, fluctuating, and perishable, but we ourselves are similarly liable to change, growth, decay, and death. In the noumena, or the universe of mental abstractions, on the other hand, all is stationary, permanent, and eternal. The phenomenon, a white object, *e.g.* co-exists only with my perception of it, or its perception by others similarly constituted. The abstraction, or noumenon whiteness, is independent not only of that or any other particular sensation, but even of my existence, and the existence of all other beings endued with the same faculties as myself. This mode of reasoning could easily be applied to all other phenomena, with their correlated noumena; and thus we can understand how the absolute became to the subtle thinkers of Elea, as afterwards to Plato and his school, a self-existing and independent power possessing an inherent and autocratic jurisdiction, and capable of giving laws to all subordinate, *i.e.* physical, sensations and conceptions of whatever kind; so that, in the view of an Eleatic thinker, absolute likeness, for instance, might be conceived and defined as independent of all relations and particular instances, and would exist absolutely and eternally, though every object in the universe were dissimilar from all the rest.

We hence perceive that abstract thought, independently of its necessity in language, is a protest against the temporary and changeable nature of all terrene experience. To use the expression of Spinoza, it is the contemplation of the universe, '*sub specie eternitatis*;' it seizes those elements in human thought and experience which seem perennial, and relegates all the rest to an

inferior position. That, under these circumstances, the diversity and manifoldness of the outer world of human experience could be melted down into a homogeneous, indifferentiated One or single Ens, can hardly surprise us. Nor can it seem wonderful that thought, with its absolute jurisdiction over the whole sum of existence, should be conceived as identical with it.

This brief survey of the growth of metaphysical abstractions will, I hope, enable you to appreciate the arguments of Zenon, as well as the connexion of Eleatic speculation with that of succeeding thinkers. Zenon's efforts were directed to the defence of the single Ens of Parmenides, and to the denial of many discontinuous beings (or Entia). You must, therefore, bear in mind that we are now moving in a world of abstractions, in which all existences and qualities are conceived and spoken of as unrelated to the phenomenal world, and as possessing a real noumenal existence of their own.

Truth or absolute existence is one, immutable, unconditioned, indiscrptible. Such was the first article in the creed of the Eleatic. Those who denied this axiom, did not do so on the ground of the multiplicity or variety of phenomenal objects. This was a fact accepted equally by the two parties—a fact of which every sensation was held to be a sufficient and incontrovertible proof. The contest was purely metaphysical and supersensual. 'You,' we may imagine Zenon's opponents saying, 'affirm that absolute existence consists of a single Ens, or that it is One. We, on the other hand, say that there are just as many abstract beings as there are separate concrete phenomena. The whiteness of snow, *e.g.* is one thing; of marble, another; of a flower, a third; and so on, for every single object. The region of the absolute consists, in fact, of the ideal semblances or images of our physical perceptions, and there are just as many beings (or Entia) as there are sensible phenomena.'

To this Zenon or Parmenides would have replied: 'Not so. Absolute being is only one.' You are confounding two different things—abstractions related to phenomenal objects, and abstractions which are not so related. You think, *i.e.* of whiteness as a quality of a specific object. To me it is a pure idea—thing in itself—noumenon, or whatever else you choose to call it. I have not that faculty, which you seem to possess, of considering these abstractions as different discrete existences. I cannot thus break up the mental continuity I am conscious of possessing—or, rather, which is my sole veritable being—into an indefinite number of parts and fractions. Absolute whiteness is to me a single, indivisible, unchangeable Ens; and to separate the whiteness of one object

from the whiteness of another, or to try to discriminate between the attribute I observed yesterday or a year ago, and the similar or rather identical attribute which I am now conscious of observing, seems to me nothing less than a denial of my personal identity, and plunges all my mental being into inextricable confusion. Besides, I require fixity in absolute knowledge or existence, on its own account. Truth, to be demonstrative and reliable, must, I conceive, be immoveable and eternal, not relatively merely, but absolutely. Fluctuating or changeable truth is to me no truth at all. That which is now true is so fully, finally, incontrovertibly; the bare possibility of increase or diminution implies change and imperfection. Similarly, truth must be absolutely one. Introduce number, divisibility, into its being, and in the very act you introduce the elements of divergency and dissolution.'

Such, I take it, were the main grounds of dispute between Zenon and his opponents, expressed, however, in terms more familiar to ourselves. He denied the principle of manifoldness in absolute existence, as well as the reality of motion, space, time, or whatever other entity or phenomenon that is necessarily conceived or expressed under a discrete, discontinuous aspect.

Let us take a few specimens of Zenon's subtle ratiocination which will show more clearly than any lengthened disquisition the nature and tendency of his thought.

Thus setting himself against the opponents of Parmenides, who affirmed that existence consisted of *entia plura discreta*, and defending the central doctrine of the Eleatics that absolute existence was *Ens unum continuum*, he thus reasons: If existing things were many, they must be both infinitely great and infinitely small. Infinitely small, because the many is necessarily composed of a number of units, each one essentially indivisible. But the indivisible has no magnitude, or is infinitely small—if, indeed, it can be said even to exist. Infinitely great, because each of the many things, if assumed to exist, must have magnitude; and each has parts which also have magnitude. These parts are by the hypothesis essentially discrete; but this implies that they are kept apart from each other by other intervening parts, which must again be kept asunder by others. Hence each will contain an infinity of parts, every one possessing magnitude; in other words, it will be infinitely great. In a similar manner he shows that if existence consists of many discretēs, they will be both finite and infinite. In short, each thing in this universe of manifoldness will be at once both like and unlike, both one and many, both moving and resting—a congeries of contradictions the

very conception of which is suicidal and impossible. The antagonism between the one and the many, by which either becomes destructive of the other, is thus shown. A grain of millet dropped on the floor makes no noise, but a bushel does make a noise, and yet there is a distinct ratio between one and the other. Hence if one grain makes no sound, neither in like circumstances can ten thousand grains do so. Pursuing his argument against all ideas compounded of discrete parts, he proves that space has no existence; for, as he argues, assuming that space exists, the supposition necessitates another space in which it exists, and this again another, and so on *ad infinitum*. He also shows that motion is impossible. For on the theory, which he is combating, of absolute discreteness, every line or distance is divisible into an infinite number of parts; hence a body, in passing through the whole length of the line, would have to pass through an infinite number of infinite distances—a thing clearly impossible. Founded upon the same ratiocination is his celebrated argument of Achilles and the tortoise, which, as Mill remarks,¹ ‘has been too hard for the ingenuity or patience of many philosophers; and, among others, of Dr. Thomas Brown, who considered the sophism as insoluble as a sound argument, though leading to a palpable falsehood; not seeing that such an admission would be a *reductio ad absurdum* of the reasoning faculty itself.’ The argument is this: Let Achilles run ten times as fast as the tortoise, yet if the tortoise has the start Achilles will never overtake him. For assume them to be at first separated by an interval of a thousand feet; when Achilles has run these thousand feet, the tortoise will have got on a hundred; when Achilles has run these hundred, the tortoise will have run ten; and so on, for ever. Here, as in the preceding example, the fallacy lies in assuming that what is ideally infinitely divisible is really infinite.² Having thus annihilated space as a discrete existence, Zenon shows that motion and time are similarly impossible. An arrow propelled from a bow, while in apparent motion is nevertheless at rest. For the time that elapses while it pursues its course, consists of an infinite number of successive instants; during each of these moments the arrow occupies a certain space and is at rest. Zenon has other arguments bearing on the impossibility of absolute discrete existences, but we need not pursue them further. They are all distinguished by the same characteristics, and are resolvable by similar methods. But we must not suppose that Zenon himself

¹ *Logic*, vol. ii. p. 389. Comp. Grote, *Plato*, i. p. 101.

² Mr. Mill offers a solution which he considers more precise and satisfactory in his *Logic*, vol. ii. p. 380.

was entrapped in these dialectical snares. They were, as I have said, prepared for the enemies of Parmenides and the Eleatic Ens; for thinkers who affirmed that the noumena of the metaphysical world were as various and discrete as the phenomena of the material world. Grant Zenon the conclusiveness of his ratiocination, and there would be in his estimation only one escape from the dilemma, *i.e.* the absolute indivisible being of his master, Parmenides.

It has often been said that Zenon's reasoning is irrefragable once his premisses are conceded. But the concession of hypothetical premisses presupposes, in all serious argumentation, that there is no subterfuge or sleight of hand in the dialectical procedure. No assumption can make valid an argument on the face of it self-contradictory, or that establishes with equal facility the affirmative as well as the negative of a given proposition, and thus reduces human reason to an absurdity; and Zenon's reasoning is open to more than one objection on that score. A Skeptical opponent might, *e.g.* reply to him: 'The Ens of Parmenides will obviously not endure the test of phenomenal existence. The *plura discreta* of his opponents, as you have proved, will not abide the criterion of the ideal world, even accepting your own account of the latter. What then remains? An antagonism irreconcilable by dialectic between the ideal and phenomenal world. In other words, an intellectual deadlock, a condition of unavoidable nescience or absolute suspense.' Nor, with every desire to insist on the ontological and supersensual character of Zenon's reasonings, is his Skeptical adversary likely to forget their real basis. His arguments as to the conditions of the absolute are derived—as, indeed, they must be—from the phenomenal world. The fall of the millet, whether a single grain or 10,000, is clearly that of phenomenal and sensible millet, and the impossibility of hearing the fall of a single grain is a defect of ordinary human senses. The space and time with which he conjures so adroitly are the entities of the name and properties with which our common experience has made us familiar. Achilles and the tortoise, with their attributes, are conceived as inhabitants of our sublunary world. The arrows propelled from the bow are the well-known instruments of our physical experience. Even the word 'infinite' is a term belonging to terrestrial and sensible conceptions, and denotes in reality not so much a positive quality, pertaining to any existence outside of us, as the limitation of our own powers. The Skeptic might, therefore, fairly demand by what right Zenon—or, for that matter, any other idealist—transfers to a supersensuous world the attri-

butes and conditions pertaining to our physical existence. And supposing Zenon to insist further on the indecomposable character of his consciousness, which seemed not only to guarantee but to postulate an absolute One or indivisible Ens, his opponent might fairly object that Zenon's consciousness could not reasonably be expected to limit or bind his own. And even were he to grant that his consciousness, like that of Zenon, was one and indivisible, yet, being numerically and probably in other respects different from that of Zenon, he could make no inferences from it, either as to the existence or character of an absolute Ens.

But leaving Zenon, and casting a rapid retrospective glance over the Eleatic school, we must admit that the essential tendency of its methods is Skeptical. Directly, all its teachers impeach the veracity and, so far as based upon them, the determinations of our reason. It is no set-off to this negation that the metaphysical entity of the One—the absolute Ens—is dogmatically inferred from it; for the negation which thus engenders an artificial affirmation is clearly competent, if need be, to its destruction. Mr. Grote thinks that Zenon did not intend to destroy or bring into doubt the phenomenal world.¹ Whether he intended it or not, he undoubtedly succeeded in doing so. The object of his ratiocination, in common with his predecessors at Elea, is to claim for metaphysical concepts an inherent superiority to their physical correlatives. No one but a Skeptic—at least a man who could shut out from his consciousness the ordinary bases of certitude—would have thought that the problem of Achilles and the tortoise was anything else but a palpable and absurd paralogism. Indeed, I doubt whether those negative ratiocinations of Zenon can be adequately appreciated except by persons who are more or less Skeptics.

Indirectly, too, the Eleatics contributed to the growth of Skepticism by their excessive ontology. The very determination to discover truth not in phenomena but in noumena, accompanied by a disregard both of our personal experience and the consensus of humanity as to the deliverances of the senses, is sufficient to vitiate all conclusions based on such principles. We shall find in the course of our inquiry that Skeptical methods are frequently allied to and made to serve the basis of idealistic conclusions, while these in their turn are no less apt to engender Skepticism. Our test in every such case should be clearly not the conclusions, but the method employed to attain them; and, judged by this criterion, the principles of the Eleatics must be pronounced to be both

¹ This was Tennemann's opinion, which Mr. Grote thinks wrong. See his *Plato*, vol. i. p. 98, note *g*.

Skeptical in themselves, as well as the source of much of the Skeptical idealism current in subsequent Hellenic thought. Their method leads up to, if it does not involve, the Platonic maxim, 'Confusion first begins in the Concrete.'

3. With the Eleatics we also have the first employment of the Greek language for Eristic purposes. Probably no other language has ever been so much used, certainly none has ever been so well adapted to subserve objects of this nature. Itself the creation of the subtle Hellenic intellect, it abounds in synonyms, delicate distinctions and gradations of meaning, abstractions of every degree of metaphysical tenuity, while it possesses a wealth of antonyms, contradictory terms, and other weapons adapted for dialectical and sophistical purposes. Zenon was also the first who employed the dialogue form in philosophical controversy, a method of discussion peculiarly well adapted, as we see in the case of Sokrates and his school, for the inculcation of Skepticism. Nor was the ontological tendency of the Eleatics without indirect effect on their Eristic. The assertion of the absolute signification of words, as apart from their derivation or phenomenal meaning, was only effected by a verbal analysis or decomposition between whose constitutive elements disagreements might readily occur. Here, as in other matters, the flesh—the phenomenal—lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. Let us take, for instance, the Eleatic terms: the One, Being, Infinite, &c. We have no difficulty in perceiving how the absolute in each of these words might be brought by astute and subtle intellects into conflict with their relative signification. The method is really the same as that by which advocates of twofold truth maintain their dual position, the Eristic asserts a distinction between the known and the unknown in language, just as the maintainer of twofold truth maintains a like distinction between nature or humanity, and revelation.

4. And this leads me to remark that the Eleatics introduced into philosophical thought the argument that has been more used by Skeptics than any other; I mean the possible antagonism, and hence liability to dissolution, of the different parts of the discrete and divisible, both as to noumena and phenomena. The reasoning that Zenon applied to the successional forms of space and time, Sokrates and his followers, together with Pyrrhôn and Sextos Empeirikos, applied to number, as well as other objects and ideas that were in the least degree discrete and separable. In the works of the last-named writer you can scarce read a page without finding numerous examples of this operation. In short, all the analytical Greek thinkers delighted to insert the thin end of their thought-

wedge into whatever minute crevice—whether in word, thing, or conception—their keen sight was able to detect, or their subtle methods were sufficient to create. The splitting up of such an object, and its consequent destruction, were afterwards comparatively easy—at least, as dialectical processes. When we come to Sextos we shall have an opportunity of examining this mode of reasoning, or, as some would prefer to call it, of un-reasoning.

5. The Skeptical character of the Eleatics, as I have already remarked in the case of Parmenides, is distinctly recognised by all subsequent Greek philosophy. Xenophanes, Parmenides, Melissos, and Zenon are called indifferently Eristics, Sophists, dialecticians, and, occasionally, Skeptics.¹ Zenon enjoys, perhaps, an exceptional fame for vigorous and trenchant analytic; Aristotle says that he invented dialectic; Plato calls him the 'Eleatic Palamedes,' who has an art of speaking which makes the same things appear to his hearers like and unlike, one and many, at rest and in motion; while Timon speaks² of

The great and exhaustless power of double-tongued Zenon,
Objector of all things.

Taking the Eleatics as a whole, we must, I think, be struck with their singular audacity of speculation. Although standing chronologically at the commencement of Greek speculation, they are already advanced thinkers. The fable of the infant Herakles strangling the serpents in his cradle is undoubtedly true of the mental growth of Greece. The age is that of the child, the prowess that of the grown man. From the point of view of general fitness and human expectation, there is almost a disadvantage in contemplating the future of Hellenic free-thought from the lofty standpoints of these early philosophers. When a traveller attempts the exploration of a new country, it is not always desirable to make his entry into it by scaling some boundary range of hills. Other mountains of the interior become dwarfed by the comparison; the panorama seems unfolded too abruptly, and the sense of proportion and gradual development is impaired. The Eleatic school, on the threshold of Greek philosophy, is suggestive of a corresponding disadvantage. The Skepticism of Xenophanes seems almost too daring and comprehensive; the idealism of Parmenides too sublime and ethereal; the subtlety of Zenon too refined and impalpable. Can, we are inclined to ask, Pyrrhôn or even Sextos Empeirikos rival the former? Can Plato or Plotinos transcend

¹ Diog. Laert. ix. 11, Art. Pyrrhon.

² *Phædo* 261 E. Jowett, i. p. 596.

the two latter? The first of these questions will come within the scope of our present researches. We shall presently learn that Greek Skepticism, though a plant of native growth, is the product of various conditions of soil, climate, and surroundings, and hence assumes a considerable diversity of form and character. We shall find that the free-thought of Xenophanes, however remarkable, is but the half-articulate utterance of the free instincts of Greek speculation. The tendencies he thus exemplified are elaborated and assume a more definite form by the labours of the Sophists and Sokrates, while their final systematisation belongs to Pyrrhôn and his successors. Hence, although we enter upon our study by climbing an elevated ridge of speculation, our horizon is bounded at no great distance by intellectual summits which overtop our present position, and from which a different stretch of scenery will disclose itself to our view.

Empedokles.

Passing now to Empedokles—for in our rapid survey of Greek Skepticism we can only touch upon prominent and well-marked names—we find a thinker connected on the one hand with the Eleatics, and on the other with the physical philosophers and the atomists. Though not an avowed Skeptic, there are distinct Skeptical elements in his teaching; quite enough, in my opinion, to justify his inclusion among thinkers of that class by Cicero and Diogenes Laertius.¹ He follows Xenophanes and his successors in inveighing against sense-deliverances as imperfect and untrustworthy. He bemoans the limitation of human knowledge and the brevity of human life. These two conditions, combined with the accidental and one-sided experience pertaining to every individual man, render the discovery of truth, as a whole, impossible. Here are some remarkable verses of his on this subject²—

Cramped are the ways of knowledge, through bodily senses diffused,
Beset by many a hindrance, and blunted by many a care.

Hardly have they regarded the span of their lifeless existence,
When swift-footed fate interferes, and smoke-like they vanish away.
They only profess the opinion that each to itself seems likely
Turning in every direction. Thus vain is the boasted knowledge
Of Truth: for neither by sight nor by hearing do men apprehend it,

¹ ix. 73: comp. Cic. *Acad.* i. 12, 44. So Claudian, *de Consulatu Mall. Theod.*:

‘Corporis hic damnat sensus verumque videri
Pernegat . . .’

² Karsten, p. 90. Mullach, *Frag.* i. p. 2.

No! nor yet by the mind. Hence, man who hast wandered hither,
Refrain from seeing more than to mortal sight is permitted.

Empedokles has other verses on the same subject¹—

See as much as you can whatsoever is clearly discerned,
But do not believe your eyes beyond the clear range of their vision,
Nor trust your imperfect ears, except to articulate sounds;
Distrust, in a word, every mode whatever the path be of knowledge;
Pin not your faith on the senses—each thing in its *seeming* is knowledge.

It seems not unlikely that the Skepticism of Empedokles may have been a direct outcome from his physical theories. There were, according to him, four elemental principles—earth, air, fire, and water—operated upon by two rival agencies, love and hatred,² or concord and discord. These were primordial and absolute, the sum of existence; for he denied that anything could be originated or perish. It is not difficult to see that this physical dualism, of which discord is represented as the more powerful influence and the eternal source of all the varied activities of the universe, imparted to his conclusions the instability and uncertainty which belong to all dual systems. But Empedokles clearly saw the difficulty of any and every theory of the universe, not only from the imperfection of human faculties, but also from the immeasurable extent of creation. Thus he says³—

Since limitless are the depths of the earth and the infinite ether,
How rashly do mortals enounce on such subjects their puerile judgment,
Seeing of the infinite whole, such an infinitesimal portion.

But though the powers of the senses are limited, he acknowledges that the imagination of man is able in its way to transcend those limits—

Sacred alone is mind, and unbounded its fanciful impulse,
Ranging by speediest thought, through every domain of the Kosmos.

He also accepted, as a criterion of truth, a certain faculty which he denominated *ὀρθος λόγος*, or right reason, by which, as he denies the power of the intellect as well as of the senses to apprehend truth, he must have meant a divine or supernatural intuition.⁴ He also agrees with Xenophanes in opposing the anthropomorphism of the popular theology. The Deity he affirms to be invisible, unapproachable, and elevated far above the limitations of form and faculty pertaining to humanity—

¹ Mullach, *Frag.* i. p. 2. ² Karster, p. 96. ³ Mullach, p. 7.

⁴ Cf. Sextos Empeirikos, *adv. Math.* vii. 122, 123. Cf. i. 302.

To God we cannot approach, nor with human eye-sight discern him,
Nor by truth apprehend him. The readiest path for mortals
To God, is the deep-seated inborn path of persuasion.¹

Some of his descriptions of the working of the Deity in the universe have a half-Pantheistic sound, though the general tendency of his thought is materialistic. He seems to have carried his deep distrust of knowledge into the region of his devotions, for he implores the gods to preserve him from the presumption that asserts more than is permitted to mortals, and to disclose to him only

What things it is fitting ephemeral beings should hear.²

It does not seem that Empedokles carried his Skepticism into the region of human duty, for he says³—

Not to some men is one thing permitted, to others forbidden,
But throughout all the wide-ranging ether, and the unmeasured
Light of the sky, one Law is apparent to mortals.

Though, as the words occur in his lustral odes, they may possibly refer to religious duties rather than to ordinary ethical obligations.

Anaxagoras.

Anaxagoras, who flourished about B.C. 460, is noteworthy for our purpose for three reasons: (1) his physical system; (2) his doctrine of reason (*νοῦς*); and (3) his banishment from Athens ostensibly on the ground of Free-thought.

(1) The primary elements of all things, according to Anaxagoras, consist of innumerable and exceedingly minute particles. Originally these formed, before the commencement of the universe as we know it, a chaos. To these primary particles, by reason of the homogeneousness which so largely exists between them, and their consequent affinity for each other, he gives the technical name *homœomeriæ*.⁴ The agency which educed out of this chaos of atoms the Kosmos with which we are acquainted is *νοῦς*, or mind, by which title he appears to have understood a certain impersonal spiritual entity, a kind of 'Anima Mundi,' or soul of the universe. The homogeneity of these primary atoms seems to play the same part in his system as 'form' does in Aristotelian physics.

¹ Karsten, p. 137. Mullach, p. 2.

² Comp. Ritter and Preller, p. 108.

³ Mullach, p. 13.

⁴ Comp. Zeller, i. p. 796, note *i*, and F. J. Clemens, *de Philosophia Anaxagoræ* (Berlin, 1839), p. 25.

It accounts for the specific individual existence of each separate aggregate. Nevertheless nothing in the physical universe is compounded only of the homœomeric atoms to which it owes its existence. For everything is composed of diverse particles, though in each particular case the various and heterogeneous atoms must necessarily be subordinated to the homœomeriæ which really make it what it is.

Such, in brief, is the crude method, a considerable advance, however, on the system of Empedokles, by which Anaxagoras endeavours to account for the similarity and dissimilarity visible in the universe. It is clear that whatever uncertainty pertains to every system of material atoms belongs equally to this scheme of Anaxagoras, and that in the combination and segregation of these particles there was ample field for theoretical doubt.

(1) Nor is this aspect of the system greatly modified by the part which *νοῦς* plays in the evolution of the universe. No doubt it is an important fact that in this co-ordinating power we have the recognition of an intelligence which is to a very great extent immaterial. The very choice of the word signifying 'mind' or 'intellect' to designate the unifying and designing¹ power in the universe was itself a most important circumstance. Few ideas in the early history of Greek philosophy have been more influential than the *νοῦς* of Anaxagoras. Subsequent writers, as Plato, Aristotle, Sextos Empeirikos, were clearly justified in interpreting it into the conceptions and language of the people as God. No other idea or name would have served to mark so well the functions and attributes ascribed to it by Anaxagoras. At the same time the distinction he makes between this entity and material substances is rather of degree than of kind. Of spirit apart from all material qualifications Anaxagoras evidently had but a faint and indistinct notion. There is, moreover, a further consideration

¹ Mr. Grote, it is true, denies this designing faculty. The *νοῦς* of Anaxagoras he defines as 'a special and separate agency for eliciting positive movement and development out of the negative and stationary chaos . . . It introduces order and symmetry into nature simply by stirring up rotatory motion in the inert mass . . .' He adds, '*νοῦς* only *knows* these phenomena as and when they occur.' But this limitation of the functions of *νοῦς* is not borne out by the Fragments, which repeatedly state that *νοῦς* knows all things. Anaxagoras undoubtedly took his idea from the operations of the intellectual volition of man, and did not conceive it as a blind instinct or purposeless energy. This fact remains entirely unaffected by what is equally true, viz. that he describes the constitution of *νοῦς* in materialistic terminology. But this is no more than a crude attempt to define spirit. Cf. Grote, *Plato*, i. pp. 56, 57.

as to the effect which this rudimentary metaphysic had on subsequent Hellenic thought. It introduced a dualism different in form, it is true, from the 'love' and 'hatred' of Empedokles, but not dissimilar in its skeptical implication. The action and reaction of νοῦς and the material atoms soon became defined as the antagonism of mind and matter, a fruitful source, as we shall find in our survey of other Greek thinkers, of opposing theories, and of the skeptical suspense engendered by them; as well as a starting-point for reliance on mind and its processes, itself also pregnant with skeptical issues.¹

(3) As regards his own views, the partial skepticism of Anaxagoras is shown by his denial of the senses, and his opposition to the popular theology. If we are to believe Sextos Empeirikos, he carried this denial of the trustworthiness of phenomena to an extravagant excess. He denied, *e.g.*, the validity of visual sensation in the case of colour, for even supposing two colours only, black and white, existed, they could be made to merge by gradation of shades into each other, whence he drew the startling inference that white was in reality indistinguishable from black.² He is also the traditional author of the argument, perhaps I ought to call it sophism, so often used by all the great Hellenic Sceptics from Pyrrhōn to Sextos, viz. 'Snow is not white but black, for snow is water and water is black.'³ If this piece of ratiocination be truly assigned to Anaxagoras, I think there can be little doubt as to his skepticism. None but a genuine Sceptic could have conceived or enounced it.⁴ It is quite possible, however, that his distrust of the senses may have been unduly magnified by the Sceptics, for he is also credited with a wise remark not altogether in harmony with such a feeling, viz. 'Phenomena are the criteria of our apprehension of things unseen,'⁵ not that the attempted combination of such incompatibilities is quite unique in the history of Skepticism.

But whatever aspect Anaxagoras may have for us, there is no doubt that he was regarded, both by contemporaries and succeed-

¹ Comp. Prantl. *Übersicht der Griechisch-Römischen Philosophie*, p. 41.

² Sext. *Emp. adv. Math.* vii. 90. Ritter and Preller, p. 32.

³ Sext. *Emp. adv. Math.* vii. 91-140. Comp., on the argument, Grote (*Plato*, i. p. 61, note *x*), who says all that can be said for its validity.

⁴ Grote thinks he impugned the evidence of the senses taken by themselves without the discriminating and controlling effort of Intelligence. *Plato*, i. p. 61.

⁵ Sext. *Emp. adv. Math.* vii. 140. τῆς μὲν τῶν ἀδήλων καταλήψεως τὰ φαινόμενα (εἶναι κριτήρια). This is the first form in Hellenic thought of the truth expressed in the later well-known apophthegm—'Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius in sensu.'

ing thinkers, as a Skeptic and an atheist. He carried forward that direction of thought, initiated by Xenophanes, which endeavoured to resolve the divinities of the Greek Pantheon into material beings. Thus he is said to have affirmed that the sun was nothing else but an enormous fiery stone, and that the moon was like the earth. To the devout and conservative Greek of the time of Perikles no propositions could have been more impious; and that wise and enlightened statesman, who was himself suspected of sharing the free-thinking of his friend, recommended Anaxagoras to leave Athens. He adopted the advice, and by so doing deprived the martyrology of Hellenic free-thought of a victim prior to the great sacrifice of Sokrates. Subsequent tradition has ascribed to Anaxagoras a preponderating share in the intellectual formation of some of the foremost free-thinkers of his age. Besides Perikles, he was said to have influenced to a greater or less extent Sokrates and Euripides, the most popular thinker and dramatist of his time. Assuming this to be true, we must attribute to Anaxagoras an influential position in the development of Hellenic Skepticism.

Herakleitos.

Herakleitos is a thinker belonging to our subject in a new and interesting manner. He is a representative—unique in Greek philosophy—of the doubt engendered, not so much by the imperfection of human faculties, nor by the objective uncertainty of phenomena considered in themselves, as by the fugitive, evanescent character of all existing things. This mode of conception is so thoroughly Oriental that one might suppose it to have been suggested to him by some foreign influence; but the only trace of this in his personal history is the tradition mentioned by Suidas that he had a Pythagorean teacher.¹ He is also unique in Hellenic thought for the dark enigmatical character of his utterances, and has hence acquired the epithet of obscure, or, more literally, ‘the Tenebrous.’

The mass of mankind, according to Herakleitos,² have no perception of truth regarded as an eternal entity separated from all other things. Even daily occurrences are strange to men. The path by which they go is hidden from them. What they do when awake (alluding probably to mechanical habit) they forget as if

¹ There are traces of Pythagorean influence in *Frag.* xvii. cxxxviii. (Bywater), though elsewhere Herakleitos praises Pythagoras for much knowledge, but thinks he had a bad method. Comp. Mullach, p. 316.

² Comp. Zeller, i. p. 528.

they had done it in sleep. Truth appears to them as something incredible. They are deaf to it even when they hear it.¹ To the ass corn is dearer than gold, and the dog barks at every stranger. Equally incapable of hearing and speaking what is true, they would do best to hide their ignorance; but, foolish as they are, they follow the rhapsodies of singers, and employ the crowd as a teacher, not reflecting that many are the evil, few the good. The best of mortals are distinguished from the rest by imperishable fame, while the majority of men pass away like cattle.²

The senses as the avenues of human knowledge are a main cause of its illusory nature. Eyes and ears are false witnesses, though of the two the former are the most untrustworthy. The wise man, however, occupies himself with the unseen, cautiously employing the visible as a means of attaining it. 'The harmony of the unseen, he says, is better than that of the seen.'³ As the senses are thus depreciated, the ordinary reason dependent on their testimony is similarly invalidated. He even denied that men in general were partakers of True Reason, but said they were only gifted with intelligence as to their physical surroundings.⁴ On the other hand, True Reason is a kind of divine inspiration pertaining only to the few who are wise, and which is conversant with Invisible Truths. To this higher reason the contradictions that seem so incredible and self-destructive are both explicable and natural. This diviner intellect is not the same as and is not attained by vast erudition, for then it would have been possessed by Hesiod and others. Perhaps it is in relation to these two different kinds of reason considered as stages in his own intellectual career that we must interpret the saying ascribed to him—'In his youth he professed to know nothing, but in his maturity he knew everything'; though it is difficult to suppose, from the general character of his *dicta*, that the latter proposition could have been anything but the ironical, tenebrous form in which so many of his utterances are veiled.⁵

But the real reason of the uncertainty pervading all human opinions and judgments is found in the passing and changeful character of the universe with all its contents. From this experience no human reason of whatever kind is exempt. Of this truth his well-known type and illustration is the ever-flowing river,—'Into the same river we go down and do not go down, for

¹ *Frag.* Bywater, iii. ² Bywater, cxi. ³ Bywater, xlvi.

⁴ *Sext. Emp. adv. Math.* vii. 129, 349; and viii. 286.

⁵ *Comp.*, e.g. the remarkable aphorism (Bywater, lxxi.): ψυχῆς πείρατα οὐκ ἂν ἐξέυροιο πᾶσαν ἐπιπορευόμενος δδόν.

into the same river no man can enter twice,' is one of his apophthegms couched in the enigmatical terms befitting the Tenebrous Teacher. No moment of time, no special condition of space, or space-occupying objects, is precisely and in all points like that which preceded or followed. The law of the universe, determined by a stern, unbending Necessity, is motion, activity, and mutation. Nature abhors a stagnation which is tantamount to non-existence. Hence the universe is not to be described as it was by the Eleatic thinkers as 'Being,' but as 'Becoming.' Being or Permanence is only the false illusive appearance presented to us by the 'Becoming.' As distinct from 'Becoming,' 'Being' and 'Not-Being' are equivalent to each other, for both are Negatives of it. This eternal process, itself invisible except to the highest reason, is symbolised in different ways and illustrated by a wealth of imagery. It is the invisible harmony which we have just seen is better than the visible. The Thought that guides all through all—the word or Reason of the universe—the one wisdom—Time—Fate—Righteousness—the name of Zeus.¹ But this principle of Eternal Flux possesses no element of fixity which could give it claim to rank as a dogmatic truth; on the other hand, it is the perpetually operating cause of a discontinuity that involves all the operations of Nature in a ceaseless Dualism. Hence it comes that opposite conditions are not in reality and apperceived by the highest reason, the irreconcilable contradictions Dialectic pronounces them. Every state induces inevitably, and is the necessary correlative and complement of, its opposite. Thus, out of Life comes Death, generation causes corruption, and corruption induces new life. Rest is the cause of motion, and motion produces rest. So far from stagnation being Nature's rule, there is a perpetual instability—a warfare of contradictions, out of which are evolved Law, Process, Harmony. Nor is this Eternal contrariety a mere metaphysical or verbal juggle; it is derived directly from the contemplation of Nature, all of whose operations may be described as dual. Indeed, once grant that Being is Becoming, and the coequal relations and real existence of all collateral and dependent opposites are a mere corollary of that proposition.

It is curious to notice how Herakleitos revels in the juxtaposition of these antitheticals as if he took pleasure in shocking the ordinary conceptions of mankind. This feature is common to him with most extreme Skeptics, and is, no doubt, the quality that procured for him the appellation of 'the Tenebrous.' The paralo-

¹ Comp. Prof. Campbell's *Theætetus*, Introd. p. xxxix. ; also Prof. Jowett's Introd. *Theætetus Plato*, iii. 316, &c.

gisms in which he indulges, contemplated from a non- or un-*becoming* point of view, are of the same kind as Anaxagoras's proof that Snow is Black. Thus Good and Evil, we are told, are the same. 'Of Life, the name is Life, but the reality is death,'¹ and *vice versa*, of Death, the name is Death, but the reality is life. The last complemental proposition, though not found *totidem verbis* among Herakleitos's recorded sayings,² is clearly implied in the following most enigmatical of all his occult utterances: 'The immortals are mortal, mortals are immortal. The former living the death of the latter, the latter dying the life of the former'³—a sentence which, on the assumption of pre-existence and immortality for all rational Beings, is not absolutely devoid of meaning. Of similar import as an antinomy is—'The path upwards and downwards is one and the same.' Perhaps the illustrations which best enable us to apprehend the Herakleitean Flux are the familiar one of a see-saw or two-buckets at a draw-well, when one motion inevitably produces its opposite. It is needless to add that of growth, evolution, or continuous progress in the same direction Herakleitos has no notion.

Fire is with our philosopher the fundamental element in nature, no doubt on account of its activity both as a generative and destructive power, and the physical source of so many of the mutations produced by natural or human agency. He quaintly describes it as the current medium for every kind of matter, just as gold is for every sort of merchandise. The moving power, which engenders the antagonistic directions of the dualisms of the universe, is discord.

I have said that the Herakleitean system is in its essence and tendency clearly Skeptical, for whatever stability is asserted in the eternal perpetuity of his flux is denied by the actual *modus operandi* of that law. A process which entails such consequences as the similarity of being and not being, of life and death, of rest and

¹ Bywater, xxvi. It is needless to point out the similarity between these utterances and the teachings of other religious thinkers, Hindoo, Buddhist, and Neo-Platonic. The parallel passages that will most readily occur to Christians are certain of St. John's deeper sayings, though of course the latter are conceived from a somewhat different standpoint. For similar dicta, see passages collected by Dr. E. Spiess (*Logos Spermaticos*, Leipzig, 1871) on John v. 26-29, p. 142.

² But compare Bywater, lxiv.

³ Literally, 'The gods are mortal, and men are immortal. (The former) living their death, (the latter) dying their life,' words in which Herakleitos seems to have attained the climax of antithetical tenebrosity. For a nother dark 'saying' of the same kind, see Bywater, *Frag.* xxv.

motion, how suitable soever for minds of a kindred subtlety to those of Herakleitos and Hegel, will hardly contribute to a conviction of certitude on the part of ordinary thinkers. No doubt, it may be alleged that the antinomies of Herakleitos are alternative and dynamic.¹ They are not contemplated as fixed contradictory states. But it is clear that this distinction might be regarded as sophistical and illusory. Because black can be brought by successive shades of gray to become white, it does not, therefore, follow that white is black; nor because generation and corruption are processes dependent on and partly conditional, each of the other, does it result that they are not really contradictory. Men have an instinctive—I suppose I ought not to say unfortunate—distrust of a ratiocination which seems to complicate and confuse, and so far to annihilate the plain evidence of their senses. Nothing has done so much to bring Hegelianism into disrepute with ordinary unmetaphysical minds as its starting-point of the equivalence of ‘being’ and ‘not being,’ and the contradictions of Herakleitos were not more popular in Greek thought.² Doubtless both systems alike served to engender and diffuse idealism as a dogmatic system among minds of a certain class, but both one and the other initiated just as certainly a Skepticism which denied the validity of all sources of knowledge. Hence Herakleitos as well as Hegel has a ‘left’ no less than a ‘right’ section among his followers—an appropriate consummation, it might be said, of a system so inter-penetrated with contradictions. If, therefore, Plato’s idealising intellect caught up and elaborated Herakleitean ideas, and gave them a fresher and firmer starting-point in Hellenic speculation, the analytical and Skeptical mind of Ainesidemos was brought by means of them to embrace the completest unbelief; while they also formed the probable basis of the Skepticism of Protagoras and the Cyrenaics.³ Herakleitos brings even Deity within the scope of his antinomies. According to him, ‘God is day and night, winter and summer, war and peace, satiety and hunger.’ This is the impersonal many-sided object of worship

¹ Comp. Prof. Jowett, *Introd. to Theætetus, Plato*, i. 474 (first edition), and Zeller’s exhaustive note to Herakleitos’s denial of the logical principle of contradiction, *Gesch.* i. p. 545, note.

² On the relation between Herakleitos and Hegel, see the exhaustive monograph of Lassalle, *Die Philosophie Herakleitus des Dunkeln*, 1858. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über der Gesch. d. Phil.* (Werke, xiii.), p. 305, and for English readers Schwegler, *Hist. of Philosophy*, translated by Dr. Stirling, p. 20.

³ Comp. Prof. Campbell, *Theætetus*, xlv.

which he offers to the Greeks instead of the mythological deities of Homer and Hesiod. One cannot help being reminded by this definition of the antithetical method of describing the divine qualities which is common to all deep devotional feeling, and which unites thinkers so widely diverse in race, country, and religion as Herakleitos, Plotinos, Augustine, Aquinas, Giordano Bruno, and Vanini.¹ At the same time it is somewhat difficult to discern at first sight the province of action thus attributed to Deity by Herakleitos. For with his elemental principle of fire, and his energising principles of war and discord, he might on purely physical grounds have been supposed, like the French astronomer, exempt from 'the need of that hypothesis.' But notwithstanding physicist proclivities, there was evidently a large admixture of rationalism and religious feeling in his system, which made the existence of spiritual beings necessary even if they were not demanded as antithetical to physical creation. Hence we must regard his notion of Deity as the universal reason which directs or superintends the various operations of nature, and which thus unifies the universe. He refused to call or to think it 'the one,' in the sense of the Eleatics. To the Ephesian physicist, nature was far too multifarious to be included in the concept of a single unit. The oneness was an eternal flux; the immutability an unceasing mutation. The uniformity consisted in the stately march of apparently diversiform and antagonistic processes—a harmony like that of music made up of a collocation of different and to some extent discordant sounds.

The historical outcome of Herakleitean philosophy in the direction of free-thought is justified and confirmed by the Skeptical character of some of his own aphorisms. His opinion of the senses we have already touched upon. His dissidence from the popular theology has also been clearly marked. He thought the wisest of all the Delphic oracles was the well-known *Γρῶθι σεαυτόν*. The knowledge of self-opinion or belief he characterised as 'a sacred disease,' an axiom of profounder significance than is apparent on the surface.² But though the legitimate conclusion from these and other of his *dicta* would be unlimited individualism, he expressly guards against such an inference. He enjoins due submission to human laws, as indeed for that matter did even Pыр-rhôn and Sextos. The distinction between the wise man and the unwise many is that the first follows common reason, whereas the

¹ See *Essay on Vanini*.

² Comp. Max Müller, *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 68, note.

latter live as if they held each one to his own private judgment.¹ The saying is expressed with the usual Herakleitean exaggeration of its antagonistic aspects. The 'common law' recommended is evidently of a sacred intuitional kind—a faculty emanating from the divine reason and potentially rather than actually shared by all men. 'The tendency (*ἔθος*) of man,' he also says, 'is not to have formed judgments, but of the gods to have them.'² In a similar sense he says a weak man listens to the *daimon* as a child does to a man, a dictum which recalls—and may possibly have originally suggested—the implicit reliance of Sokrates on the intuitions of his moral and intellectual consciousness. Herakleitos's suggestion that good and evil are the same is to be taken, like his other antinomies, as a protest against the unconditional, absolutely unrelated character of vice and virtue, and a declaration of the dynamic alternation, the ever-mobile gradation, by which the one passes into the other. He has another saying of a similar purport:³ 'The most beautiful ape, compared with the human species, is foul and ugly; and the wisest of men, if his wisdom, beauty, &c., be compared with those of the gods, is but an ape.' The moral effect of these antinomies on mankind in producing a philosophic calm under the changes and chances of existence, he thus indicates: 'It is not well that men should have what they wish, for it is disease that makes health to be sweet and good; hunger has the same effect on satiety, labour on rest.'⁴

The old tradition representing Herakleitos as the lachrymose thinker of antiquity, and the contrast to the merry Demokritos, is now generally regarded with contempt by historians of philosophy,⁵ but there are evident traces in his fragmentary remains of a pessimistic tendency which may easily have been exaggerated by contemporaries and subsequent writers. Notwithstanding all his theorising he was undoubtedly impressed with the infinity of the field of knowledge, and the small produce the most diligent labour of the philosophical husbandman is able to secure. He compared such a searcher for truth to a gold-digger, who, after much excavation, only obtains a few grains of the precious metal. He also recognises the final Inscrutability of all physical causes. 'Nature,'

¹ Bywater, xcii., quoted from Sext. *Emp. adv. Math.* vii. 133. The words preceding this utterance, *κατὰ μετοχὴν τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου πάντα πράττομέν τε καὶ νοοῦμεν, κ.τ.λ.*, bring Herakleitos into connexion with St. Paul, as well as St. John.

² Bywater, xcvi.

³ Bywater, xcix. Comp. *Plato Hippias Maj. Stallbaum*, iv. p. 187.

⁴ Bywater, civ.

⁵ See, e.g. Zeller, i. 526, note.

he remarks, 'loves to be hid.' Together with these contributory inducements to skeptical despondency may also be classed the indirect presumption derivable from the fact that a tendency to pessimism is among Oriental thinkers an undoubted result of the vein of sentiment which Herakleitos indulged. The 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity' of Koheleth, and the perpetual stress on the *Mâyâ* of the Hindoo philosopher, cannot be characterised as optimistic estimates of existence. I cannot leave this remarkable man without pointing out the inherent excellences of much of his thought. In some respects the system of the Ephesian physicist approaches the speculation of the nineteenth century. Besides minor approximations there is a clear recognition of nature as immutable law, as perpetual movement, and of movement not in a straight line, as some modern physical dogmatists persist in explaining it, but rather in recurring cycles, and by means of various and often antagonistic forces. That such is the normal process of nature and humanity is incidentally confirmed by the fact pointed out by Professor Max Müller :¹ 'Ephesus, in the sixth century before Christ, was listening to one of the wisest men that Greece ever produced, Herakleitos, while a thousand years later the same town resounded with the frivolous and futile wrangling of Cyrillus and the council of Ephesus.' As a free-thinker his influence is strongly marked on the whole of subsequent Hellenic thought, as I have already briefly mentioned, and this irrespectively of the nature of the speculations. Tenebrous as are many of his utterances to us as they were to his contemporaries,² it is the tenebrosity not of the night, but of a thunder-cloud riven by unceasing and brilliant lightning-flashes of profound thought, and suggestive apperceptions of truth.

Demokritos.

Hitherto we have seen Skepticism gradually developing in Greek philosophy on the side of metaphysics. The human mind is engaged mostly in self-reflection, in gauging the powers and

¹ *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 67.

² Sokrates said of Herakleitos's *Book on Nature*, that what he could understand of it was excellent, what he could not he believed to be equally so, but that the book required an able swimmer (Diog. Laert. ii. 22, lx. 11, 12). Hegel thus explains the 'darkness' of his Greek predecessor: 'Das Dunkle dieser Philosophie liegt aber hauptsächlich darin, dass ein tiefer, speculativer Gedanke in ihr ausgedrückt ist; der Begriff, die Idee ist dem verstande zuwider, kann nicht von ihm gefasst werden, wogegen die Mathematik für ihn ganz leicht ist.' *Gesch. der Philosophie*, i. p. 304.

limits of her faculties, in contemplating the universe as reflected in the mirror of her own laws and methods, with a result dubious and suspensive, if not actually negative. But Hellenic physical inquiry arrives at the same uncertain results from the objective consideration of the facts of the universe. The different explanations of natural phenomena adopted by the Ionian philosophers, from Thales downwards, were found to be as unsatisfactory as the speculations of the Eleatics or Herakleitos, while their skeptical effect upon the popular creed was probably much greater. This is the stage at which the early atomists of Greece come before us. Demokritos may be said to sum up and to complete the materialism of the Ionic thinkers. All preceding physical speculations, the water of Thales, the air of Anaximenes, the four elements of Empedokles, find their ultimate resolution in the atoms of Demokritos. Beyond this point physical analysis and theory could no farther go. Hence, with the exception of some trifling additions, materialism has made no trustworthy advance since the time of its great founder, about 450 B.C.¹

Like all the Ionic philosophers, Demokritos attempts to make the material world disclose the secret of its origin, and solve its many enigmas. After long and arduous contemplation of the facts and processes of nature, he formulates his conclusions, most of which are still primary axioms in the creed of materialists. 'Out of nothing,' he says, 'comes nothing.'—'No existing thing can be annihilated.'—'All change consists in the aggregation and dissolution of parts.'—'Nothing happens by accident, but all things come of reason and with necessity.'—'The primordial constitutive elements of the universe are only plenum and vacuum.'—'Like always tends to like.'—'Atoms are infinite in number, and of endless diversity of form,' &c.—The perpetual movement of which nature consists is vortex (*δίνη*), which is set in motion by fate or necessity.²

Such are the rudiments of constructive materialism for which Hellenic and European thought are indebted to Demokritos. By means of these and with the aid of a powerful imagination he evolves the Universe together with its numerous worlds from its chaos of atoms. But notwithstanding his elaborate theorising on the subject, Demokritos is fully aware of the hypothetical character of his system. He is as much a Skeptic as a Physicist.³ With

¹ Cf. Lange, *Gesch. d. Materialismus*, i. p. 15.

² Cf. Zeller, *Gesch.* i. 709, &c. Lange, i. p. 12, &c. Ritter and Preller, p. 40.

³ A recent writer says of him: 'Er war weder Skeptiker noch Physiker,

Sextos Empeirikos, he is the standard instance of a physicist who questions the certainty of all Physical phenomena. All sensations he regarded as pure matters of opinion and common agreement. 'It is opinion that decides what is sweet and bitter, what is hot and cold, what colour is,' &c. The only true entities are atoms and vacuum. To the same purport he says, 'What things are esteemed and thought as sensible do not really exist, the sole existences are atoms and vacuum.'¹ Were a captious inquirer to ask how we can have cognition of atoms and vacuum if all certainty be denied to the senses, he would find that Demokritos, like Herakleitos, immediately takes refuge in a supersensual knowledge. There are, he says, two kinds of cognition, one genuine, the other obscure. The obscure are the following—sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch. The genuine consists of what is distinct from the senses. Hence when the obscure are unable, as in minute matters, to see, or hear, or smell, or taste, or touch, we must adopt the more subtle and genuine method.² The signification of these dicta is obvious. Demokritos takes refuge in noumena from the uncertainty of phenomena. From the sensible aspects of the material world he appeals to supposed invisible states by which they are conditioned. Rejecting the crude theories of the Ionic thinkers with Empedokles, he takes his stand on a hyperphysical conception of the Universe. No doubt his theory constitutes an advance on prior materialistic schemes. In view of the multiplicity of natural products conjoined with the identity of so many of their ingredients—in view also of the researches of astronomers and chemists since the time of Demokritos—primitive atoms form a more probable starting-point for a material universe than air, or earth, or water. Nevertheless it is certain that Demokritos did not claim for his supersensuous theories more than a certain probability. Perhaps he regarded his analysis of matter as more full and complete than any Ionic thinker had as yet put forward, and to that extent as having a prior claim to acceptance. At least he never considered it as possessing demonstrable certitude. Demokritos may on this ground claim credit for a perspicacity

für einen Physiker ist er zu sehr Skeptiker, für einen Skeptiker zu sehr Physiker' (S. A. Byk, *Die Vorsokratische Philosophie der Griechen*, ii. p. 173), to which it might fairly be replied that he carried his physical theories and his Skeptical caution so far as he thought possible. It would be well if many a modern 'zu sehr Physiker' tempered his hypotheses with Skepticism. Herr Byk appropriately compares this union of affirmation and negation with the plenum and vacuum of the Demokritean theory.

¹ Sext. Emp. *adv. Math.* vii. 135-39. Comp. Mullach, *Frag.* i. p. 357.

² Sext. Emp. *adv. Math.* loc. cit.

which is far from being shared by modern materialists. He was clear-sighted enough to perceive that every scheme that is founded ultimately upon a divisibility of matter, far transcending all methods of direct perception and verification, must needs be beset with uncertainty. Hence we have his Skeptical dicta, 'Truth is uncertain. Man's knowledge is bounded by this limit, that it is far from the truth.' This is partly due to the individualistic aspect of all cognition. 'Of nothing do we know what is really true, but only what is apparent to every man as he happens to be personally affected by external objects.' 'Even though anything seem evident, exact knowledge of it is doubtful. It is also due to nominalism, language and names being only verbal agreements, and therefore no guarantees for truth. In reality, therefore, we know nothing, 'Truth lies hid as in a well!' ¹ This judicious tone of uncertainty in matters so immeasurably beyond human means of investigation is apt to be forgotten by the successors of Demokritos in the present day. Because their science deals with matter as an object of sensuous perception and experimental observation, they forget the inherent inscrutabilities which underlie every portion of their theory.² But in truth the overweening despotism of the materialist is just as unfounded as that of the metaphysician. Conceive for a moment the materials of the system as propounded by Demokritos. An infinite vacuum or empty space occupied by an infinity of atoms, endowed with an infinity of different forms, weights, qualities, as shown by the infinity of diversiform objects and phenomena in the universe, and is any other determination respecting it conceivable but one pervaded by uncertainties? It is therefore, as I have said, to the credit of his far-sightedness and candour that our Skeptic both saw and acknowledged the haphazard character of his conclusions. Out of this chaotic jumble of atoms and qualities—generated by this conflux of infinite contingencies, phenomena might conceivably have presented a very different aspect from that with which our senses and experience invest them.³ The necessity by which they are co-ordinated and arranged is merely a subjective requirement of our own. It is the verdict of our infirm senses on the actuality presented to them. An absolute necessity we have no means of affirming. Hence Demokritos's conclusion, that

¹ Mullach, i. pp. 357-58. Comp. the passages collected by Zeller, *Gesch.* i. 744-46, with his notes.

² See, on this point, Lange, *Gesch. d. Materialismus*, i. p. 15, and *passim*.

³ ποῖα οὖν τούτων ἀληθῆ ἢ ψευδῆ εἶηλον· οὐθὲν γὰρ μᾶλλον τὰε ἢ τὰδὴ ἀληθῆ, ἀλλ' ὁμοίως. Aristot. *Metaph.* iv. 5, 1009. Comp. notes 1 and 3 of Zeller, *Gesch.* i. p. 744.

phenomena might have been other than what they are, for 'of all existing things each one might exist either in one mode or in another;' and that all our pronouncements about them are but matters of opinion, is the only one justified by his principles.

There can, then, be no reasonable doubt either as to the existence or considerable range of his Skepticism. It is amply attested by the similar teachings of associates and disciples¹ as well as confirmed by subsequent historians. But his own dicta, and the relation of his principles to each other, are sufficient evidence on the point. He seems even indifferent to those incongruities of his system which he must have known were provocative of doubt and uncertainty. When, *e.g.* he makes the mind or intellect the criterion of truth instead of the senses, the value of the newer standard is irretrievably impaired by his opinion, that both intellection and sensuous perception have a common origin.² Nor is this the only conspicuous gap in his ratiocination. Perhaps in the true Skeptical spirit he was content with setting forth the best hypotheses his limited knowledge allowed him to form on the subject of the universe without being very careful of the congruity of his system as a whole. But though a pronounced Skeptic, the precise nature of his Skepticism is not quite so easily determined. That he was not a Pyrrhonist, a denier of the existence of Truth, is clear for several reasons: his own elaborate physical system, and his reliance to a great extent on reason and intuition, whatever their intrinsic merits, constitute a sufficient disproof of such a theory.³ Moreover, there is the fact stated by Plutarch, that he commented in severe terms on the Skeptical sophisms of Protagoras.⁴ There is also the distinction insisted on by Sextos Empeirikos between the doubt of Demokritos and complete Pyrrhonism,⁵ though as to this the extreme scrupulosity of the great commentator in excluding

¹ *E.g.* Leukippos and Metrodoros of Chios, both of whom have Skeptical reputations.

² Zeller, i. p. 740.

³ On the whole subject of the Skepticism of Demokritos, compare Zeller, *Gesch.* i. 744, &c.

⁴ *Adv. Colotem.* 1108; Reiske, x. p. 561. Cf. Sext. *adv. Math.* vii. 389.

⁵ *Pyrr. Hyp.* i. 213, &c. The main distinction seems to have been that the Demokriteans accepted the *ὁ μᾶλλον*—a primary axiom of Greek Skepticism—in the sense of a distinct affirmation of the Law of Contradiction, *e.g.* something is A or not A, whereas the Pyrrhonists refused even the amount of dogma implied in that proposition, declining to affirm positively anything respecting either or both alternatives. On the fourfold employment of the phrase *ὁ μᾶλλον*, comp. Diog. Laert. ix. 75, and Fabricius's note on *Pyrr. Hyp.* i. 213, Kühn's ed. i. p. 92.

from the category of Skepticism every form of doubt not identical in terms with Pyrrhonism is a point worthy of remembrance. Perhaps we shall not go far wrong in crediting Demokritos with the modified uncertainty which will come before us in academic Skepticism, *i.e.* doubt engendered not so much by the consciousness of absolute Nescience, as by an eclectic variety of contending theories, and a definition of the highest attainable truth as a probability only. This is, in my opinion, the standpoint of his physical theory, and it harmonises with his views on ethical and political subjects.

A considerable portion of the Skeptical notoriety which Demokritos has always enjoyed rests on the supposed atheistic tendency of his teaching. The verdict of history on this subject is summed up with his usual trenchant, rhadamanthine terseness by Dante:—

Democrito, che 'l mondo a caso pone¹—

‘Demokritos, who puts the world on chance.’ In terms, nothing could be farther from the truth than such a judgment. The movement of the universe he describes as ‘Vortex,’ its principles are ‘fate’ and ‘necessity.’ If there is one thing more than another excluded by his terminology, it is the operation of accident or chance. In reality, however, and from the standpoint of volitional agency, the difference is purely verbal. A blind motionless power, no matter how inevitable its processes, can only be construed to human consciousness and experience in terms of uncertainty and therefore of accident. This is allowed by Demokritos himself in his admitted possibility of phenomena being other than the actual conceptions we are compelled to form of them. His scheme was thus as repellent to the old Greek theology as it is to our Christian ideas. If the Athenians suspected the *νοῦς* of Anaxagoras, with its half-personal implications of directly infringing the rights of Olympian deities, they were hardly likely to be more favourably disposed to the ‘Vortex’ or ‘Necessity’ of Demokritos. Aristophanes only gives utterance to the popular feeling when he describes ‘Vortex’ as having dethroned Zeus.² Nor did Demokritos leave any room for misconception as to his virtual Atheism. He opposed the *νοῦς* of Anaxagoras as importing a volitional and theistic element into nature which he could not recognise, and he ascribed the origin of the popular theology to impersonation of the great

¹ *Inferno*, canto iv.

² Aristoph. *Clouds*, 380 and 828:—

Δίνος βασιλεύει, τὸν Δῖ' ἐξελληλακός.

powers of nature and to the fear engendered by their operations. That he employs the language of theology to designate the reasoning and soul-like element which he not very consistently discerns both in nature and in man¹ is only a phase of the distinction which he makes between the obscure and genuine methods of ascertaining truth; the soul or reason being itself material, though composed of finer and more subtle atoms.²

But skeptical and atheistic as is the physical system of Demokritos, his ethical system is in practice as full, determinate, and sound as could easily be conceived. Indeed the Skepticism of pre-Socratic free-thinkers, who lived before ordinary ethical conceptions and social regulations were submitted to the searching scrutiny of the sophists and Sokrates,³ was generally limited to the popular theology and cosmogony. On many points the maxims of Demokritos attain an ideal of purity and unselfish generosity approximating to the teaching of Christ himself,⁴ e.g. 'Self-conquest is the highest kind of victory'—'He is brave who subdues not his enemies but his appetites'—'Sensual enjoyment produces only a brief pleasure, with much pain, and does not insure the real satisfaction of the appetites'—'Only mental possessions produce true happiness and inward peace'—'Wealth obtained by unrighteousness is an evil'—'Culture is better than riches'—'No power and no treasure can outweigh the extension of our knowledge'—'Moral purity in its perfection is a quality not only of act and word, but even of thought.'—On the subject of virtue he rises to the 'ethical sublime' of eternal and immutable morality. 'Good actions should be done not out of compulsion but from persuasion, not from hope of reward but on their own account.' 'A man should feel more shame in doing evil before himself than before all the world, and should shun evil just as much if no one as if all men were aware of it.' He agrees with Sokrates that to do wrong is a greater source of unhappiness than to suffer wrong, as well as in the opinion of the teachableness of virtue. It is needless to add

¹ Comp. Zeller, i. 755.

² A curious outcome of the Demokritean teaching is the recognition of ghosts or shadows pertaining to men—an analogue, perhaps, of the atoms which are the invisible but real constituents of matter. These are semi-immortal beings, some of which are good, others evil. When visible and audible, they sometimes declare future events. Sext. *adv. Math.* vii. 116, 117, and ix. 42.

³ Comp. Hegel, *Gesch. der Philosophie*, ii. 43: 'Die Athener vor Sokrates waren sittliche nicht moralische Menschen.'

⁴ Comp. Mullach's *Frag.* i. pp. 340-56, and, for an ingenious arrangement of them, compare Zeller, i. 749-53.

that Demokritos excepts the human will from the iron chain of necessity¹ in which the physical universe is involved, and this is not the only instance of a happy inconsistency in his thought. Hence he makes no attempt to find a theoretical basis for his moral practice beyond the teachings of experience as to the highest welfare of man and of the society of which he forms a part.

Some approximation to succeeding Skeptics may be found in the stress which Demokritos placed on *ataraxia*, or unruffled mental calm. He is indeed one of the earliest Greek thinkers who employed in this sense a term destined to become in after-times a skeptical technicality. The end of all intellectual effort, the object of all ethical and social action, is *ataraxia*. This undisturbed serenity of mind, purchasable only, according to Demokritos, by zealous search after knowledge, by high moral purity, by untiring self-sacrifice, is the sole pleasure within the reach of mortals. But although in terms he makes happiness the *summum bonum*, it is needless to point out the enormous difference between his conception of that object and the self-indulgent Hedonism of Epikouros. Consequently he may be adduced as an example by no means unique of the fallacy of the opinion which makes a high ethical ideal an impossibility to all atheists. His own personal idiosyncrasies, so far as we may trust tradition, are precisely those we might have anticipated from his philosophy. Agreeing with Herakleitos in a half-supercilious and disdainful estimate of humanity, he differed from him as to the proper method of expressing his feeling. According to Demokritos, humanity is more fittingly the object of laughter than of tears. Not that the laughter is necessarily derisive, for it may imply merely the combination of equanimity with high animal spirits which would enable him to survey with good-humoured cynicism the ordinary actions and variable fortunes of his fellow-men.

His isolated life procured for him the character of a misanthropist, which was, if we may judge him by his moral precepts, altogether undeserved. Probably his repudiation of all human companionship was nothing more than the single-hearted devotion of all truth-seekers to the object of their quest—

The last infirmity of noble minds,
To scorn delights and live laborious days

¹ 'Man is only a half-slave of necessity' is one of his dicta, perhaps akin to the modified Necessitarianism which in contemporary philosophy goes by the name of Determinism. Cf. Sir A. Grant's *Aristotle's Ethics*, i. 103.

—which was common to the great thinkers of Greece. He was called the ‘mob-despiser,’ an epithet which might probably be applied to every genuine philosopher. That some of his contempt for the unthinking crowd was, however, paid back with interest is shown by the satirical remark of Plutarch,¹ who contrasts his oracular explanation of the universe with his petty definitions of things more within the scope of his knowledge; for while in the former matter his utterances were like those of Zeus, in the latter he was not a whit above the vulgar, inasmuch as he defined man as ‘that which we all know.’

Demokritos deserves a high place in the history of Skepticism, especially as being the founder of the atomistic schools of Epikouros and Lucretius, which have always occupied so polemical an attitude to all religious dogmas, and in which atheism is almost inevitably a primary axiom. That the physical theories he was the first to propound grew in elaboration and dogmatic intensity among succeeding thinkers is only what might have been expected. Nor can it be denied that such a development is in its assumed omniscience a deterioration. If we can know but little of the supreme mind which co-ordinated and arranged the universe, we know still less—and every day’s further investigation into physical science affords additional confirmation of the truth—the primary material conditions out of which the realm of nature has been so wonderfully evolved.

The Sophists.

In every leader and every school of early Hellenic thought we have discovered distinct elements of free-thought, sometimes bordering upon, at other times involving, Skepticism. All the modes and objects of cognition hitherto tested have yielded the same verdict of uncertainty. This is the common link that connects speculations starting from different points, adopting different methods, and aiming at different results; this the common experience which has clung, like a shadow to its substance, to every dogmatic conception tentatively put forward. Matter, mind, language, religion, have all been tested with a final recognition of incomplete results. Greek philosophy had, therefore, prepared the way for an order of free teachers and free thinkers such as we have in the Sophists.

A similar preparation had been brought about in another direction. Parallel with the speculative advance was the political growth of Greece. This was undoubtedly in the direction of

¹ Plutarch, *adv. Colotem.* p. 1108. Reisk, x. p. 561.

democratic institutions, and a fuller recognition of individual freedom. The supremacy Athens had attained since the Persian war; the prosperity, ease, and rapid development in culture of its inhabitants, made it the common centre for all the thought of Greece, while its commercial energy rendered it the emporium of foreign philosophies as well. Hence it became the resort of traffickers in free-thought, who flocked to it from every side, so that in addition to the varied and prolific harvests of speculation produced on its own soil, it imported whatever foreign commodities of the like kind it was able to procure.

Besides speculative and political there was another kind of progress, which tended to foster as it was itself engendered by Hellenic free-thought—I mean advance in literature. No ancient literature is so devoid of dogmatic aims and pretensions as that of the Hellenes. There is none which is so purely spontaneous and unforced, none in which the artistic feeling so completely preponderates over the didactic purpose, none in which thought-production in and for itself has ever held such a prominent place. All genius is indeed necessarily individualistic, originality is but another name for this characteristic, and freedom is its indispensable condition. As Hellenic literature confessedly excels all others in original power, so is this a proof of its possessing a maximum of free energy and independence. This natural aptitude for freedom is manifested in the very earliest products of Greek thought. We find it in the imaginative wildness of their mythological legends, in the extempore fluency of their rhapsodists, in the varied and copious luxuriance of their lyric poetry, nor is it lost sight of in the more restrained products of the drama. The effect of Hellenic literature, even at an early period of its development, was still further to develop and strengthen the free instincts so profoundly grafted in the national character, and which was being evolved by its philosophical and political growth. Itself begotten of the individualism which marked every Greek thinker, it impressed everyone who came in contact with it with the same feeling of conscious independence and self-assertion. Hellenic literature trained the mental faculties of its votaries in a manner analogous to the physical education of its youths in the gymnasium. For its varied instruction, its diversified scope for reason and imagination, the intellectual athletics suggested by its different questions and literary products imparted to their minds strength and flexibility, just as wrestling with naked limbs gave a muscular power, a combination of freedom with grace of movement, to their bodies.

And this leads me to notice a further cause of the influence of the Sophists, and one in closer alliance with ordinary Greek life. As free teachers of literature they aspired to discharge its athletic functions. The Sophists were intellectual gymnasts. On its intellectual side they represented and administered to the national fondness for athletic contests, trials of personal skill, agility, strength, and endurance. If we bear in mind this analogy—common enough in Greek literature—it will serve to exemplify the idea of education generally current among the more cultivated sections of Athenian society in the time of Perikles, and it will also indicate the merits and defects of that idea. Education then was regarded not as the acquisition of knowledge in the sense of facts, truths, and dogmas, so much as the attainment of methods. It purported to give not the finished product so much as the instrument best adapted for the production. The mind, its faculties and its contents, were subjected to a disciplinary process, or rather series of processes, with the object of investigating its condition, testing and determining the value of its ideas, analysing the methods employed in their formation, imparting a readiness, dexterity, and flexibility to all its operations, and generally inducing a condition of intellectual force and vigour, corresponding to sound health, and a maximum power of activity on the part of the body. In a word, the main intent of education among the Sophists—and the remark may be applied to after-periods of Greek history—was the extreme opposite of modern ideas current on the subject. The Greeks endeavoured to train and form, we try to fill, the mind. They expended their labour on the working of the intellect, we lay stress on its attainments.

No doubt the Greek conception had its merits. Intellectual operations were regarded as living functions. The mind was itself a life, and, *ipso facto*, liable to disordered powers, weakness, torpor, disease, and death. It was not a mere passive addendum to the body, but an independent living entity, though, no doubt, so allied with it that the health of the one affected that of the other. This stress upon mental activity and care in its cultivation entailed further consequences. The mind was not regarded as a lifeless depository of dogmas which it had received but had no power to digest or assimilate. The quickened reason not only accepted and utilised, but rejected and extruded. It not only affirmed but denied, and the latter function was discharged as readily and spontaneously as the former. To this training we owe the large amount of Skepticism that permeates Greek thought, and the Sophists are the direct precursors of Pyrrhôn and Ainesidemos.

In this respect the Greek intellect is unique among the cultured products of history. No other thought presents such a variety of negations, or discriminates with such nicety and refinement the different kinds and methods of doubt. We may indeed find cause to suspect that the persistent and unscrupulous employment of negation affected prejudicially the discharge of the more normal function of receptivity and affirmation.

For I am bound to admit the idea was not without its defects. The Sophists trusted too much to mere training, just as we attach too little importance to it. A healthy body has, no doubt, a wonderful power of self-nurture; it easily assimilates what is good, and rejects what is evil. Given a robust and well-trained intellect, it will discharge, thought the Sophists, its functions in a similar manner; provision against unruly or mischievous excesses is needless. An athlete, trained to use his arms with vigour and dexterity, need not be prohibited from encountering, not human combatants, but stone walls. Similarly, the intellectual gymnast may well be left to take care of himself. We see, therefore, that the teaching of Sophists was not didactic, but agonistic; they did not think it necessary to load the intellects of their pupils with ultimate convictions—religious, ethical, or political—they rather endeavoured to render them efficient in the discussion of any and every subject-matter with which they came in contact.

As there was a defect in the Sophists' method, so was there also, incidentally, in the end they proposed to attain. It is quite conceivable, as a theory—and as a fact it is attested by numerous instances—that teachers might adopt the methods of the Sophists, and show carelessness as to results, from an implicit reliance on the powerful restraints of nature, custom, patriotism, law, &c., to ward off hurtful excess; or they might take a still higher ground, as did Sokrates, and believe in the ultimate invincibility of truth. As a rule, however, they took the lower ground of personal advantage. Thus acting, they yielded, in my opinion, not to the necessities of their mode of teaching, but to the disorganisation, political corruption, and selfishness that ruled in Athens under the tyranny of the Thirty. Hence, intellectual training came to be regarded merely as the requisite propædeutik for success in the arena of life, just as physical training was for victory in the games. Similarly, humanity—social and political communities—were looked upon as objects of experiment and enterprise for the intellectual athlete. His education was the formation and sharpening of certain instruments calculated to work on the masses of his fellow-men. Whatever was efficacious for this object was cherished and

commended, and, on the other hand, all arts and knowledge not directly conducing to it were despised.

But considered in themselves, and apart from all ulterior objects, the methods of the Sophists were, as we have seen, Skeptical. They imparted the education which some of our Skeptics, notably Montaigne, thought best adapted to the progress of the individual and the general march of science—an education embarrassed in its progress by the least possible amount of impedimenta in the form of absolute principles or fixed dogmas. The idea is no doubt open to objections, though I myself think that these are generally overstated. Conservative Athenians alleged that the training of the Sophists, while eminently calculated to form astute politicians or unprincipled dealers, was hardly adapted to train good, unselfish, virtuous citizens. In their zeal for athletic prowess the Sophists forgot that the analogy of physical vigour did not altogether hold good of mental training. The common animal instinct of self-preservation will always hinder the athlete from displaying his science on impossible or hurtful objects, but similar restraining motives will not so certainly prevent a misdirection of intellectual powers. On the contrary, the very same instincts of selfishness may easily induce a perversion of those powers.

Another point on which the Sophists touch closely the development of Greek thought and life is their relation to language. No phenomenon is more marvellous in Hellenic history than the early, rapid, and philosophical growth of the Greek tongue. Nothing attests so fully the profound and subtle qualities of the intellect of those who shaped it, or the methodical character and wide extent of their culture. Its development as an instrument of philosophical thought we have noticed in the Eleatic and other philosophies. Indeed, the earliest conception of philosophy distinctly identified it with linguistic or literary studies,¹ so that the first meaning of Sophist was probably a word-artist—a dealer in forms and modes of speech. But parallel with its growth as an instrument of speculation was its increasing cultivation as a political and social agent. A knowledge, at once artistic and complete, of his language—especially of its oral powers and capabilities—was to the ambitious Hellene the sole avenue to distinction. The politician in addressing the assembly, the private citizen advocating his cause before the dikastery, were both dependent on the persuasive effect of their words. Rhetoric and dialectic were the

¹ On the history of the terms *φιλόσοφος* and *φιλοσοφία*, see Jebb, *Attic Orators*, vol. ii. p. 36, and Dr. Thompson's *Phædrus*, p. 278, note.

levers with which men like Perikles, Themistokles, and Kleon set in motion, whether for public or private ends, the feelings and activities of their fellow-citizens. In the words of Ennius—

Is dictus 'st ollis popularibus olim
Qui tum vivebant homines atque ævum agitabant
Flos delibatus populi suadæque medulla.

Even the philosophic thinker who aspired only to such social distinction as might be conferred by a foremost position in the speculative discussions perpetually carried on either in the public schools and gymnasia or else in private houses, was compelled to study carefully the form, method, and artistic arrangement of his arguments. Nor was this attention to form and beauty of language confined to the more cultured classes; the common crowd that frequented the theatre or the literary contests in the games were trained to appreciate reasoned argument, and to mark by their plaudits or maudits (if I may coin the word) the excellences or defects of poets, orators, and historians; just as their forefathers, centuries earlier, hung on the lips and criticised the utterances of the rhapsodists.

To all these various activities and proclivities the Sophists by their teaching ministered. Originally created by the development of Hellenic thought and language, they themselves served to quicken and intensify the intellectual fermentation that gave them birth. They are, therefore, coeval with the highest stage of Hellenic development—intellectual, political, and artistic—and some of the most venerated names in Greek literature are directly or indirectly connected with them.

It is now agreed that the Sophists did not form a particular school or sect with common doctrines or method, but a profession marked by strong individual idiosyncrasies. They were teachers not only of rhetoric but of all the different branches of knowledge that make up the sum of a Greek liberal education. But their individual peculiarities were so great as to amount to a qualification of them as free teachers. Welcker has aptly hit off both the occupation and perfect freedom from all formal method and dogmatic restraint that distinguished it by denominating them '*freyere Privatdocenten*.'¹ They were free-traders in thought and philosophy. They also carry on that tradition of itinerant teaching which we met with at an earlier age of Greek history. Bound to locality as little as to method and doctrine, they exposed their intellectual wares—like travelling pedlars among ourselves—

¹ *Kleine Schriften*, vol. ii. p. 428.

whenever they found likelihood of customers. Many of them, and especially those who taught rhetoric, came from Sicily, the native home of that science. They spread themselves over Greece, but the more famous of them concentrated themselves in Athens, where they were first held in honour, but afterwards, from various causes, exposed to obloquy, distrust, and persecution. To determine the nature of the free teaching of the Sophists, and thereby the extent of indebtedness of subsequent Greek Skepticism to their instruction, it will be well to examine the 'dictes and sayings' of the three names most eminent among them—Protagoras, Gorgias, and Prodikos.

I. To Protagoras are ascribed some striking aphorisms, which have become current not only among skeptical, but among philosophical, thinkers generally. He is the author, *e.g.* of the earliest assertion of the relativity of all knowledge, 'Man is the measure of all things, of existing things that they are, of non-existing things that they are not,' a principle which stands foremost in all skeptical ratiocination.¹ It also affirms the ultimate character to the individual of the deliverance of his healthy senses, a truth also admitted even by extreme Skeptics. To the popular theology he maintained a position of suspense. 'Of the gods,' he said, 'I can neither say they exist, nor that they do not exist, for many are the impediments to this knowledge, (*e.g.*) both the obscurity of the subject and the brevity of human existence,' an avowal which is said to have endangered his own life. This skeptical suspense Protagoras did not limit to theology. He asserts that a similar position of neutrality is discoverable in every assertion of knowledge. So he maintained that 'Two contradictory statements might be made concerning everything,' which may be called the nucleus of all the definitions of pure Skepticism from Pyrrhôn to Sextos Empirikos.² He is also credited with the maxim which became the prime article of accusation against the Sophists generally, as constituting the main object of their teaching, *viz.* 'to make the lesser cause appear the greater.' That he did not anticipate from these maxims, nor wish to induce by his teaching a complete intellectual vacuum, is shown by his remarks on education, in which the idea of definite attainment seems fully expressed. Nor, again, was Protagoras a shallow logomachist, asserting the difficulties of

¹ The maxim has occasionally been made dogmatic, either by taking 'man' in the sense of humanity, or laying undue stress on 'all things.'

² Fabricius notes it as a curious fact that Sextos in his account of Protagoras has failed to credit him with this aphorism, of which he himself has made such ample use. *Hyp.* bk. i. chap. xxxiii. *Comp. Diog. Laert.* ix. 51.

human knowledge without a profound investigation of the subject, for to him is ascribed one form of the beautiful legend of Prometheus,¹ that perennial illustration, common both to Aryan and Semitic races, of the difficulties, perils, and disappointments that beset the acquisition and communication of knowledge.

His depth of thought, as well as his Skeptical tendencies, is also evinced by the tradition that attributes to him the Herakleitean belief in the transitory nature of all things.² This was perhaps the initiatory impulse of his Skepticism, and may have given rise to the tradition of his being a disciple of 'the tenebrous' thinker.

It is needless to point out that the chief developments of the skeptical method made by Pyrrhôn and his successors are but legitimate deductions of the principles laid down by Protagoras. His 'man is the measure of all things' is an enunciation of the individualism which is so conspicuous in all Greek thought, and the source both of its unrivalled productiveness and its inexhaustible variety. In passing, too, we may observe that the independence and self-assertion generated by the principle were exemplified not only in the speculation but in the political life of Greece, producing that intense passion for liberty, that cordial hatred of tyranny, which lends a glow to so many brilliant passages in her history. The same principle contributed also to the growth of Eristic or captious reasoning—'the art of wrangling,' as Locke termed it—which subsequent thinkers, from Sokrates to Sextos Empeirikos, so largely employed. For if the only conception of truth rightly pertaining to every man be the particular conviction engendered by his own senses and mental faculties, it is clear that the dictum '*Quot homines tot sententiæ*' represents not an abnormal and exaggerated, but the only possible, view of the case. With 'all things' man becomes 'the measure of all men,' and each unit of the community is a focus of antagonistic and repellent influences to all the rest. Eristic, I am aware, has also another paternity in the inherent peculiarities of all written and spoken language. Indeed, we have noticed its development among the Eleatic thinkers before the promulgation of the maxim of Protagoras, but it is to the latter as a foundation in human consciousness that we must ascribe both its diffusion among Greek thinkers and its general justification as an ultimate truth, however inconvenient its practical applications.

II. If Protagoras is the greatest thinker among the Sophists,

¹ Mullach, *Frag.* vol. i. pp. 132-34.

² Sext. Emp. *Pyr. Hyp.* i. § 217.

Gorgias is their greatest writer. By his talents, his polished and urbane manners, his influence, he is able to secure a courteous and respectful treatment even from Plato, the natural enemy of the Sophists.¹ Only a few fragments of his teaching have come down to us. In his work on 'Nature or the Non-existent,' the bare title of which marks the Skeptical tendency of the author, he seeks to establish the extreme positions: 1. Nothing exists; 2. If anything exists, it is unknowable; 3. If it is knowable, the knowledge cannot be imparted. The work starts from the conclusions of the Eleatic thinkers, with which it is said that Gorgias in early life had much sympathy, but is in reality an uncompromising attack on the Eleatic abstractions. To give you an idea of his argument, and incidentally to illustrate methods of reasoning common to all the Sophists, I will summarise its prominent features. Taking advantage of the ambiguity in the word existence which has played such an important part in metaphysics, he first determines that things neither are nor are not, because otherwise being and not being would be identical. Secondly, assuming existence, it could neither have come to be nor not come to be, neither could it be one nor many—where the argument turns on a confusion not uncommon in Greek speculation between the infinite and the undefinable, and on the employment of Zenon's argument against the reality of space as incapable of definition. Besides, if existence were to be estimated by human thought, everything so thought must be real, whereas experience convinces us that the existence of objects is independent of our perception of them. As to the third point, that existence cannot be imparted, this is proved by showing that it is not existence which is communicated, but only words, which can refer only to the perceptions of which they are signs; and even then must have their significations limited by the necessarily individual character of the recipient, since no two persons ever agreed on all points as to their perceptions or feelings, nor even the same person with himself at different times or in different circumstances. This argumentation is noteworthy as an early example of a type of Skeptical dialectic often employed by subsequent thinkers, and which may be found in almost every page of Sextos Empeirikos. It consists in making every proposition the centre-point of two or more contradictory assertions, and submitting each of the latter to a similar process of dichotomy, and then, by the help of certain axiomatic truths, deducing the falsity of each step of the argument. No doubt Gorgias intended by it

¹ Cf. Grote, *Plato*, vol. i., and Thompson's *Introduct. to Gorgias*.

not, as Grote thought, to establish the non-existence of Noumena; his Skepticism was of a far more sweeping character. It amounted in reality to a denial of all existence considered as an object of absolute verification and unimpeachable communication. Nor can it be denied that the reasoning is sophistical not only in name but in its unscrupulous character, for the axioms he borrows from the Eleatics, with a tacit assumption of their unquestionable character, are precisely those to which, as an adversary of that philosophy, he had no right. But this, it might be said, is a feature common not only to Greek rhetors, but to all special pleading, whether political or forensic. Passing by the form of the argument and Gorgias' standpoint in relation to it, we must admit that in its last analysis it is based on the necessarily contradictory character of all ultimate truths. The indemonstrable character of existence, and the impassable gulf which divides man as a percipient being from the objects of his perceptions, are facts which are as common to the Antinomies of Kant as to the Skepticism of Gorgias. We may here enumerate, as bearing on the after-history of Greek Skepticism, the following elements and characteristics of its method discernible in the teaching of Gorgias:—

(1) The employment of a dialectic as unscrupulous as it is keen, subtle, and profound.

(2) The juxtaposition of generally accepted principles to their, if possible, mutual destruction.

(3) Distrust of the senses and their deliverances.

(4) A nominalistic estimate of the scope of language, and a resulting conviction of its untrustworthiness in the communication of truth.

III. No teacher held a higher position among his contemporaries than Prodikos, whom we may take to represent especially the rhetorical and ethical element in the teaching of the Sophists. A native of the island of Koos, and probably a pupil of Protagoras and Gorgias, he wandered throughout Greece, teaching virtue, at so much a lesson. The latter feature—surely venial in the case of a man who depended on his teaching for his subsistence—together with a doubtful allegation of avarice, are the only faults found with him. In all other respects he ranks as the wisest and most exemplary of the Sophists, from whom, indeed, he is pointedly distinguished by Plato, on account of his superior worthiness. Of Prodikos's teaching we have two fragments left. These, however, relate to the main theme of all his teaching, the choice of Herakles. This apologue, as I dare say you remember, teaches how Herakles in his youth was accosted by virtue and vice, in the semblance of

two women, each with appropriate dress, gesture, and demeanour; the former of whom sets before him the present glory, the enduring fame and beneficence of a virtuous life, withal not disguising the severe trials and hardships which are its necessary conditions; for the gods have not granted what is really beautiful and good apart from trouble and careful striving. The other tries to allure him to her service by dwelling on the various pleasures, the careless ease, that attend it. Herakles ultimately decides for virtue, and thereby becomes the great but much-trying hero of Greek ethical teaching. The moral of the fable, I need scarcely remark, is not only inoffensive, it is in the very highest degree pure, noble, and disinterested. It would be difficult to find in the Bible itself teaching of a sublimer or more distinctly ethical character. And when the apologue, affecting when narrated in the simplest language, was adorned, as we are told it was by Prodikos, with every rhetorical grace¹ calculated to touch the feelings and excite the passions of his youthful hearers, the effect must have been as wholesomely stimulating and beneficial as any moral teaching could possibly be. Not less salutary were Prodikos's other teachings, if we may credit the reproductions of them by rhetors and philosophers. He agrees with Sokrates that the value of riches depends entirely on the use made of them, and that virtue must be learnt. He also taught the worthlessness of earthly life, and how the good man should long for freedom from the body. Whether, as Welcker maintains, he taught immortality, is perhaps a little more doubtful, though I must confess most of his teachings point in that direction. On the other hand, Prodikos is accused of atheism, in that he regarded the gods not as divine beings but as personifications of the sun, moon, rivers, fountains, and whatever else in nature was beneficial to man.²

In the objects of his instruction, though perhaps less in method, Prodikos is a forerunner of Sokrates. Not only are his teachings ethical, but he adopted the plan of taking moral definitions and abstractions as objects of rhetorical disquisition. So he treated of courage, rashness, riches, in a manner akin to that of Sokrates. He probably, however, endeavoured to obtain and to inculcate some final decision on the questions thus mooted, and did not, like Sokrates, leave the result doubtful. Perhaps this is the reason, among others, why he is treated with more respect by Aristophanes than his great successor.

¹ Xenophon, *Memor.* ii. 1.

² Sext. Emp. *adv. Math.* i. § 52.

In some respects Prodikos must be regarded as an exceptional Sophist. Agreeing with his fellow-teachers that virtue is to be learnt, he insisted not only on the intellectual, but on the exclusively ethical aspect of that discipline. Virtue, the perfection of human action, like intellectual and physical vigour, was the object of exercise, cultivation, and self-discipline. The moral athlete, the would-be imitator of the great Herakles, must, like his prototype, contend and strive for virtue. He must become a gymnast in the arena of human passion and worldly temptation just as much as in the debates of the schools or the physical exercises of the palaestra. From this point of view he remedied what were generally considered deficiencies in the teachings of his brother Sophists, and even of Sokrates himself. On the other hand, the Atheism of Prodikos, whether entire or, as most probable, only partial, connects him with the class of free-teachers generally as the objects of popular suspicion and displeasure. No ethical teaching was so noble, no life so pure, as to compensate in the mind of the vulgar Athenian for defective belief in the gods. Protagoras, as we have seen, urged his intellectual helplessness on the subject. He could not tell whether the gods existed or whether they did not exist, and unfortunately he had no means of obtaining information on the subject. Neither the suspense of this philosopher nor the rationalism of Prodikos were pleasing to their fellow-citizens. We shall see when we come to Sokrates the result of this exacerbation of the popular religious sentiment.

We are now, I think, in a better position to realize the actual position of our free-teachers and the extent of their independence of and antagonism to the religious convictions and customary traditions of the Athenian populace. 1. They represent the decadence of older theological conceptions, and the separation thereby necessitated between religious dogma and the ethical teaching ordinarily based upon or taught in connection with it. We may find precisely similar phenomena in two important epochs in modern history. The Sophists are the predecessors of the free-thinkers of the Italian Renaissance, and of the French Encyclopædists in the half-century preceding the Revolution. In each of these cases the immoral character of Religion and its ministers effected a disruption—temporary in the latter two instances on account of the essentially moral basis of Christianity—between Theology and Ethics; and the establishment of the latter on an independent foundation of its own. In theory, no doubt, the deities of Olympus still retained their supremacy at Athens. The literally *unsophisticated* populace were still of opinion that human right and wrong, and weal and

woe, were regulated by their almighty decrees. How the gods rewarded the good and punished the evil was the subject and plot of most of their dramas. The extent to which religious fanaticism in favour of traditional belief could be evoked at Athens is shown by the popular excitement at the mutilation of the Hermæ. That the Olympian deities were represented by poets and dramatists as liars, adulterers, thieves, did not signify. With an obtuseness which would be marvellous if it were not so common, they refused to recognise palpable incongruities between the religious dogma or worship on the one hand, and the moral sentiment of cultured humanity on the other.

To this disparity the Sophists and Sokrates drew attention, though less by open contradiction than by the tacit and indirect adoption of other hypotheses irreconcilable with it. By the free-teachers the gods were placed distinctly in the background. Human duties and interests, virtues and excellences, were substituted as regulative sanctions for the old Olympian rule. The change was the ethical analogue to a similar revolution taking place in Greek physical science. If 'Vortex' ousted Zeus, as Aristophanes complained, from his material dominion, 'Virtue,' with still more right, it might be said, deprived him of his pretended moral sovereignty over human actions and life. It was already a suspicious circumstance, symptomatic of the change coming over Greek theology, that the thinkers of Greece were now in the habit of referring to the deities in general terms as the gods, instead of designating them as individuals, and so calling attention to the turpitudes associated with their actual names.

But the Sophists not only opposed the religious prepossessions of the Greeks, their free-methods conflicted with their moral convictions as well. The chief Sophists, we have seen, were Rhetors, and with Rhetoric they combined Dialectic and occasionally indulged in Eristic, the captious excess of Dialectic. They taught for pay the art of persuasion, the best and readiest method of securing victory in all kinds of debate. The Athenians could not but see that this art was open to abuse. If not essentially inducing laxity and want of principle, it would undoubtedly do so in the hands of unprincipled persons. Besides, these rhetors came from Sicily, the native land of Rhetoric, and were perhaps, even on that account, obnoxious to the Athenians. Hence the old-fashioned among them regarded these new teachers in the same light as Cato the censor did the Sophistical disquisitions of Carneades, when that Skeptic endeavoured to prove to the Roman youth the identity of justice and expediency. They could not be brought to see the utility of

an art which might conceivably be used to confuse vice with virtue, duty with pleasure, and to prove the worse the better cause. They refused to concede the advantage of intellectual gymnastics for their own sake, or to applaud a rhetorical or dialectic prowess which might be employed so as to endanger the well-being and social order of the State. Men like Anytos and Meletos were far from sharing the robust confidence of Sokrates and Plato in the common sense, the native goodness, the social instincts of the young Athenians; nor were they more prepossessed in favour of such abstract principles as the inherent force of truth, or the claims of Dialectic as an end in itself, or the innate aptitude of the human mind for inquiry and discussion, nor, once more, did they consider that every kind of human knowledge may, in the hands of unworthy persons, be abused. It was enough for them that the liability to such abuse offered by the Sophists and their methods was of a peculiarly seductive nature. Hence the dramatic freedom, the double-tongued argumentation of the Sophists, were as loathsome to dogmatic Athenians as the twofold truth of some Christian thinkers was to the ruling powers of Romanism. This feeling, as we know, aided by political causes, reached its climax in the martyrdom of Sokrates, while the traditional flight of Anaxagoras, the indignation against Prodikos, were less marked expressions of it. Nor can it be said that the Athenians were at all likely to discriminate between the rhetorical and the dialectical arts considered in their probable effect on the minds of their youth. For, although Rhetoric is older than Dialectic, as intellectual synthesis is an earlier mental process than analysis, the end of both is in reality the same. Under any circumstances, as Plato and Aristotle both admitted, the boundary-line between Rhetoric and Dialectic, and between these and Eristic, is in reality and practically of a very insignificant character; for if a man be inveighed to adopt a wrong conclusion and carry it into practice, it cannot matter much whether his feelings have been seduced by Rhetoric or his reason convinced by Logic. In either case, the instrument of persuasion is double-edged, and just as capable of bad as good effects. Perhaps on the score of permanence, Rhetoric might be considered as the more innocuous, in accordance with the old epigram which happily describes their respective methods:—

Rhetorica est palmæ similis, Dialectica pugno;
Hæc pugnet, palmam sed tamen illa feret.¹

¹ According to Quintilian, Zenon was the author of this comparison. The epigram in the text is quoted by Fabricius in his notes to Sext. Emp.

But to such niceties the average Athenian Philistine was supremely indifferent. The distinction between the sciences, if he allowed it, would have been between the bad and the worse, a rivalry of ill teaching and immoral consequences. In either case he discerned or thought he discerned in the linguistic legerdemain a potent source of immorality and corruption. His suspicions were no doubt kept alive and confirmed by the more vain and extravagant among the Sophists, who chose the most paradoxical subjects on which to dilate. The more preposterous the theme, the more opposed to the common-sense of mankind, the greater the skill needed to elucidate and establish it. Like a lawyer who boasts of carrying his client through some very difficult case, the glory of the victory was in direct proportion to its *à priori* unlikelihood, in other words, to the justice, reason, and evidence naturally arraigned against it. Aristotle's treatise on the Sophistical elenchi furnishes us with an exhaustive list of the paradoxes the more unscrupulous Sophists pledged themselves to maintain. The effect of such themes on the Athenians might perhaps be illustrated by the indignation excited in some circles in this country on the publication of Mandeville's work proving that 'Private vices were public benefits,' or the excitement caused by the theological paradox of Warburton's 'Divine Legation.' These dialectical excesses are not only reprehended by such writers as Plato and Aristotle, they are also found fault with by Sextos Empeirikos, who bases upon them his argument that the rhetorical, like every other art, is a nullity.¹ But for my part I cannot for a moment suppose that most of those paradoxes with which the Sophists are credited were really adopted by them in good earnest and with a direct purpose to deceive; and much virtuous indignation seems to me to have been wasted on them on that account. I regard these paralogsims, logical puerilities, &c., in the same light as similar playful riddles, equivocations, and quibbles among ourselves. Every intellectual process, like vinous fermentation, will have a certain proportion of good liquor, and so much lees or insoluble subsidence, but no wise man is at all liable to mistake the one for the other. To me at least these paralogsims seem a striking illustration of the astuteness of the Greek intellect, the flexibility of their language, the recklessness with which they

adv. Math. ii. § 8, as one of Dupertus; but a very similar epigram may be found by Andoenus, *Epigr.* ed. Renouard, p. 45. Luther's distinction between rhetoric and dialectic is well known: 'Rhetor sine dialectica nihil firmi docere potest, et e contra dialecticus sine rhetorica non afficit auditores Utramque vero conjungens docet et persuadet.' *Epist. ad Galatas*, cap. 5.

¹ *Adv. Math.* lib. ii.

applied their thought-processes to every conceivable object, and the thoroughness with which they followed up every investigation and accepted every result. No other characteristic could, I think, have been expected from a race possessed with an invincible love of freedom, and a hatred of all restraint. Hence we have the noteworthy fact that it is among that nation of all others which carried mental development to the highest pitch of perfection that we find the greatest number and variety of these mock-dialectics. Nor again can I leave out of consideration the fact that much of the power of Sokrates and Plato, and even the dialectical skill of Aristotle himself, was due to a preliminary training in these exercises. For false as well as true Dialectic contributes to the same object of strengthening the mental faculties by intellectual gymnastics, just as grammar may be taught by the correction of what is wrong as well as by direct imitation of what is right. Indeed many of our Skeptics have asserted that even true Dialectic serves no other nor higher purpose.

But although to the simple citizens, the *ιδιωται* of Athens, regarding the effects of Rhetoric and Dialectic on the minds of their youth, the two arts seemed equally culpable and from a practical point of view undifferentiated, still the passing over of Rhetoric into Dialectic is a distinctly marked feature of the progress of Hellenic speculation.¹ It is also connected with the Sophists and

¹ That the stress on Rhetoric which marked the earlier Sophists was later on transferred to Eristic is a theory not only established, as Mr. Sidgwick has shown (*Journal of Philology*, vol. iv. p. 288, &c.), by Plato's different methods of treating the Sophists, but which receives independent confirmation from the probability of the case. For in the ordinary progress of mankind—considering man as a social and political unit—Rhetoric, the direct appeal to the feelings or the volition, precedes Dialectic, the reasoned persuasion of the intellect, though intrinsically considered the latter comes first. Probably the difference in Plato's treatment of the Sophists also throws some light on the relation of Sokrates to Plato. The original Sophists brought from Sicily the art of rhetoric, and employed it rather unscrupulously to enforce contradictory opinions. But they discovered that their art was soon nonplussed by the native shrewdness of the Athenian intellect, which prided itself on quickly detecting argumentative pitfalls, as well as by that peculiar development of dialectic employed by Sokrates. Accordingly they changed their tactics. Abandoning Rhetoric, at least giving it only the second place in their teaching, they cultivated the Athenian Dialectic and the Sokratic elenchus. So far, therefore, as method was concerned, Sokrates might be said to have been 'hoist with his own petard.' When Plato discovered, probably after the death of Sokrates, that his master's elenchus had thus been sophisticated, he adopted another plan, which, however, differed from that of the

Sokrates, and contributed directly and largely to the development of freedom of Greek thought. The difference between the sister arts was in the first instance one of method. The rhetor declaimed in long harangues, dividing his speeches into carefully adjusted periods, each rounded off with artistic and rhythmical cadence; the whole adorned with flowery language, profuse imagery, far-fetched expressions, under which the pith of the argument was in danger of being lost. No doubt the voluptuousness of the form frequently served to veil the imperfection of the substance. Inconclusive and false reasoning occasionally lurked beneath the ingeniously woven chain of sentences. Redundancy of words was purposely employed to conceal poverty of matter. Superabundant imagery, subtle distinctions, and high-flown language drew off the hearers' attention from the perverse or untrue deduction. Sokrates and his school conferred therefore incalculable benefit on the cause of Greek free-thought by pitting Dialectic against Rhetoric, and quick short questions and replies in opposition to long and artificial harangues.

Properly speaking, the change thus induced was a return or rather an advance to the native methods of the human reason. For in pursuing its inquiries and arriving at its conclusions the unsophisticated reason does not naturally rely upon verbose arguments and elaborate propositions. Its primary and favourite method is catechetical. The questions of an intelligent child are much more direct and pointed than the reserved and circuitous investigations of the disciplined thinker. Its verdicts also are as plain and simple as the subject-matter may permit. Hence Rhetoric may be called the luxury, while Dialectic is the necessity, of the human reason. The latter is the prose, while the former is the rudimentary poetry, of human language.

Further, Dialectic, the creation and outgrowth of free-thought, is also its potent instrument. It is therefore much less adapted than Rhetoric to enforce dogmas and conclusions of a definitive kind. Indeed its operations when unrestricted by dogmatic postulates and foregone conclusions are not so much constructive as destructive. The attempt to enforce creeds and convictions by methods exclusively dialectical, accompanied with an acknowledgment of the infallibility of the process, may at any moment recoil on the heads of those who make it. Like the eagle, those soaring ratiocinations

Sophists more in the end aimed at than in the method pursued. Like his master, he employed Eristic, or a Dialectic indistinguishable from Eristic, for the purpose of exposing Ignorance and discovering Truth; whereas the Sophists in many cases had an eye merely to their own advantage.

and conclusions are liable to be brought down by arrows feathered from their own wings. Hence the finished and unscrupulous dialectic of Sokrates was in reality much more dangerous to Athenian belief than the rhetorical methods of the Sophists, though the latter, as I have already hinted, were by no means unversed in Eristic, or backward in employing its supple and elastic argumentation. Professionally no doubt Sophists were teachers of knowledge, and herein lies one of the few distinctions that separate them from Sokrates, who professed to have nothing to teach; but so far as this applies to the dogmatic content of their instruction, it must have been almost nullified by their free method, and their habit of discussing with equal impartiality the opposite sides of every argument.

All succeeding Greek Skeptics, I might say all subsequent philosophy, adopted this method—the free dialectics, which, initiated by the Eleatics, undoubtedly practised by Zenon, employed by the Sophists first perhaps as subsidiary to Rhetoric, but afterwards as an independent mode of argumentation, was ultimately brought to its highest point of perfection in the Sokratic elenchus. Not only the Sokratic schools, the Cynics and Megarics, but the distinctive Skeptics, Pyrrhôn and his followers, employed exclusively the dialectic found in its fullest development in the Platonic Dialogues. Nor is there, as commonly supposed, any real distinction in kind between the excessive employment of Eristic by the later free-thinkers and its use by the Sophists and Sokrates. The high personal character, the deep moral earnestness, and the fate of the greatest of Greek philosophers have combined in raising a barrier between his method and that of pronounced Skeptics which in fairness cannot be said to exist. Sokrates is as resolute an employer of Eristic as any Skeptic from Pyrrhôn to Sextos Empeirikos. He is just as great an adept at playing on both sides of the argument. He is quite as indifferent to positive results accruing from his ratiocination. Nay, in some respects, as we shall shortly find, Sokrates is a more genuine Skeptic than Pyrrhôn himself.

Thus the Sophists and Sokrates contributed to the further progress of Greek free-thought by advocating and employing a mode of truth-investigation unfettered by dogma and tradition, and unhampered by bias and preconception. The basis on which their method rested, the conclusion to which it tended, was the ultimate supremacy of the human reason and its intelligent procedure over all authoritative and dictated truth. Even if the reason were not infallible, it was more so than any other mode of ascertaining truth; besides which it had the peculiar faculty, like the self-regulative or corrective processes of some machines, of apprehend-

ing its own fallibility. I have admitted that the Sophists were not always free from the charge of self-interest in their teaching. The flexibility of the mind and of its instrument human language, they sometimes employed for their own purposes. The uncertainty of ultimate truth afforded an occasional plea for advancing or suggesting what was transparently untrue. But this was no more, as I have hinted, than the abuse to which all freedom, even the most rudimentary, is liable; the sediment which is the normal product of all fermentation. Some of the leading Sophists may have arrived at—as Sokrates certainly did—the high disinterested aim of all true inquiry—‘Truth for truth’s sake,’ apart from the material gain of money, or the social advantage of definitive and general convictions; nay, even carrying disinterestedness to such a point of self-sacrifice as to remain careless whether truth were actually discovered or no, and solicitous only that their restless mental energies should be employed in the right direction. However this may be, the Sophists undoubtedly promoted very largely the intellectual life of Greece. Both by their varied subjects of teaching and their free handling of them, they helped to widen the range of Greek thought. Their Dialectic and Eristic braced the reasoning faculties of their pupils, while their Rhetoric imparted the rudiments of linguistic æsthetics and good taste. They impelled the national instincts in the direction they had already chosen, viz. the application of reasoned discussion to every object with which they came in contact. In a word, they materially hastened the development of that complete philosophic freedom, that entire liberty of intellectual speculation, which distinguishes all subsequent Hellenic thought. Nor is their undoubted merit in these particulars appreciably lessened by the imputations so frequently lavished on them of indulging in puerile or even dishonest ratiocination. This abuse of their method, even if it were more common than we have reason to believe it, was a fault of less intellectual consequence to the nation than uninquiring ignorance or mental stagnation. It was surely better that the Greeks should learn of Gorgias how to prove the non-existence of all things than to acquiesce blindly in the still greater falsity, the real existence of all things. The absolute needs of nature and of life may be trusted to rectify any excess of ratiocination, they can do little to supply its defect. Of the two, it is better that a man should think himself to be a god than feel himself to be a brute.

The Sophists also have the merit of recognising the position of the human consciousness in the search for truth, and to insist on what has now become an axiom of philosophy, the relativity of all

human knowledge. The maxim of Protagoras, 'Man is the measure of all things,' declared this with an explicitness and simplicity that could hardly be surpassed. The effect of this principle was naturally to separate the individual thinker from the general traditions and opinions of his fellow-men, and to make his knowledge and conduct dependent on himself. Protagoras was thus the Descartes of ancient Greece, the real founder of the critical philosophy. Never after did Hellenic thinkers lose sight of that primary axiom of all thought. Especially did it subserve the cause of Skepticism. To the disciples of Sokrates and of Pyrrhôn, the free-thinkers of Greece, it became the citadel from which they attacked every system of dogma, and to which they could always retire when inconveniently pressed by their foes. If the individualism thus engendered had its inconveniences, these were probably infinitely exceeded by its merits. The Greek passion for freedom had at least a philosophical principle on which to rest, and from which it was never afterwards destined to be moved.

Nor must we omit the services rendered by the Sophists to Hellenic progress by their linguistic analysis and their nominalistic tendencies. They thus exercised a power on early Greek speculation like that which the Nominalists of the Middle Ages exercised on scholasticism. Already there was perceptible in Greek philosophy a tendency to accept words for things. The abstractions of the Eleatics, the physical causes of Ionic and other materializing thinkers, were assuming an influence more potent than their real origin warranted. The enormous development of realism under Plato we shall have no opportunity of noticing. Clearly there was ample justification for the Skeptical analysis, the examination into the origin and etymology of words, the investigation of the relation of language to the human mind which the Sophists initiated. The later Skeptics, as we shall find, also availed themselves of this weapon first cast in the armoury of the Sophists, and found that its destructive powers served them in good stead.

I need hardly add any remark on the general character of the Sophists. The common notion that unconventional conclusions, or an unusual amount of liberty, must needs engender profligacy of conduct, contributed for many centuries to fix on them an immoral character, for which Greek history does not afford the least basis. Happily, the prejudice is now extinct. Mr. Grote, treading in the steps of Welcker, and followed by English and German critics, has established their general rectitude and morality beyond possibility of question. Neither Plato nor Sokrates ever accuse the Sophists of leading immoral lives, nor do they suggest that they were any-

thing but respectable citizens. What small foundation there was for a charge of corrupting youth when adduced against Sokrates, who in this particular is a representative of the Sophists, we shall shortly have an opportunity of considering. In the instance of Prodikos, whatever freedom may have attached to his speculative doctrines, of which we know little, his practical teaching is marked by purity, justice, and self-denial equal to that of any Hellenic teacher, not even excepting Sokrates himself. Thus in parting from the Sophists as the free-teachers of early Greece, we have the happiness of knowing that their freedom, speculative and religious, was as a rule unsullied by any taint of vice, and that the liberty they taught and practised did not degenerate into licentiousness.

‘I feel I owe you some apology,’ continued Dr. Trevor as he closed his MS., ‘for having detained you so long on the subject of the early Greek philosophers, though I did not read you every sentence of my MS.; but we have, as you are aware, determined to prosecute our subject with some degree of thoroughness. After all, the hours we are devoting to a few of the world’s greatest luminaries are only what some men give up daily to the perusal of the combined atrocities and trivialities of a daily paper, while a much greater portion wasted every day by many ladies in devouring the inanities of time is of a modern fiction-monger.’

Tea was then brought in and handed round.

ARUNDEL. To be candid, Doctor, your paper was somewhat exhausting. However, we can discuss a few of its salient points while drinking tea, and thus make philosophy our tea-table talk, as well as recover from the repression, lingual and mental, caused by your long essay.

TREVOR. Our best plan would be to keep as close to chronology as possible. My paper, you see, comprehends two schools, Eleatic and Sophist, with an intervening number of thinkers unattached.

MISS LEYCESTER. But starting with the Eleatics, as your paper admitted, deprives us of the real dawn of Greek philosophy, which one naturally looks for in the rude speculation of Thales and the physical thinkers, who tried to find the origin of all things in water, air, fire, &c. In my first

introduction to Greek philosophy, I was greatly impressed by the freshness and simplicity of those efforts. What a child-like idea of the universe was that of Thales! and how pleasant it must have been to have lived at a time when all the philosophers in the world could be counted on the fingers of one hand, and when every new teacher arriving at Athens was welcomed with a zest and interest we are unable to realise! When Zenon, *e.g.* arrived with his master Parmenides, we can imagine the intellectual excitement produced. Contrast this state of things with the blasé and jaded condition of our present-day philosophy, when all conceivable systems of thought seem quite exhausted, and more or less ingenious eclecticism is the sole originality we can aspire to. . . . You remember how Herder, with the keen feeling of a poet for complete harmony between his ideas and his surroundings, makes his characters, when preparing to discuss the commencement of Hebrew poetry, mount a hill just before sunrise on a fine summer morning,¹ and the exquisitely beautiful manner in which he interweaves the sensations produced by the scene before them with the emotions caused by the first poetic lisps of the Hebrews. I am afraid you will laugh at me, but I have always been so impressed by this poetic fancy of Herder's, and the peculiar propriety of studying the early development of human thought by the dawning light of a summer's day, that I took some years ago my notes on the early Greek thinkers to the top of a rather high hill before sunrise to see if the rising sun would throw some additional light on the subject of Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes, as well as on the early poetry of the Hebrews.

TREVOR. I hope your picturesque enterprise was attended with success.

MISS LEYCESTER. To tell the truth, I do not think it was. Of course I witnessed what, with my associations, I was bound to interpret as a grand physical representation of the rapid mental growth of Hellenic thought; but either the morning was not so favourable as it was in Herder's case, or the contemplation of intellectual effort does not impress

¹ *Geist der Ebraischen Poesie*, Sämmt. Werke, i. p. 35.

one's feelings so keenly as poetry, especially of a devotional kind, or I am not sure that chapter of Herder's did not unconsciously operate as a disillusionizing medium by leading me to expect too much from the experiment. At any rate, I came home with a feeling of disappointment.

MRS. HARRINGTON. And with a very bad cold, you might have added, Florence.

TREVOR. No doubt Herder's is a pleasing conception very artistically wrought out, and sunrises and dew-drops are under proper conditions delightful objects of contemplation. But the freshness which accompanies the dawn, whether of science or of sunshine, and the pleasure it is thus capable of imparting, is due to the fact that it is a season of hope and expectation, and suggests the further progress and realization of which it is only the harbinger.

HARRINGTON. Besides, men with work to do in the world must have full sunshine, all the light in fact they can possibly get, though accompanied by the penalties of weariness and exhaustion. We must advance, as Cicero said, '*in solem et pulverem*,' into sun and dust. That, indeed, is our position in dealing with the Eleatics. As Florence remarked, in reality if not in time, we are beyond the first dawn of Greek thought. The dew-drops and the haze of early morn are past, and the sun of Greek science is high in the heavens. Some of those fragments of Xenophanes, *e.g.* are quite marvellous for their audacity of speculation. They might almost stand for the utterances of a disciple of Voltaire. There can be no doubt, I should say, of his complete Skepticism.

TREVOR. True; and what is remarkable in this early specimen of free-thought—a kind of intellectual fossil embedded in primeval strata but manifesting the well-known characteristics of contemporary living species—it is evidently the outcome of considerable ratiocination. It is not the mere impulse to vent paradoxes or startling utterances in order to frighten timid people, of which Sceptics are sometimes and perhaps with justice accused. His *dicta*, fragmentary as they are, are evidently conclusions based upon long and laborious processes. He is not only a Sceptic, but, what is

still higher praise, he is a rational Skeptic, if you, Arundel, will allow that such an abnormal being ever existed.

ARUNDEL. Why, as to that, the union of Rationalism of a certain kind with Skepticism, both in ancient and modern times, is too distinctly marked to be successfully impugned. Indeed, the older I grow and the more I study the intellectual formations of great thinkers, the more I am persuaded that centaurs and monstrosities are rather the rule than the exception. I expect our researches will reveal quite a menagerie of abnormal combinations of this sort. No doubt Xenophanes is a genuine Skeptic to whom every established conviction suggests grounds of dissent just as naturally perhaps as the idea of another man's property suggests to a thief the desirability of its acquisition. In him the Skeptical element outweighs the rational. As to Parmenides, I confess I hesitate in pronouncing him a Skeptic. He seems to me rather a Rationalist, one who would fain make Reason the sole arbiter of truth, and who merely questions sense-impressions or popular opinions so far as they conflict with her dictates. At all events the rationalist element in his intellect is decidedly predominant.

HARRINGTON. The predominance must depend, I take it, on the comparative weight you attach respectively to a thinker's method and his conclusions. That his method was Skeptical seems amply proved not only by his own expressions but also by his subsequent fame in Greek history. He was known to Plato and Aristotle as a Skeptical Idealist, and his very argument to prove the non-existence of motion is adopted by Sextos Empeirikos himself. Besides, he is classed among Skeptics by Plutarch and Cicero. Indeed I think it not improbable that his philosophical influence might have been more Skeptical than Idealistic, inasmuch as incredulity with respect to sensations or opinion is more easily comprehended than such an abstraction, *e.g.* as the *Ens*. I should be inclined to say the same of all systems of thought in which a Transcendental Idealism is made to depend upon processes antagonistic to or entirely dispensing with the ordinary common-sense of mankind. I have no doubt this is as true of Kant and Hegel in our own day as it was of Parmenides 500 years

B.C. Men understand the initiatory Skepticism, and act upon it. They do not understand the ideal and mystic dogmatism of which it is ostensibly the basis. Hence it seems to me that the majority of the disciples of such teachers remain in the purgatory of Unbelief, and are not anxious to look for an Elysium the existence of which their very method has taught them to doubt.

TREVOR. Luckily for you, Harrington, there is no disciple of Hegel here to defend his master, and to repudiate with Hegelian indignation your accusation of the Skeptical tendency of his teaching which is in my judgment duly merited. It will perhaps serve to confirm your notion that Idealism is often allied with Skepticism if you observe how Greek speculation from Parmenides to Plotinos is marked by a two-fold tendency to pure abstraction and unlimited negation. Of all thinking communities, Greece has originated the greatest number of Ideal systems, and has furnished the world with most Sceptics.

ARUNDEL. Add the experience of modern German speculation, in which, since Schelling and Hegel, Skepticism and Nihilism have become wildly rampant. But I don't agree with what Harrington advanced a minute ago as to men being less influenced by plain contradictions to their senses than by what transcends their reason. At least it is not true of people unsophisticated by philosophical speculation. Take Zenon, for instance, and the astounding paralogisms which he enunciated. Place before a jury of intelligent men the problem of Achilles and the tortoise, we cannot conceive their being puzzled, as certain philosophers are said to have been, by the clear absurdity of the metaphysical conclusion. They would immediately decide the question by the simple plan of *solvitur ambulando*, as Diogenes the cynic decided it. No other solution could be rendered comprehensible to them. The sophistries of Transcendental logic, like the absurdities of Transcendental mathematics, such men would sweep away like so many cobwebs.

MISS LEYCESTER. No doubt they would, Mr. Arundel; and give them scope and margin enough for wielding their Philistine brushes and dusters, those ordinary non-thinkers

would make short work of a few more idealities you yourself would be loth to part withal.

TREVOR. Well warned, Miss Leycester. Your proposed *reductio ad absurdum*, Arundel, takes the issue out of the category in which Zenon placed it. The actual consequence of pitting Achilles against the tortoise he was quite as well aware of as we are. What he postulated was the *ideal* standpoint of the Eleatics. Maintain as he did the fact that time is infinitely divisible, and as a *metaphysical* result Achilles cannot overtake the tortoise.

MRS. HARRINGTON. To come to matters more within the limits of ordinary comprehension, I wish to ask in what way fragments of such antiquity as those of Xenophanes and Parmenides were preserved so many years before the invention of printing, and I suppose of writing as well.

TREVOR. By oral tradition. The earliest teachers of Greece, *i.e.* of the mythology which then stood for her history, her religion, and her popular philosophy, were wandering minstrels, not unlike perhaps the itinerant students, Goliardic poets, and Troubadours of the Middle Ages, or the ancient bards of Wales and Scotland. Hence the sayings of the earliest Greek thinkers, like those we have just considered, were first preserved in the memories of faithful disciples. With the invention and diffusion of the art of writing these utterances found a better depository in papyrus rolls, which were reverentially kept in the principal temples. Elea is said to have been one of the earliest places which could thus boast of something like a philosophical library. The first literary library of Greece of which we have authentic record was that of Peisistratos.

HARRINGTON. What an interesting place that Elea must have been in the days of Parmenides and Zenon! It was a municipality based on principles of civic freedom, of which philosophers are the ruling spirits not only in speculation but in legislation. Parmenides, *e.g.* was not only the chief of its philosophic school but was also the recognised head of its civil and legal administration, a combination we can realize only inadequately by imagining the mayor of a university town, the vice-chancellor of the university, and a leading

professor—supposing the last to be what he generally is not, the greatest speculative thinker of the age—rolled into one. Plutarch tells us that Parmenides ‘adorned his city with the best laws,’ and that the magistrates were required to take an oath that they would abide by the laws of Parmenides. The same high position was also held by Zenon, who if the testimony of later writers is to be credited fell a sacrifice to his patriotism and his determination to preserve the state from tyranny. In the history of municipal government I do not know anything more interesting than this early example of civic freedom and autonomy under the shelter of high culture and philosophy. This ideally perfect arrangement has its parallels in ancient Greece,¹ but the nearest approach to it in modern European history is perhaps Lorenzo de’ Medici in Florence, and the influence of Calvin at Geneva, neither a very satisfactory example on the score of freedom.

TREVOR. Yes, in those early days Elea might have been called the intellectual capital of Magna Græcia, the name given to the South of Italy. By a curious coincidence, too, the same neighbourhood has produced some of the foremost Italian contributors to Idealism in modern philosophy, as we shall see when we come to discuss Giordano Bruno.

HARRINGTON. Your unattached thinkers, who succeed the Eleatics, I think we must allow to stand over for the present, considering the lateness of the hour. If we except Herakleitos, who represents an Idealism which we shall meet in Oriental

¹ The interest which the speculative thinkers of Ancient Greece took in matters of state and civic polity, and, as a consequence, their paramount influence in their respective cities, is very remarkable. Besides the instances of Parmenides and Zenon at Elea, there are the equally noteworthy examples of Empedokles at Agrigentum, Melissos at Samos, and Pyrrhôn at Elis. Moreover, Thales is said to have endeavoured to combine the twelve Ionian cities of Asia Minor into a Pan-Ionic league, possibly similar to the Lombard league of the Middle Ages, or to that of the Hanse Towns of more modern times. In our own country the chief examples of the union of philosophical speculation with practical politics are Bacon, Locke and his indirect aid to the government of William III., Shaftesbury, Bentham, and John Stuart Mill. On the Continent, the enormous influence of Fichte in the war of the French Revolution, as well as of Gioberti in the Italian national movement of 1848, are unparalleled in ancient history. Cf. Curtius, *Greek History*, Eng. trans. ii. p. 428.

free-thought, their contributory influence to Greek Skepticism does not seem to have been very powerful.

TREVOR. Very true; and as to the Sophists, their method will come before us when we discuss Sokrates, whom I regard as their chief.

ARUNDEL (rising to go). A very doubtful proposition, Doctor, which, together with your overcharged patronage of those teachers, I should feel inclined to contest, if the clock were not at this moment striking eleven.

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EVENING III.

SOKRATES AND THE SOKRATIC SCHOOLS.

Ἕμεῖς μέντοι ἂν ἐμοὶ πείθησθε, σμικρὸν φροντίσαντες Σωκράτους, τῆς δὲ ἀληθείας πολὺ μᾶλλον, ἔὰν μὲν τι ὑμῶν δοκῶ ἀληθὲς λέγειν, ξυνομολογήσατε, εἰ δὲ μὴ, παντὶ λόγῳ ἀντιτείνατε.

Socrates apud Platonem.

‘You may dislike philosophy: you may undervalue, or altogether proscribe, the process of theorizing. This is the standing-point usual with the bulk of mankind, ancient as well as modern, who generally dislike all accurate reasoning, or analysis and discrimination of familiar abstract words, as mean and tiresome hair-splitting. But if you admit the business of theorizing to be legitimate, useful, and even honourable, you must reckon on free working of independent, individual minds as the operative force, and on the necessity of dissentient, conflicting manifestations of this common force as essential conditions to any successful result. Upon no other conditions can you obtain any tolerable body of reasoned Truth—or even reasoned *quasi-truth*.’

GROTE, *Plato*, vol. iii. p. 485.

‘Dulce mihi cruciari,
Parva vis doloris est;
Malo mori quam fœdari,
Major vis amoris est.’

Old Latin Hymn.

DU MERIL, *Poésies Populaires Latines*, p. 139.

EVENING III.

SOKRATES AND THE SOKRATIC SCHOOLS.

MISS LEYCESTER. A pretty and appropriate designation for this *evening*, speaking literally not ecclesiastically, in respect of the object to which we mean to devote it, would be—‘The eve of Saint Sokrates.’

MRS. ARUNDEL. *Saint* Sokrates! Miss Leycester!

MISS LEYCESTER. Most true, Mrs. Arundel! He was so named by Erasmus, who said that as often as he read his life and his death he could scarce refrain from saying, ‘Sancte Sokrates, ora pro nobis.’

TREVOR. I must say I cordially sympathise with Erasmus; and if Mrs. Arundel will read, if she has never done so, the *Apology* and *Krito* of Plato, I think she will understand why Sokrates has received, though informally, philosophical canonization. But it is not as a saint in the usual acceptation of the term, but as a ‘sinner,’ that he comes before us. He is the choregus of Greek free-thought.

ARUNDEL. Greek thought, if you like, Doctor; I demur to the ‘free,’ at least in your sense of Skeptical.

HARRINGTON. On the contrary, I think Trevor is right. The outcome of Sokratic thought is really Skepticism in the sense of suspense, though not in that of negation. He questions not the existence of truth, but methods of attaining it.

TREVOR. You might have said *all* methods of attaining it excepting one, Dialectic; and this exception is on his own showing just as fallible as the rest. Consequently, he is a complete though undeclared Skeptic. That he was not a negative Dogmatist, as Pyrrhôn was, is clear, but he is not the less but rather the greater Skeptic on that account. Free suspense is, or should be, as careful to avoid positive

negation as distinct affirmation. The difference between Sokrates and Pyrrhôn is—the former simply maintained his ignorance of truth, saying, with Montaigne, ‘Je ne sçais pas,’ or ‘Que je sçais ;’ while the latter went further, and held all truth-knowledge to be impossible—a very different position.

MISS LEYCESTER. I suppose the difference consisted in this: Sokrates was content with the assertion of his own nescience, while Pyrrhôn, sharing the same conviction, made his ignorance an absolute rule for the rest of humanity, which we may take as another exemplification of the irresistible propensity of mankind to hasty generalization.

TREVOR. Pyrrhôn, if he is not belied, went even further than that. He was not satisfied with saying of himself, ‘I don’t know,’ and of his fellow-mortals, ‘I am certain you don’t know,’ but he went a step further and said, ‘It is quite impossible that you or I or any being endued with our faculties ever can know anything,’ an overweening and arrogant judgment, to which he has not the least right, and which conflicts completely with his own standpoint of professed ignorance.

ARUNDEL. But you see, Doctor, that is precisely the mischief of negation, it does not know when to stop. If I say, *e.g.* ‘I don’t know,’ I feel inclined immediately to extend my nescience to my neighbours, whom I see to be constituted as I am, and to add, ‘You don’t know ;’ and having by induction ascertained that all men in the world are similarly constituted as myself and my neighbours, I next say positively, and of all mankind, ‘We don’t know,’ or perhaps, ‘We cannot know,’ in other words, ‘Knowledge is impossible.’

TREVOR. But the same tendency to rapid and unauthorized generalization is just as true of affirmation as of negation. Nothing is more common than for dogmatists of every kind to urge, ‘I know and believe certain doctrines in a certain manner. Therefore, you know and believe the same doctrines in precisely the same manner. If you don’t, you are infidels, heretics, or fools.’

MISS LEYCESTER. But if both these processes are illicit, what are we to say of the saw of Protagoras, ‘Man is the measure of all things’?

TREVOR. We must say that it holds good of the man himself and of his own subjective and individual measure. It cannot be held to condition or determine another man's knowledge or measure, for that in reality would operate as a contravention of the maxim. It is as true of our neighbour as of each of us that he is himself the measure of all things.

HARRINGTON. Your discussion is approaching a point of excessive individualism, which in the ordinary interests of man as a social and political being is much to be deprecated. In practical life, at least, there is no need of pushing individual idiosyncrasies to an extreme which would make all communities and societies mere ropes of sand; and I agree so far with Arundel that of the two excesses, negative and affirmative, the former are the more mischievous, at least they would be so if negation were as normal and satisfactory a state for average humanity as affirmation.

ARUNDEL. But why do you then insist so strongly on the purely negative attitude of Sokrates?

HARRINGTON. Because I believe it to be the only conception of him which can be fairly deduced from his writings; and also because, if I may employ a personal argument, I have a vivid remembrance of the effect of his elenchus on myself. When I studied him carefully many years ago, I could not help applying his proof to other subjects than those he discussed, with the result that I was glad to buy back again through the agency of 'categorical imperatives' what I squandered by means of Sokratic ratiocination and dialectics. It seems to me there are few truths capable of standing before the Sokratic elenchus, when wielded with skill and freedom.

MRS. HARRINGTON. But why, if Sokrates was really a Skeptic, has he always enjoyed the reputation of a dogmatist, and for that reason has stood so high in the estimation of civilized humanity?

ARUNDEL. The very objection I was about to raise, Mrs. Harrington! Moreover, in declaring Sokrates a Skeptic we are going even further than Grote, who explicitly defends him from the charge of Skepticism.

TREVOR. True, but from Skepticism in the sense of determined and absolute negation, which I contend is not genuine Skepticism at all, though it is very often confounded with it. Certainly it is not the attitude of calm suspense which I hope to prove was Sokrates's position. As to Mrs. Harrington's remark, I acknowledge its truth, but I believe the common prejudice to be unfounded. The popular estimate of Sokrates has been vitiated and rendered inaccurate by too much isolation from brother thinkers. Partly on account of his personal character and influence, partly because of his noble death, he has been generally regarded as a unique product, a marvellous *ἀπαξ λεγόμενον* of nature, who has neither companion, rival, nor equal. This, I think, is the reason why his Skepticism has never been valued at its true worth. It has been regarded as only the ironical mask put on to deceive his countrymen, and expose their own ignorance, but which really covered in his own case the normal amount of Greek conviction both in philosophy and religion. This position I shall criticise in my paper. A further reason for the same fact is the unconscious misrepresentation of him by Plato, who is sometimes inclined to place the idealistic dogmas of his own later philosophy into his master's mouth.

MISS LEYCESTER. So you see, Dr. Trevor, 'Man' is not after all 'the measure of all things.' At least a little man is not the measure of a giant.

TREVOR. Of course, the little man is liable to make mistakes if he thinks the giant's stature is not greater than his own, and does not make the requisite allowance for the difference. On the other hand there is, I take it, an advantage in reducing the intellectual giant, for temporary purposes of comparison, to the standard of his brethren. Take Sokrates, *e.g.* In the history of philosophy he is really the companion of Skeptical thinkers, as he is classed by Diogenes Laertius, and other ancient authors, and I believe no small light is thrown on his intellectual tendencies by the comparative method of estimating him, which I purpose to employ on the present occasion. Indeed, it seems to me that the only philosophical mode of assessing any man's intellect,

and the only true basis for his psychological classification, is to take account of the instinctive workings of his mind, the processes by which he arrives at his conclusions. A reformation is on this account needed in biography, of the same kind as that by which the botanical system of Jussieu came to be substituted for that of Linnæus, the natural for the artificial method. Linnæus classified the vegetable kingdom by affinities of structure, Jussieu by similarities of process, nutrition, and fructification. The former was at its basis organic, the latter functional. Similarly the ordinary basis for psychological classification of mankind is their conclusions, opinions, tenets, and creeds. But the truer method is the processes by which those conclusions are attained, the manner in which those opinions and creeds are evolved. Hence Sokrates will never be rightly estimated until he is compared with men not so much of the same definitive opinions as possessing the same kind of mental habits, tendencies, &c. The Linnæists ridiculed the groups which the natural system brought together. Similarly ordinary biographers and students of Sokrates will criticize my classification when I place him in closest juxtaposition with Pyrrhôn, Ainesidemos, Sextos Empeirikos, Thomas Aquinas, Pomponazzi, Giordano Bruno, Montaigne, Huet of Avranches, Descartes, Locke, Kant, Niebuhr, John Stuart Mill, and, if I may add two illustrious contemporaries of our own country, George Cornewall Lewis and Bishop Thirlwall. What, it will be demanded, is the common thread joining these various individuals of different ages, countries, and creeds? I answer, in all of them is a passion for logic not only as an instrument for attaining knowledge, but as a necessity for mental exertion! All of them are really Eristics and controversialists. All of them have the dual instinct; to use a Greek word they are ἀμφοτερόβλεπτοι or 'double-eyed men.' All possess an inborn tendency for taking a judicial many-sided estimate of every question that comes before them, and for that reason all are more or less Skeptics. It might be added, as showing that the correspondence between them is not limited to more important characteristics of mental formation, but holds good of the lesser features of temperament, style, &c., they all

share an ironical or satirical manner of criticizing opinions opposed to their own.

HARRINGTON. I suspect your classification is only another form of the division of men's intellects into analytic and synthetic.

TREVOR. Not quite. In the minds I speak of analysis is, no doubt, the preponderating motive, but there is no *à priori* objection to synthesis when fairly arrived at.

ARUNDEL. A contingency which, taking your own mind as a specimen, is somewhat rare. What proportion of analysis and synthesis would you assign as the particular psychological 'blend' that constitutes a perfect intellectual formation?

TREVOR. Well, it is difficult to apply arithmetic to psychology, but I should say it ought to have three quarters of analysis to one quarter of synthesis. In the case of Sokrates, the proportion of synthesis we shall find to be still less.

MISS LEYCESTER. There is another aspect of Sokrates to which I wish to call attention—I mean the state & Greek or rather Athenian society which could have made a career like his possible. I do not suppose that, taking any other European town at any period of its history, we could find an environment so suitable for a Sokrates mission as that which Athens afforded him.

ARUNDEL. You might find many an European town that would have terminated his existence quite as promptly as Athens did.

HARRINGTON. Nay, far more promptly. Sokrates pursued his ungrateful task for thirty years, opposing himself to the firmest convictions and most sacred prejudices of all around him. Even if the conditions of civic life in modern Europe rendered the career of such a strange 'missioner' possible, it would be quite impossible to find a town where he could have discharged his office with so much tolerance. I agree with Grote's comment on the death of Sokrates, that it is the forbearance of the Athenians—not their intolerance—that ought to excite our wonderment.

TREVOR. I think so, too; but our marvel at Athenian tolerance becomes sensibly diminished when we remember

its high intellectual and literary status in the days of Perikles and Sokrates. Welcker justly remarks that in its prime the city was, in reality, 'a little university conducted on principles of free-teaching.' All its places of public resort and many private houses were devoted to lectures, discussions, lessons, &c., on the most diverse topics. Had we lived at Athens in those days we might have come in contact in a morning stroll through the streets with, perhaps, some score of different teachers and schools. Extending our walk, *e.g.* outside the city walls as far as the Lyceum, we should have found Prodikos surrounded, not only by his own pupils, but by a mixed crowd of Athenian citizens, expounding his perennial theme of the 'Choice of Herakles,' and the vanity of riches without virtue. While, in another part of the Lyceum, Euthydemos might be heard declaiming; or a brace of Sophists discussing some moot point of rhetoric or grammar. Returning to the city and entering the house of Kallias or Kallikles, we might have found Sokrates placing some innocent youth, like Lysis or Euthyphron, on the intellectual rack of his elenchus, and watching his struggles with some ironical sympathy and much real amusement. Or going into one of the gymnasia, we might discover Gorgias, a man of noble presence and magnificently dressed, declaiming in periods as stately and ornate as his own appearance and deportment, some rhetorical exercise, and surrounded by an admiring crowd; or entering the schools of Isokrates or Lysias, we might have listened for a time to the brilliant but inflated periods of the former orator, or enjoyed the incomparable grace and simplicity of the latter. I do not speak of the *chefs-d'œuvre* of architecture, painting, and sculpture that might conceivably have arrested our attention at different points of our walk, nor of the dramatic performance of the masterpieces of Aischylos and Sophokles probably within our reach. Confining ourselves to purely ratiocinative excitation, we might say that Athens in the time of Perikles reveals an activity of free-thought, an intensity of intellectual life, unsurpassed by any city, at any epoch, ancient or modern; the nearest approach to it being, perhaps, Elea in the time of Parmenides, or Florence under

the Medicis. What makes the case of Athens so peculiar as well as superior to all the university towns of modern Europe is the fact that those who share its cultured energy are not strangers who come to the town for purposes of education, but the inhabitants of the town itself, who combine with their ordinary avocations the pursuit of literature, art, and philosophy.

ARUNDEL. I suspect the 'ordinary avocations' of the disciples of Sokrates and the Sophists were of the lightest description. Indeed I am inclined to doubt whether the intellectual activity you speak of penetrated much below the circles of politicians and the wealthy—the upper crust of Athenian society. I don't think the artizans, shopkeepers, and agriculturists—the olive-farmers and vine-dressers of the time—would have entered, *e.g.* into the spirit of one of Plato's dialogues much more readily or profoundly than individuals of the same classes among ourselves.

HARRINGTON. I cannot agree with you, Arundel. The average culture pertaining to a community at any given epoch is to be estimated not so much by the intellectual calibre of its foremost leaders as by the appreciation of their works on the part of the people. Judged by this test, we are bound to conceive a high estimate of general Greek culture. The audiences who could appreciate the masterpieces of Aischylos and Sophokles, who were moved by the orations of Lysias and Demosthenes, who approved the sculpture of Pheidias and Praxiteles, and who were capable of taking part in deciding the literary and artistic contests at the games, must have attained a high proficiency in general culture.

ARUNDEL. Still it could only have been the leisured and wealthy classes which gave attention to the ethical and philosophical problems mooted by Sokrates. Among all his disciples, interlocutors, &c., we have no distinct evidence of any one belonging to the poorer classes. His own stress upon 'Leisure,' and his dislike of mechanical occupation, show the general quality of his hearers.¹ Zeller, I observe, calls his auditors 'wohlhabende junge Männer.'

¹ See on this point some remarks in Mahaffy's *Social Life in Greece*, pp. 314, 315.

TREVOR. The affluence and prosperity of Athens after the Persian war were so great that the number of the really poor among its citizens was probably very small; but I quite agree with Harrington that Athenian culture penetrated far below the upper circles of society—and that artists, mechanics—what we should call the middle classes—were often intelligent hearers, if not more, of the Sokratic philosophy. Xenophon, you remember, tells us that besides resorting to the public walks, the markets, gymnasia, &c., Sokrates was accustomed to frequent the studios of artists, the shops of mechanics, the *salons* of fashionable ladies, and wherever else Athenians were most wont to congregate. He was curiously like Dr. Johnson in his love for crowded thoroughfares, in his high estimate of their educational value, as well as in his opinion of the monotony of Nature apart from human existence. That most of the youth whose names are recorded as disciples of Sokrates belonged to the wealthier classes of Athenian citizens is easily accounted for by their greater facilities for intellectual improvement; but that Sokrates evinced any partiality for the scions of wealthy men as such, is utterly opposed to all the ruling principles of his life and character. Indeed, in the 'Apology' he admits 'putting to the question' both rich and poor indifferently.

MISS LEYCESTER. I am eagerly looking forward, Dr. Trevor, to your treatment of the demon of Socrates, and not less eagerly to the reconciliation you will, I suppose, try to effect between his Skepticism and his conviction of possessing within himself an infallible oracle. The legitimate outcome of such a conviction would ordinarily be extreme dogmatism.

TREVOR. But the demon of Sokrates, Miss Leycester, was a negative demon. Its oracular decisions were always 'No,' never 'Yes.' Moreover, it limited its restraining agency to the practical concerns of life, and never meddled with speculation.

HARRINGTON. But I hope, Doctor, you will think it your duty to examine that curious feature of the great Thinker from a professional point of view. Some years ago

I fell in with and read with much interest M. Lelut's work 'Du Démon de Socrate,' which attempts to explain the belief of Sokrates by overstrained sensibility passing into actual hypochondria.¹ Though agreeing with the author as to the genesis of the conviction, I thought he pushed his theory of hallucination and conscious self-deception beyond the exigences of the occasion. For my part I have always thought the protestations of Sokrates on the subject are, like others of his statements as to personal peculiarities, more or less ironical.

MRS. HARRINGTON. But did the work you speak of maintain that Sokrates was really persuaded of his possessing a familiar spirit? The notion seems so curious for the wisest of the Greeks to have held.

HARRINGTON. Undoubtedly. It would be impossible to dispute the mere fact of Sokrates having entertained the opinion. The only doubt on the subject relates to the mode in which he held it, and the precise extent to which he carried it. He certainly imagined himself to receive in critical conjunctures, both of his own life and in the lives of his friends, certain prohibitory whispers which he ascribed to a familiar spirit or divine voice, and it seems probable that he attached a supernatural meaning to such intimations; but there is nothing to show that he attributed them to agencies outside and independent of his own reason, intellect, and conscience. M. Lelut seems to think that he ultimately became a kind of monomaniac or imbecile on the subject, and really fancied that he heard strange voices and saw strange sights; an idea which appears to me at least quite unnecessary. He also classes Sokrates with such historical notabilities as Hebrew seers, Numa, Cardan, Swedenborg, Jean d'Arc, Pascal, Rousseau, and others who have deemed

¹ 'Voilà ce qui est arrivé à Socrate. Ce qui n'était d'abord en lui qu'une impulsion irrésistible, une conviction profonde, une pensée de tous les instants, est devenu, par les progrès du temps, mais surtout par le fait d'une action incessante, une sensation externe de l'ouïe, et je n'en doute pas de la vue.' *Du Démon de Socrate*, p. 196. A few sentences afterwards, M. Lelut proposes to explain 'comment Socrate, la première tête philosophique de l'antiquité, a pu se laisser devenir fou.' Comp. Zeller, *Gesch.* ii. i. p. 64.

themselves the objects of special divine guidance. As I have said, I regard most of Sokrates's utterances on the subject as ironical. He seems to have been fond of posing occasionally as an eccentric.¹ At the same time he was clearly not without some superstitions. He believed, for example, in dreams.

TREVOR. Well, he is none the less a Skeptic on that account. When we come to discuss Montaigne, Cornelius Agrippa, Pascal, Glanvill, and others of our Skeptics, we shall find numerous examples of an excessive credulity in one direction, compensating, I suppose, for a deficiency of belief in another. My notion of the demon of Sokrates is that it is an instance of the concrete subjectivity not uncommon in profound thinkers. Contemplation often engenders a kind of mystic self-assertion, a morbid excess of personal consciousness, so to speak. How far he really supposed this self-evolved oracle to be divine in the sense of supernatural is a question not altogether easy to answer. The highest divinities in the estimation of Sokrates were truth and righteousness, and he would probably have regarded every true instinct and clear-sighted perception of right conduct as divine.

ARUNDEL. I own I have always regarded it as a striking proof of Sokrates's religious spirit, the internal witness of conscience harmonizing with the external law of divine providence which in reality he seems to have substituted for the divinities of Olympos. We must remember that he repeatedly calls his mentor divine, and compares it to the Delphic oracle, in which it would seem he believed most devoutly.

HARRINGTON. On the contrary, that very comparison convinces me that Sokrates's profession of faith in his demon is to a great extent ironical. His argument is: The priestess at Delphi receives communications from the gods, why should not I? And I would also infer a half-contemptuous, half-ironical sneer at the authorities of Delphi in the well-known story of their having pronounced him the wisest man in Greece.

¹ Comp. the striking and almost incredible instance given by Xenophon, *Sympos.* iii. 10.

TREVOR. There, I think, you are mistaken. Ironical it may have been, but by no means contemptuous. If there was a firm, unflinching conviction in the mind of Sokrates, it was that the supremest wisdom consisted in nescience; and being fully conscious of his absolute ignorance, his wisdom was a direct corollary from that premiss. How he managed—assuming the truth of the story—to get the authorities at Delphi to side with him is a point not easily solved.

ARUNDEL. For my part, I cannot see why you or Harrington should wish to *ironize*, if I may coin the word, Sokrates's demon out of existence. If it stood alone as an ultimate principle of certitude, its existence might be thought doubtful. But Sokrates was just as firmly convinced of the infallibility of reason and its method. Did he not say that 'Dialectic was the nature of things'? Moreover, he certainly asserted the unconditional obligation of virtue as well as the existence of Deity and a future state. So that if he is to be taken as a Skeptic it must be with very large qualification.

TREVOR. I quite admit that there are incongruities in the thought-system of Sokrates, though, I hope, my paper will succeed in minimizing some of them.

MISS LEYCESTER. I remember being struck with that definition of Dialectic as 'The nature of things' when I first read it. I should suppose there is hardly a more pregnant aphorism to be found among all the maxims enounced by philosophers. Its purport, I presume, is the declaration of the identity of human and divine reason—the assertion of a positive relation between phenomena and their interpretation, between thought and being.

TREVOR. Yes, it is an admirable foundation stone for idealism. Human ratiocination, notwithstanding its proved fallibility, is thereby made the divine plan of the universe. . . . But with Sokrates its effect is of a mingled description. It affirmed in the first place that a man's own reason was his sole method of reasoning—a self-evident proposition, though one on which Sokrates lays much stress—but its well-known result in his own case was a conviction of nescience, whence,

according to Sokrates, it holds true that 'Nescience is the nature of things,' so far as humanity is concerned.

HARRINGTON. I think, Doctor, you are, if not perverting the dictum of Sokrates, at least exaggerating its Skeptical implication. Sokrates's ratiocination must have had some part in his conviction of absolute morality and the existence of Deity, if only by affirming the necessity, apart from demonstration, of these truths for humanity. . . . By the way, it is curious how thoughts in different epochs, conceived by persons differently constituted, tend occasionally to converge. Sokrates affirmed that Dialectic supplied, the rationale of human subjective truth (for I do not think he meant to apply it to the order or wisdom displayed in nature). Similarly one of the Schoolmen, Berengarius, I think, said still more boldly, 'God is a dialectician,' meaning I, suppose, that his works were the result of wisdom and prescience interpretable by human ratiocination.

MISS LEYCESTER. I should like some light thrown on that very point—How far does the recognition by human reason of the processes and laws of nature affirm a relation, I suppose I must not say identity, between the reason which interprets and that which seems involved in the law or process itself? Is not Newton's discovery, *e.g.* of the law of gravitation an illustration of the Sokratic maxim 'Dialectic is the nature of things,' or, as it might be phrased in that particular instance, 'Human reason sufficed to discover the nature of planetary movements'?

TREVOR. Most theologians, especially of idealizing tendencies, would say that the human reason must imply the divine, but I do not think this ratiocination either exact or imperative. Human reason might conceivably interpret processes and operations from which all objective reason, considered as the intelligent adaptation of means to an end, were absent. Like an indeterminate problem in algebra, *e.g.* in which unknown quantities preponderate over equations, but which nevertheless admits of solution.

ARUNDEL. Excuse me, Doctor. Your Skepticism is running away with you. Un-reason might interpret what is irrational and absurd; reason itself, never! When it assumes

such functions, reason must lay down its own proper office and assume for the time being the cap and bells of folly. Suppose, *e.g.* the planets had been governed, I won't say by laws but by impulses fitful, wayward, and irregular, would Newton's reason or any other man's have been competent to interpret their motions? As for your mathematical illustration, it is against you, for the solutions of indeterminate problems may be numberless.

TREVOR. Do you then deny that reason in the case of 'Mad-doctors,' as they are called, is incapable of interpreting and accounting for the capricious irrational impulses of their patients?

ARUNDEL. No, I do not, but I dare to affirm that it is by temporarily divesting themselves of their own rational faculties, and entering into the wayward unregulated moods of their patients, that they are able to do so. Besides, there are, I suppose, in most lunatics some relics of ordinary reason, so that there is not a total want of a common standpoint between them and their physicians.

HARRINGTON. Your controversy resolves itself into this: How far can reason, *quasi* reason, divest itself of its customary methods, and enter sympathetically into modes of thought that are irrational? Certainly reason, *applying rational procedure*, can never claim to interpret what has no affinity with itself. I therefore agree with Arundel, there must be some congruous relation between thought and being, or I quite fail to see how one can interpret the other. The principle may be pushed to extravagance, but I am convinced that at the bottom it is sound. Even those Scientists who most deny the objective wisdom or reason displayed in the universe, postulate it at every affirmation of a discovery of fitness between means and ends. Among the Darwinian materialists—Haeckel is a conspicuous instance—the text of their discourses is loudly Atheistic, but the discourses themselves are distinctly Theistic. . . . But we are in danger of leaving Sokrates, I think.

TREVOR. I will return to him by beginning my paper—with this final question on the point just mooted: Who is the best judge of a discord, the musician with a sensitive ear

for music, and who perhaps has studied the law of discords, or any chance *idiotés* who has no ear for music of any kind?

HARRINGTON. Your analogy is wide of the mark. A more suitable one would be this: Could a musician by any possible means enter into the feelings which a deaf mute might conceivably have on the subject of his art? I humbly trow not.

Dr. Trevor then began his paper.

Sokrates, the greatest thinker of Greece, is also its freest thinker. I mean that he attaches more importance than any other Greek philosopher to the free unrestricted exercise of human reason, and values more highly the results of that exercise. Though not the inventor of Eristic, he first brought it to perfection; he first showed what an invincible instrument for destructive purposes Dialectic is. Sokrates, therefore, is allied both to the Eleatics and the Sophists, for the reason that he introduced and taught the ordinary use of those logical weapons which had been forged in the school of Elea, and in the lecture-rooms of Sicilian Rhetoricians and Athenian Sophists. Sokrates may also claim to be the first Greek thinker who declared Skeptical suspense—the conviction of ignorance—to be a legitimate outcome of the unimpeded energies of the human intellect. His creed is Nescience, not, in the first instance, as a dogmatic estimate of the condition of others, but as an assertion of his own state. Hypothetically he assumes that both truth and knowledge not only exist, but are diffused widely among mankind; hence, he covertly pretends to agree with the multitude who are all convinced that they possess them. Although he cannot share this conviction, it is from no want of effort on his part. His endeavours are unceasing to become partaker in this general store of science, to realise and convert to ready cash for every-day use this speculative stock of knowledge which humanity claims to possess. Having thoroughly ransacked his own mental coffers and found them empty, he industriously explores those of other people—generally of great reputation for wealth; but he plainly intimates, as the result of his search, that the wealth is fictitious, the reputation unfounded, and their true condition not very different from his own. But the quest has been attended with one beneficial result. Setting aside the intellectual vacuity of others, on which from ironical and humorous motives he does not insist, he has at least

ascertained his own real state. He has put in practice one of the earliest axioms of Greek philosophy, 'Know thyself;' and he congratulates himself on that self-knowledge, though it amount only to a conviction of nescience.

A detailed narration of the life of Sokrates we may dispense with. The story of that noble life, and especially its glorious termination, has been so often told that it has become the best known of classical biographies. The son of a sculptor, Sophroniskos, and a midwife, Phanarete, Sokrates was born B.C. 469—the last year of the Persian war. His life, therefore, synchronises with the most brilliant period of Athenian history. Having received the usual elements of an Attic education—comprising Music, Gymnastic, Geometry, and Astronomy—he passed some years in learning his father's trade of sculptor; but Nature had clearly destined him to mould men's intellects rather than copy their bodily forms. He accordingly, though at what age is uncertain, abandoned hewing dead marble; and, after due preparation, began to treat incisively the mass of convictions then current among his countrymen, and of which he conceived himself to possess his proper share. His philosophical studies were commenced by an investigation of the Ionic physiccists. Indeed, it seems probable that at one period of his life he had acquired some celebrity as a teacher of physical science. We have his own admission of the powerful charm which natural science exercised over him during his early manhood. He thus entered the portal of Greek thought by the study of her earliest philosophy, and it is observable that his mental career coincides with the general course of Hellenic speculation. Few, indeed, are the aspects of Greek thought that find no representation nor reflection in the Platonic Sokrates. His introduction to the next stage—the Eleatic Philosophy—was accomplished by personal intercourse with Parmenides and Zenon. To these subtle and illustrious thinkers must be ascribed no small share in the impulsion to those mental studies and dialectical exertitions by which the name of Sokrates is signalled in history. To a certain extent they may even claim the title of his teachers; but his own native powers were so great, his intellect so clear and penetrating, his character so independent, the career that he struck out so entirely novel, that it is impossible to suppose him influenced by any external instrumentality beyond mere suggestion. The bent of his own mind was decidedly towards metaphysical and ethical inquiries, and he himself confesses to a passionate love of controversy. His distaste for physical inquiries and his permanent attachment to dialectic are thus readily accounted for. Investiga-

tions into natural phenomena appeared to him to have no practical issue. Theories of cosmogony and kindred subjects taught him nothing about himself—the problem of all others in which he was most interested—nor did they throw much light on the intellectual formation and modes of thought of his fellow-men, the subjects which he deemed next in importance. Accordingly, abandoning all objects of physical research, he resolved to confine himself to mental and ethical philosophy; to the study of human knowledge, its origin, growth, and validity; to the free and unreserved analysis of prevalent convictions and modes of belief; in a word, to search for truth in its immediate relation to human thought and conduct.

The motive influences that impelled Sokrates along this path of free-thought are not, I think, difficult to determine. The chief of them was, perhaps, his personal proclivities. Like all Skeptics, Sokrates possessed an intellect of marvellous acuteness. He was also gifted with an insatiable curiosity for knowledge, as well as with that peculiar subtlety and profundity of thought which is never satisfied with *prima facie* solutions or probable determinations of intellectual problems. Men of this class—Montaigne is another conspicuous instance—seem to possess an instinctive and spontaneous distrust of what is obvious or apparent; they delight to probe beneath the crust of customary belief and somnolent acquiescence. In any state of society or opinion Sokrates must needs have pursued his mission. The political, social, or individual condition of his fellow-men that could have satisfied him is quite beyond ordinary conception or experience. The perfection of popular education and belief; the general advance in Dialectic and mental culture, which rendered further examination superfluous, would have been for him undesirable. He himself admits before the Dikastery that life without cross-questioning and discussion would not, in his judgment, be worth having. It is to this personal peculiarity that we must ascribe the chief motive that determined his mission. I do not mean to say that he was not convinced, apart from his own predilection, that his intellectual vivisection—his ‘torpedo shock,’ or his ‘horse-fly bite,’ as he playfully calls the stimulus—was not most healthful for his fellow-citizens. That he supposed his mission beneficial to the State is a fact beyond doubt. In this respect his conception of public utility coincided admirably with his private idiosyncrasy. His overmastering lust of discussion had the further merit of being the one thing needful for the general community.

To this personal quality must be added various external

stimuli ; and firstly those we have noticed as being derived from Parmenides and the Eleatics. The aim of these thinkers was primarily to concentrate men's attention on themselves, to teach them that all sound knowledge begins with self-knowledge. Now Athens, during the latter portion of the Periklean régime, was overrun with teachers, who theorized on all branches of natural knowledge, and for the most part in an exceedingly crude manner. The possible size of the sun, the motions and natures of the other heavenly bodies, the origin of the Universe, represent the type of questions which attracted the attention of Athenians more than those ethical and intellectual subjects which concerned every act of their lives. Sokrates himself, we have seen, had once evinced the keenest interest in these hypotheses. Assuming that he was converted by Parmenides from physical to ethical speculation, it is only natural to suppose that, with an idiosyncrasy like his own, the impulse should have been of a very powerful character ; that he should not only have pursued with zest the congenial path thus opened to him, but should have transformed into a popular mission what had perhaps been the esoteric lore of a few disciples.

Nor would I suppose him quite uninfluenced by certain incidental mischiefs which had followed the teaching of the Sophists. It is clear that in certain cases and under the more unscrupulous of these teachers a lax tone of public and private morals had been induced. Probably the point in their teaching which had most contributed to this result was the confounding practice with theory in the sense that a deficiency of demonstrable truth in speculation was held to involve a want of any standard in ethical conduct. This theory, which is most confined to Greek Sophists, was combated with all his force by Sokrates. He is never tired of insisting that a defect of speculative truth does not nullify obvious moral obligation. There was, indeed, a peculiar significance in the fact that he himself combined with sophistical ratiocination and mental freedom a life of unblemished rectitude and moral purity.¹ He thus endeavoured to teach the Athenians to discriminate between what was good and what was harmful in the teaching of the Sophists. Their free methods, so closely copied by himself, were useful. It was right that men should be taught to employ their intellectual powers with freedom, unimpeded by foregone conclusions and ancient prejudices. But their conduct, the practice as distinct from the theory of ethics, belonged very largely to their fellow-men, to the State, to society, to their friends and neighbours ; good, unselfish action being the founda-

¹ On this point see Appendix C.

tion stone of all political and social life. But though Sokrates opposed, in the interests of the common weal, immoral application of the Sophists' teaching, it is evident that he derived no small intellectual excitation from the atmosphere of free discussion which those teachings helped to create and sustain. During his early manhood there was in Athens a large and active circulation of free thought among the upper classes of society. Questions of Philosophy, Theology, Art, Ethics, and Politics were discussed not only in public in the theatres and gymnasia, but also at reunions in the houses of prominent citizens. The tone of these speculations was so much in advance of the popular creed that the cry of impiety was more than once raised against Perikles; while of his free-thinking friends, Anaxagoras was compelled to flee, and Pheidias died in prison. Aspasia, the wife of Perikles, and other leaders of Athenian fashion seem to have exercised the same kind of influence on the foremost intellects and political movements of the time as the leaders of the Parisian *salons* in the eighteenth century. That Sokrates attended these conversaciones in the house of Aspasia seems clear; and the keen love of controversy which he admits was so deeply engrained in his character, justifies us in supposing that he manifested a warm interest even if he did not take a leading share in the mimic warfare of so congenial an arena.

Nor, once more, must we leave out of calculation those circumstances in his own life which gave him that peculiar insight into his fellow-men which he manifests in the 'Platonic Dialogues.' His career as an Athenian citizen—and he zealously took part in all the varied functions his citizenship involved—had brought him into intimate personal relation with every class of Athenian, from ruling statesmen to the lowest members of the community. Upon all his fellow-citizens, without distinction of class or calling, Sokrates brought to bear his keen habits of observation, his acute diagnosis of character, as well as his humorous perception of human foibles. The insight he thus acquired into the hollowness, falsity, and mere conventionalism of his age might well have impelled a mind so religiously earnest and sensitive to truth to tear off the veil from this unreality and pretentiousness; to hold up the mirror to his fellow-citizens, and compel them to see themselves in their own nakedness and deformity instead of in those gaudy, borrowed trappings of false knowledge in which they were wont to array themselves.

Among these educational and inspiring influences, and during his transition from one philosophy to another, the mind of Sokrates was itself undergoing a certain discipline. He had brought his

restless research, his subtle dialectic, and his insatiable craving for truth to bear upon the stock of home convictions, with which he had grown up, and which he shared with the majority of his fellow-citizens. He had, in other words, pursued that path of self-knowledge which he afterwards declared to be the highest wisdom.

We may well suppose that this self-analysis was carried out with all the pitiless vigour which subsequently distinguished his dialogues with others; that no idea or opinion was allowed to pass muster without being first placed on the rack of his dialectic, that no hidden mental recess was left unsearched, no plausible definition unexamined, no popular conviction untested; in a word, that no mental disguise or covert remained, beneath which some unverified dogma or unstable half-truth might haply find shelter. I have often imagined a Platonic dialogue in which the interlocutors are Sokrates the elder and Sokrates the younger, and which might represent the severe self-criticism of former beliefs to which the great dialectician submitted himself. How long this Platonic di-psychical dialogue between Sokrates and himself lasted we have no means of knowing. It probably extended over some years. But the result of his introspection is evident by his own repeated attestation. It may be described as both twofold and somewhat incongruous. Sokrates became persuaded of his complete ignorance, and also of the invincible power of dialectics by which he had arrived at that conviction.

Sokrates thus accomplished that destructive self-diagnosis which is the commonest characteristic of all Skeptics. He therefore takes his place in the history of philosophy by the side of such thinkers as Augustine, Montaigne, Descartes, Pomponazzi, and other Skeptics who set forth in their intellectual career with the same determination to analyse the convictions in which they had been brought up, to sift the pure grain of truth from the chaff in which they found it commingled, though they did not all arrive at precisely similar results. The ample information we possess as to the personal character of Sokrates, as well as his declared opinion of the beneficial results of self-analysis in the case of others, enables us to pronounce with some confidence on the effects he derived from his self-examination. He thereby acquired that robust intellectual independence, that unrestricted freedom of mental energy—making every speculative conviction an open question—that supreme indifference to popular and long-held opinions as such, that indomitable calmness and serenity of mind, that love of truth for its own sake, with which his name is associated in history.

But Sokrates was not satisfied with achieving this conquest

over popular dogmatism and prejudice in his own person. He was desirous that his fellow-citizens should be partakers in this new gospel of self-reliant mental freedom. If the conviction of nescience had been beneficial to himself, why should it not be so to others? False knowledge, ill-grounded opinion, and pretentious dogma were essentially evil, and must needs exercise a pernicious influence wherever they were found. Accordingly, Sokrates commenced that career of public teaching which, on account of the religious earnestness with which he pursued it, and the martyr's death that crowned it, has been worthily termed a mission. But a more extraordinary mission it is scarce possible to conceive. It is altogether unique in the history of human thought, and its extraordinary character pertains as much to its method as to its object. For the latter, it consisted in the public inculcation of human ignorance, in the ruthless investigation and wholesale destruction of unverified and unverifiable opinions. Sokrates was, hence, a teacher of philosophical repentance and self-abnegation. No religious preacher of any creed insisted more strenuously on the necessity of self-examination, on the uprooting of ancient prejudices, on the abandonment of intellectual sin and error, on such duties as are implied in the exhortation 'to cut off the right hand or pluck out the right eye.' But the Sokratic method was as remarkable as in philosophy was its object. He possessed the rare art of compelling his hearers themselves to draw the required conclusions; and the irresistible cogency of the lesson was enhanced by the involuntariness that attended its acquirement. In reality a teacher, he humorously professed to be a learner. Instead of delivering harangues as did the Rhetoricians, or formal lessons as the Sophists, he limited himself to asking questions; and so conducted his catechism that the catechumen became his own instructor.

No doubt the mission was full of peril: every attempt to compel idolators (in the Baconian sense of the word) to resign their idol-worship, to admit the false or nugatory character of long-cherished dogmas, to rest satisfied with true nescience instead of fancied knowledge, must needs be attended with danger. No humility is so great as genuine poverty of spirit, no asceticism so difficult as the surrender of preconceptions—especially on the subject-matter of religion; and the mission of Sokrates, by ignoring ordinary ideas of the gods and their worship, by analysing current ethical notions, and by insisting on the practical duties of life as apart from speculative theories respecting them—struck a blow at the self-complacency of Athenian citizens which they

would be humanly certain to resent whenever a fitting opportunity offered.

But the mission, it must be admitted, was in its real nature Skeptical. The enemy against which Sokrates fought was knowledge and popular convictions. The state he aspired to establish in each of his disciples was a candid and truthful ignorance; an ignorance, moreover, that, so far as its method was concerned, was unlimited. For, granting that much of the current Athenian knowledge was false or baseless, there was nothing in the Sokratic elenchus that limited its operation to such false science and excluded it altogether from the true, and this the Athenians were quite keen-sighted enough to perceive. Sokrates had devised a powerful machine most ingeniously adapted for uprooting mental weeds, but it was almost equally effective in extirpating the good crops. Nor was its character less real on account of the insidious and ironical guise under which it was veiled. Instead of parading openly the virtues of nescience, instead of proclaiming in set terms the vanity and pretentiousness of popular knowledge, instead of insisting plainly on the folly and imbecility of those around him, Sokrates adopted the very opposite course. He feigned to believe that the common knowledge of his fellow-citizens was real, trustworthy, and demonstrable. They were wise, he was the fool anxious to participate in their wisdom. But before doing this he naturally wished to investigate the grounds on which it was based. His adoption of this standpoint was necessitated by his avowed consciousness of ignorance, by his passion for controversy, as well as by a prudent recognition of the danger a more open indictment of popular opinion would have involved. As it was, the conviction of falsity and vanity underlying their belief was a conclusion his hearers themselves were necessitated to draw. The admission of shallow pretentiousness and folly pertaining to unverified truths was one they were coerced, in spite of themselves, into making. Oftentimes the avowal was wrested from his interlocutors without their knowledge or suspicion. They were entrapped into a confession of nescience on the very subjects they imagined they knew best. Supposing themselves wealthy, they were constrained to admit themselves intellectual bankrupts; accounting themselves possessed of rational beliefs and modes of thought, their possessions were proved to be visionary, and this by the very dialectic—the ordinary processes of human reason—on which those tenets were ostensibly grounded.

It is obvious that nothing can exceed or even equal the efficacy of such a method, whatever may be said of the painful wrench

that must have attended its application, especially in the case of disingenuous or bigoted disciples. It was a process of self-instruction that for honest inquirers rendered conviction doubly convincing. Hence, no Skeptical method that ever existed can pretend to rival the Sokratic elenchus, and we may confidently assert that its complete representation, as we have it in the Platonic 'Dialogues of Search,' has made more Skeptics than any manual or method that the doubting ingenuity of man ever devised. Other thinkers—we shall pass in review most of them—have explained the processes by which they succeeded in testing their own knowledge, and, so doing, in ridding themselves of a large amount of bastard and supposititious knowledge; but no Skeptic, either ancient or modern, succeeded so well as Sokrates in undermining the convictions of others, in proving that popular opinion is oftentimes either unconsciously groundless or purposely mendacious.

But while proclaiming Sokrates a methodical and avowed Skeptic, it is but reasonable to set forth in detail the grounds on which I base my opinion, especially as it differs from the common theory on the subject.

I. Firstly, some stress must, I think, be placed on the deliberate renunciation of physical-science studies which Sokrates made in earlier life, and his final reliance for Truth upon introspection; not only because he thereby cut himself adrift from much of prior Greek speculation, but because it evinced a distrust of the knowledge acquired by physical means. We shall find repeatedly, during our researches, that doubt, like knowledge, often begins with the senses, and there is sufficient evidence that Sokrates at a critical point of his intellectual career had conceived a suspicion of all sense-derived knowledge. How far he carried that feeling in the direction of Idealism it would be difficult to say. I do not think myself that he would have agreed with Plato in the *Phaidon* that a philosopher would be better off without his bodily senses. Perhaps we shall not be far wrong in supposing that Sokrates arrived at the wicket-gate of idealism by adopting the principles implied in such maxims as 'Know thyself,' 'Dialectic is the Nature of Things,' without caring to push to their ideal consequences the logical issues of these propositions. Certainly the general method and standpoint of Sokrates are only reconcilable with a partial and limited Idealism—one that propounded introspection as the readiest path to Truth, but at the same time made Truth the synonym of Nescience. The main advantage that Sokrates derived from Idealism was its supplying him with a

metaphysical standpoint whence he might survey the nature of the human mind, its methods and processes, just as his physical position had enabled him to examine man's knowledge of the material universe. But his conclusion from the latter as from the former investigation, from the self-knowledge as from the Nature-knowledge, was the same Nescience.

For it was not only the fallibility of human senses that his physicist-investigations served to reveal; the weakness of the Reason when brought to bear on the problems of Nature was another conviction derived from the same study. Sokrates discovered that the simplest and most obvious of natural phenomena refused to disclose all its secrets to the human inquirer. The passages in which he relates his experience on this point read like condensed summaries of chapters of Sextos Empeirikos. He says that he once inquired into the physical growth and decay of animals, but with the Skeptical result of doubting whether growth depended on eating and drinking. He had also investigated ordinary ideas of number and comparison, but ended by professing his inability to understand precisely how one and one made two. At last, baffled and disappointed, he took refuge in Introspection. Dialectic became to him 'the Nature of Things;' and though this path, like the other, ended in a conviction of Nescience, the unwelcome conclusion was presented in a more definitive if not more agreeable form, so as at least to induce an acquiescence in it. His metaphysics had also the advantage of not deceiving him with a fictitious glamour of easy knowledge, as physical phenomena were apt to do.

But this supreme confidence in Dialectic, which is disclosed in its definition as the Nature of Things, seems to call for a passing remark. I incline to regard it as the most noteworthy feature in the intellectual character of Sokrates. That Introspection, self-analysis, is the only road to Truth and Knowledge he is experimentally certain.¹ Indeed the Ratiocination of a wise man he declares to be the *only conceivable* method of Truth-search. But though satisfied with the way, he is not certain that he himself *must* attain Truth by pursuing it—we might say that he is not so anxious about the termination of his path as he is that it should follow the right direction. If Truth were the goal of all human effort, we could not be wrong in following undeviatingly that Unfettered Reasoning which was the only road leading to it. To

¹ It should be noticed, as one of the many ties that connect Sokrates with the Sophists, that in the *Sophistes* he describes the Sophist as doubting of all phenomena, *and knowing only the Idea.*

Dialectic, therefore, he conceded, sometimes in playful irony, but often with sincere earnestness, a certain despotism over the Human Reason in general, and over the methods of his own inquiry in particular.¹ It was a transference of the absolute supremacy of Truth to the sole method by which it was acquired. Whatever Dialectic or Reason taught must needs be true, no matter what it was or how much it conflicted with popular prejudices and convictions. He represents it as a kind of tyrant, in whose hands he himself is volitionless and helpless. Its dictum is the judgment of a superior court, which he has no power to disregard or gainsay. Suppose, *e.g.* it were to lead to a denial of the gods, he cannot help it. Assume it to involve a criticism of any other long acknowledged truth, that is not his fault. Suppose it terminate, as in his own case it actually did terminate, in Nescience, the result must be accepted if not gratefully, at least unrepiningly. At most, an inexpedient conclusion can only be avoided by the very road leading to it. Dialectic must, if possible, rebuild what it has itself overthrown.

It is easy to criticise the position of Sokrates. Modern Science and, in England, the Experience Philosophy have long claimed a victory over the metaphysical method. Nay more, it must be admitted that the position itself is suicidal, and it seems probable that Sokrates recognized it as such. Dialectic, the Nature of all Things, is ultimately the Destroyer of all Things. Plato himself acknowledged its double-edged prowess,² though without the full admission of Nescience which the discovery drew from his more candid master.

We thus arrive, by tracing the footsteps of Sokrates, at his final conclusion. As I have said, it is that of the Skeptic. On all matters of speculation, and in regard of absolute knowledge, he can only affirm his ignorance. He deliberately adopts, therefore, for himself a position of active neutrality, which is equivalent to the suspense of later Skeptics, and he claims for the standpoint he has chosen the sanction and commendation of the Delphic oracle. We shall presently have to consider certain implied 'unconditional obligations' in the direction of Practice—common to Sokrates

¹ Comp., *e.g.* the latter part of *Charmides* (Jowett's trans. vol. i. pp. 33, 34), and see his discrimination between the philosopher and the partisan in the *Phaidon*. Under the same head also falls his expressed inability to resist the mingled force and fascination of Dialectic, in the *Apology*.

² *Republic*, end of book vii., where the description of unlimited Eristic might almost seem to have a satirical reference to the Sokratic *Dialoques of Search*.

with other Skeptics—which we must regard as a set-off against what would else have been unlimited Nescience. Meanwhile we must not confound the pure Skepticism of Sokrates with the determined Negation of Pyrrhôn and his successors. The conscious ignorance of the former is more a personal property than a characteristic of humanity. Although, therefore, Sokrates professes continually that he knows nothing, he does not make his conclusion absolute and universal. He never denies the existence of Truth, nor does he deny the ultimate possibility of human effort to attain it. Such a denial would, indeed, have stultified his own position, and made all human inquiry a vain and fruitless folly. For whatever else is uncertain in the character of Sokrates, there can be no doubt as to his being not only a searcher for Truth himself, but one who made Truth-search the sole worthy employment of human life. Nor was this opinion merely the outcome of his view of the necessities of others; it was also the result of his own feelings and passions. Intellectual exercise in any and every direction was an absolute necessity for the great thinker. Extreme negation was therefore as abhorrent to him as the most supercilious and ill-founded assertion; and he wages his Dialectic warfare with the former as well as the latter.

As a Zetetic or searcher Sokrates is in accord with the highest spirit of Greek Skepticism. When Sextos Empeirikos defined the different classes of philosophic thinkers, he reserved for the Skeptics the attribute of pure, disinterested search. This is in truth one main characteristic of Sokrates. He is a born inquirer; a searcher whom no concession or discovery can satisfy, and no difficulty can deter. He himself represents his own vehement passion for reasoned discussion, his perpetual efforts to find, if not truth, yet the closest possible approximations to it, in a variety of images; sometimes in an ironical and uncouth fashion, as in the 'Phaidros,' where he compares himself, allured into the country by a promise of discussion, to a cow attracted by a bait of leaves and fruit, and says that a similar bait might have drawn him all round Attica. Nor was he content only with being a searcher, but he must make other men searchers as well. It was just this excitation of the dormant intellects of the Athenian populace, this abrupt and forceful impulsion of them along a path of mental activity and research, that he regarded as the greatest service he could do the State. He might have adopted the title which a fellow-Skeptic, Giordano Bruno, gave himself on account of the awakening effects of his teaching, '*Dormitantium animarum excubitor*,' the awaker of sleepy souls. For a similar reason Sokrates compared the

startling effects of his elenchus to the shock of a torpedo-fish, or the bite of a gadfly. Nor do I think that there is, as some might aver, the least incongruity between his profession of Nescience and his untiring search for Science. On the other hand, it was his conviction of the former that induced and justified the latter. Had he boasted not ignorance but attainment, the possession of infallible truths, further search would have been superfluous. Sokrates saw and proclaimed far more clearly than most thinkers that it is not Skepticism but Dogmatism that operates as a drag on the human faculties, and induces intellectual sloth and torpor. It is the man who has caught and eaten his game, who perchance is heavy from the effects of the meal, that rests from the chase, not he who is still hungry and desirous to appease his appetite. The Athenians, no doubt, were fully satisfied with their dogmas and truth-discoveries, and did not wish them disturbed. It seemed to them, as it always does to dogmatists, impious to question or analyse long-venerated beliefs and conceptions, mythological, religious, political, or ethical. If examination must needs be instituted, if search must be undertaken, it should be confined to newer verities, not yet fully ascertained, or which have not as yet received the imprimatur of the past. But Sokrates was altogether of a different opinion. It was among these old truths that inquiry was most needful. They were in his opinion—and we shall see when we come to the Sokratic method as displayed in the 'Dialogues of Search' that that opinion was well founded—so many dead corpses waiting for and demanding an inquest. They were estates for which, though long in possession, it was needful to produce title-deeds. Prescription, antiquity, sacredness, were in his eyes no claim to exemption from investigation. Of all truths and systems indifferently he maintained that their first principles should from time to time be reviewed and tested, and that the higher the subject the greater should be the accuracy and verifiable character of the fundamental principles on which it was based.¹ Sokrates was clearly convinced that truths might occasionally be too true; that their reception might even in their own interests be too much taken for granted. In the words of Coleridge—and few more pregnant truths were ever enounced by that great thinker—'Truths of all others the most awful and mysterious, yet being at the same time of universal interest, are too often considered as so true that they lose all the life and efficiency of truth, and lie bedridden in the dormitory of the soul, side by side with the most despised and exploded errors.'²

¹ *Phaidon*, 107 B.; *Repub.* vi. 504 E.

² Coleridge's *Friend*, No. 5, p. 76.

Nor, again, is there any real incongruity between the eager and comprehensive search of Sokrates and the indifference with which he contemplated the result. Convinced of his actual Nescience, he was nevertheless not sanguine of exchanging it for Science, at least to any appreciable extent. How his search might terminate here or hereafter he was indeed by no means anxious. Probably, like Lessing, had the alternative been submitted to him, he would have preferred the search to the find. Undoubtedly he would have done so had the latter condition implied a cessation of intellectual activity. Having in his possession a few working certainties of a practical kind, he was indifferent to speculative infallibility. Reverting to our former simile, he resembled a hunter who has a crust of bread in his pocket sufficient to allay the worst pangs of hunger, and is comparatively indifferent to the spoil; but who nevertheless feels the necessity of the exercise, the free movement of the body, the expansion and exhilaration of mind which the pursuit of the chase gives him. Moreover, to Sokrates the matter had a still more solemn bearing. Search for Truth and Knowledge was his divinely assigned mission, just as his persuasion of Nescience was its divinely sanctioned starting-point. To abjure his call, to retire from his task, as he told his judges, would be an open breach of the divine command. Rather than commit this he would willingly suffer death.

Sokrates, then, by his own frank and unreserved confession of Nescience, must be reckoned a self-avowed Skeptic. This estimate is confirmed—if confirmation of his own repeated declaration be thought needful—by the method presented to us in the Platonic ‘Dialogues of Search.’ It is to these the inquirer must always turn for a complete account of the Sokratic elenchus by the disciple most capable of entering into its spirit and purport. But on referring to them we find a portrayal of Sokrates as a subtle, profound, but at the same time unmitigated Skeptic. From his standpoint of Nescience he analyses and discusses a variety of prevalent notions—metaphysical, religious, ethical, political; and in all cases he arrives ultimately at inconclusive or negative results. In one he discusses prudence, in another friendship, in a third courage; while others are taken up with Rhetoric, the methods of the Sophists, impiety, the teachableness of virtue, &c., but in all alike the conclusion is uncertain. Truths, apparently the most obvious and easy of definition, are shown on Sokratic analysis to be charged with insuperable difficulties. All his interlocutors are landed one after another in an inextricable labyrinth of self-contradictions and absurdities, from which the sole

escape is the admission of complete ignorance. Nor is this result wonderful: anything more unscrupulous, more unreasonable, more determinedly captious and implacably contentious, it is quite impossible to conceive. With all his covert sneers at 'All-wise Eristics' and Sophists, Sokrates approves himself more Eristic than the former, and more Sophistical than the latter. Accordingly, current notions, opinions, and beliefs fall before his dialectical battery like naked savages before a Gatling gun. No dogma or permanent conviction could, indeed, stand before such unprincipled tactics. No fort of human belief—no matter what its original strength—could long hold out before so determined an attack, such an unceasing and varied succession of stratagems, assaults, feints, ambuscades, subterfuges, and surprises, as Sokrates brings to bear upon the opinions of his fellow-citizens. Allowing, as in duty bound, a fair margin to his confidence in dialectics, and granting the truth of Aristotle's remark that he was precluded from any definite conclusion or dogmatic assertion by his own profession of nescience,¹ it must still be a lasting charge against Sokrates, from a dogmatic standpoint, that his methods in application transcend all reasonable scope; that his Dialectic is, in effect, an example of Eristic of the worst kind. What this excess serves to prove—and this, as regards Sokrates, is the chief outcome of the Dialogues of Search—is the intensity of his own conviction of Nescience, and the determination he displays in showing that his condition is really shared by many who in their own estimation are models of wisdom and knowledge. Unfortunately, in trying to effect this he has left us, I will not say a portrait, but a caricature of a Skeptic whose Skepticism is incurable, of a rationalist who can at times reason away ratiocination, of a logician who can logically annihilate logic.

In order more fully to determine the character of the Dialogues of Search, and to fix their true position in Skeptical thought, all that is needed is to compare them—(1) with the methods of the Sophists which they occasionally vilify; (2) with those of the more pronounced Skeptics, *e.g.* Pyrrhôn, Ainesidemos, and especially Sextos Empeirikos. With the first they shared, as we have seen, the inordinate disputatiousness, the love of discussion for its own sake independently both of fair starting-points and legitimate conclusions, the desire of dialectical victory at any cost, and therefore the effort to make the worse prove the better cause of which Aristophanes had accused Sokrates. With the Skeptics, too, he

¹ *Soph. Elench.* chap. xxxiv. Comp. Cicero, *Lucullus*, chap. v.

shares a determination to negation often in excess of his own standpoint. He avails himself of quibbles, fallacies, and ambiguities without limit, in order to establish an inconclusive issue. It would, indeed, be difficult to name a single illegitimate process employed by subsequent Skeptics which has no parallel or example in the Platonic Dialogues. Sokrates is evidently well versed in all the bypaths, as well as the main roads, of Dialectic, and is by no means scrupulous in employing the former when the latter do not serve his purpose. Hence, notwithstanding his belief in absolute truth which differentiates him from the school of Pyrrhôn, he often reasons as if he believed truth to be an impossibility, or at least as if its presence on the side of an adversary would have been an unwelcome phenomenon. I am convinced that this is only what I have already termed it, an exaggeration of his own suspensive position. He finds it in practice difficult (subsequent Skeptics found it impossible) to assert distinctly his own Nescience without implying that this was incontrovertibly the condition of all men. But however this may be, of the fact of his unprincipled Eristic and his ostensible preference of Victory over Truth there can be no doubt. Bacon, among others, has long ago pointed out that characteristic of the Sokratic method as one that allied him to the Skeptics,¹ and Professor Jowett remarks, *à propos* of his discussion on friendship, that Sokrates 'allowed himself to be carried away by a sort of Eristic or illogical logic against which the truest definition of friendship would be unable to stand.' A similar remark, it may be added, might be made on most of the themes of the Platonic Dialogues.

It would be easy to carry out into greater detail the general proof of the Skepticism of Sokrates furnished by the 'Dialogues of Search,' by enumerating other instances of his profound distrust of commonly received dogmas. Setting aside for the present corroborative testimony, of which both among contemporaries and later writers there is no lack, we cannot but be struck with the thorough-going character which Sokrates confesses to have marked his Doubt. We have seen that, like a celebrated English Skeptic of our own day, he was not inclined to attach to

¹ Speaking of the *De Elenchis Sophismatum* of Aristotle, and of the Greek Thinkers who had practised it, he says, 'Neque illud tantum in persona sophistarum antiquorum. . . . verum etiam in persona ipsius Socratis, qui cum illud semper agat, ut nihil affirmet, sed a ceteris in medium adducta infirmit, ingeniosissime objectionum, fallaciarum, et redargutionum modos expressit.' *De Aug. Sci.* lib. v. cap. iv. *Works*, Ellis and Spedding, vol. i. p. 642.

the properties of numbers that indubitable certainty generally accorded to them. The combination of one and one is often adduced as the 'Ne plus ultra' of Scientific Truth. To Sokrates it afforded matter for puzzlement and doubt. Self-identity—the 'Cogito, ergo sum' of Descartes—is generally regarded as an irresistible truth. But Sokrates seems to have doubted his own identity—to have admitted the impossibility of discriminating between his dream and waking states, and professed his ignorance as to whether he were Sokrates or a multiform serpent of Typhon,¹—an anomalous result to have followed, which it seems to have done, the observance of *γνώθι σεαυτόν*. His doubt further spread itself to the mythological, religious, and ethical beliefs of his countrymen. Indeed, his dictum that the first principles of all systems should be analyzed and reviewed from time to time must be regarded, from the dogmatist point of view, as a Philosophical Radicalism of a very sweeping kind. His doubt embraced also Language, of which he affirmed his inability to say how it came into existence, while traces of Nominalism are by no means rare in his utterances. Added to all these are his own frequent admissions of Nescience and his encomium on the awakening effects of doubt both on the individual and on the State. And if he held in reserve two or three abstract truths, the reservation was so well kept that it might easily have escaped the notice, not only of a casual observer, but even of an occasional disciple. The every-day attitude presented by Sokrates to his fellow-citizens was that of an intrepid reasoner—a doubter on most points of popular belief—a secret despiser of the national gods, and an astute advocate, well skilled in making the worse seem the better cause. His mission was regarded as a dissemination of Doubt, and he himself as a veritable though half-disguised Skeptic.

But granting this to be the character of Sokrates, why—it will be objected—have historians of Philosophy not only refused to pronounce him a Skeptic, but have agreed to consider him as the most potent adversary of the Skepticism of the Sophists?

For this three causes may be assigned (I enumerated them in our opening discussion) :—

1. A perverted stress upon Sokratic irony.
2. The fact that we have the Skepticism of Sokrates distilled through and largely neutralized by the Idealistic Dogmatism of Plato.
3. The halo of martyrdom which has somewhat induced an oblivion of the cause for which he suffered, *i.e.* Free-Thought.

¹ *Phaidros*, 230 A. Comp. Sextos Empeirikos, *adv. Math.* lib. vi. § 265.

1. The Nescience professed by Sokrates has been held to be an ironical profession of a state he was really far from feeling. He assumed it in order—(1) to render his persistent inquiry for information reasonable; (2) to convict others of an ignorance as great, if not greater, than his own. Sokrates, it is said, is a dogmatist in the cloak of a Sophist or Skeptic. If he allows any of his arguments to terminate inconclusively, this is not because he does not know the true conclusion, but because for the sake of his interlocutors and his pretended ignorance he will not disclose it. If, *e.g.* he permits Lysis to depart with no definition of Friendship capable of withstanding the assaults of a libertine logic, or if Euthyphro is dismissed unenlightened as to the true definition of Impiety, this is not because Sokrates does not know what Friendship or Impiety is, but because he is bent on discovering for the benefit of his hearers their own unexpected ignorance upon such obvious and every-day topics. Now this reasoning seems to me utterly devoid of foundation. Sokrates—though I am far from denying his masterly employment of irony—is, on the subject of his Nescience, sincere enough. He really does share the ignorance though not the mental confusion of his interlocutors on the points controverted. He is thoroughly persuaded that no definition of ‘Friendship’ or ‘Impiety,’ or any other of his conversational themes, can be propounded which will withstand the assaults of an Eristic, rapid, versatile, and unprincipled. Indeed, it is in his superior knowledge of Dialectic, in his profounder study of the avenues to human conviction, that his Nescience as regards fixed principles and dogmatic truths may be said to consist. Thus he is far more convinced of his ignorance than his hearers are of theirs because he is aware of the almost numberless aspects of relativity under which most human truths, especially of a religious or ethical kind, are capable of being presented; and it was precisely in this fuller conception of Nescience that, as he himself observed, lay the main difference between himself and ordinary men. In other words, Sokrates is a real, not a fictitious, Skeptic; his Ignorance is felt, not assumed. Indeed, his conviction of it is all the more vivid and indestructible for being based on knowledge, just as the study of the Buddhist found its outcome in a Nirvana of semi-consciousness. Sokrates has explored every department of Greek thought; he has followed every stream of its speculation to its fountain-head; he has weighed every argument of every subject-matter in the scale of his reason; he has applied to every portion of human knowledge as it came before him a Dialectic, bold, ruthless, and utterly unscrupulous. He ends with a conviction as

assured and indubitable as anything can be that Truth in itself—in its final determination and as a matter of speculation—is indiscoverable. Like Lessing, he is inclined to regard it as the exclusive prerogative of Deity.¹

2. The Skepticism of Sokrates has also been overlooked because it has been so inextricably blended with the idealism of Plato. Unfortunately for the history of philosophy, but quite in harmony with his free tendencies, his non-affirming character, and his passion for *viva voce* discussion, Sokrates left no written work behind him. His method and opinions have to be disentangled from the crude realism of Xenophon, and the extreme transcendentalism of Plato. The latter is especially responsible for the prevalent conception of Sokrates as a half-formed idealist, a teacher whose own progress in the path of ontology, afterwards so boldly developed by Plato, was cut short by death. No doubt the method of Sokrates was introspective. The starting-point of his search was 'Know thyself;' and although he in one place disclaims any knowledge of Dialectic as a definite system, and professes to rely only on common-sense, the method of self-knowledge enounced in the maxim, 'Dialectic is the Nature of Being,' must have been a fundamental law of his own thought. But while we recognise in these principles the rudiments of Platonic idealism, we must be careful not to allow these, or for that matter any other conclusions as to his teaching, to contravene or obscure his own admission of Nescience. This must always be accepted as the central fact of his intellectual character, the standard by which we must estimate the overcharged personal sentiment of disciples, and the glosses of commentators. How absurd, *e.g.* is it to suppose that with his profound conviction of Nescience, Sokrates could really have held the doctrine of Reminiscence, or that from the same standpoint he could have indulged in those speculations as to the future world contained in the 'Phaidon' and 'Gorgias.' It seems to me that we should apply to the Sokrates of History his own recommendation, and review those first principles on which his intellectual character has generally been based. When we do this sincerely, taking as our starting-point that mental attribute on which he oftenest insisted, and which is most generally ascribed to him by his fellow-citizens, we can have no hesitation in pronouncing him a Skeptic. No other designation is possible for a man who so continually proclaims his absolute ignorance of truth.

3. Another cause that has tended to hide his Skepticism, or at least to prevent its full acknowledgment, is the noble fearlessness

¹ *Apologia*, 23 B.

with which he met death. Sokrates is the first and most distinguished member of that band of martyrs who have endured death in the cause of Free-thought, and of which our list of Skeptics will furnish us with several more instances. But in the death of Sokrates men have forgotten its cause. Martyrdom, as a rule, implies convictions definite, strong, and passionate. But Sokrates is an instance of a martyr who disclaims all convictions in the sense of positive knowledge; whose sole earnest persuasion is that of his own ignorance. Historians, I think, have hastily endeavoured to rectify what they have deemed an anomaly, and in order to assimilate Sokrates to other martyrs have credited him with the creed of a dogmatist. What Sokrates suffered for was not a particular creed, but the confessed want of any creed; or, still better, he died for pure mental liberty, for absolute freedom, whether of belief, disbelief, or unbelief.

But granting the Skepticism of Sokrates, the question immediately suggests itself, How far was he a conscious Skeptic? How far did he conceive that his standpoint of Nescience assimilated him to deniers or oppugners of all truth? To this the answer is not difficult. Skepticism, as a formal profession, was as yet unknown in Greece (we shall come to its introduction when we discuss Pyrrhôn at our next meeting). Free analysis and inquiry had already been carried to their extremest point by Eleatics and Sophists, but there had yet arisen no school of avowed doubters, still less of deniers. So convinced were Hellenic thinkers of the necessity of mental freedom in every direction, that it might have seemed on *à priori* grounds unlikely that such a school could have found much favour in Greece. The proclamation of the absolute impossibility of all human knowledge was not only a dogma as arbitrary as it was overbearing, but it left no room for search, for that perpetual exercise of the intellect which to a Greek thinker was its most imperious necessity. I can therefore quite imagine that Sokrates did not think his attitude of ignorance was equivalent to such a denial of all truth as an extreme Sophist might have professed. On the other hand, I am certain he would have denied such an imputation with vehemence. I do not think he quite realised, what I believe unquestionable, that the difference between himself and ordinary Sophists was one of degree rather than of kind. Indeed, he seems to me to have been quite indifferent to distinctions between rival schools of philosophy; and when on his trial he is accused of being a Sophist, the apathy he manifests in rebutting the charge is so great as to amount to a confirmation of it. Be-

sides, his Skepticism, with all its consequences, whether good or ill, is a direct result of his Dialectic. Paradoxical as it may seem, it was in simple fealty to Reason, in the full recognition of her supremacy as the sole guide to Truth, that Sokrates allowed what seemed her paralogsms or '*reductiones ad absurdum.*' The misogynist, to use his own term, had as little ground for his dislike of Reason as the misanthropist for his hatred of humanity. The *logos* was as much an entity requiring sympathetic consideration and proper deference as the *anthropos* with whom it was allied, nay much more, for the reason was the highest faculty of man. Hence above all other matters the rights of the ratiocination had to be considered, not the conclusions haply evolved from it, still less the effect of those conclusions on the ordinary convictions of mankind. If Sokrates is the apostle of truth and reason, he has no business to set up for his mission another didactic purpose of his own. Ratiocination must proceed at its own 'sweet will,' with just enough impulse imparted to it by controversy to keep it in motion, and must not be incumbered with the advocacy of any prescribed dogma. He draws in the 'Phaidon' a distinction between the philosopher and the partisan. The latter, he says, will not care for *the rights of the argument*, but only how best to impress his own convictions on the minds of his hearers. Sokrates, on the other hand, both in theory and practice, cared for the rights of the argument to an extent that no controversialist has surpassed. If his dialectic terminated in a *cul de sac* whence was no egress nor regress, it was to be regarded as the chosen conclusion, the pure self-determination of the reason. If the result were Skeptical, an antinomy of positive and negative, it was because the reason would have it so. If the effects of the argument on the convictions of the hearers were disquieting, so much the better; this was the torpedo-shock by which reason was wont sometimes to startle unthinking men. If the end were absolute disbelief in the conventional dogmas of men, the fault, if fault it were, was the reason's. He himself, as its humble minister and missionary, had nothing to do with it. In the eyes of Sokrates, Reason was an absolute potentate, whose decrees had to be received with submission—a kind of intellectual *Moirai* or Fate, whose determinations could not be questioned, and from whose judgments there lay no appeal. Reason, Dialectic, had convinced Sokrates of his Nescience, and had thereby conferred on it a semi-divine sanction, equivalent to if not originally identical with the declaration of the Delphic oracle.

We are here confronted by another question. If Sokrates's disclaimer of knowledge, and his assertion of Nescience as divine

wisdom, forbade the cherishing of any dogmas or definitive tenets, how far, it may be asked, is this negative position compromised by the profession he makes of exercising his mother's maieutic art? Schwegler and others appear to take the well-known passage in the 'Theaitetos' as indicating a dogmatic tendency. No doubt, if we could believe in the earnestness of Sokrates, and if his claim on the point did not conflict with other professions made with much greater *bona fides*, it would assume that character. Any one claiming as he did to aid in bringing into the world latent truths, must, *primâ facie*, assume their existence in those on whom his art is exercised. But when, setting aside the terms of the passage which is one of the most grotesquely ironical in the whole of the Platonic Dialogues, we examine the manner in which he discharged intellectually his mother's craft, we find strong reason to doubt his sincerity. He himself claimed the fullest right to determine whether the offspring he thus ushered into existence was worth preserving or not, and it is not too much to say that he exercises this right in a manner that, if transferred to ordinary obstetrics, would go far to depopulate the world. He approaches the individual in labour with a distinct prepossession that the issue is really worthless, that the looked-for truths are either spurious or valueless, and prove not the pregnancy but the vacuity of those who vent them. The destructive results of his actual obstetrics we have already contemplated in the 'Dialogues of Search,' and these are indeed the only kind compatible with his general standpoint. It would be a question worth asking of those who think that Sokrates was really serious in his profession of intellectual midwifery, what positive final truths he himself admits having thus elicited; in other words, what are the well-formed and healthy offspring whose birth he really helped to accomplish. The only object Sokrates, in consistency with his own principles, could have had in his exercise of the maieutic art was to prove that his own barrenness—for which he humorously pleads the general childlessness of midwives—was a mental condition largely shared by others who thought themselves gravid with truth and wisdom. And what he would fain accomplish was to force the persons operated on—as Charmides, Lysis, and Euthyphro—to perceive their real condition, to create a feeling of intellectual shortcoming, and so to impel them to fuller and well-founded knowledge. What the philosophical obstetrician really delivered them of, and what I maintain was the only offspring for which he looked, was the false conviction of their own wisdom. He would naturally represent this deliverance, as he did his own feeling of ignorance, as the most

important of positive truths. Besides, the argument that Sokrates expected to find in others the wisdom he was unconscious of possessing, completely stultifies his supposed relation to the Delphic oracle. For if the oracle proclaimed that it was his consciousness of his own ignorance that made him the wisest of men, he could not expect to find truth in those who were *ex hypothesi* not only not conscious of their ignorance, but who imagined themselves to possess distinct verities, and thought they only needed obstetric assistance to divulge them. Were then, I would ask, those on whom Sokrates exercised his art wiser than the Delphic oracle, and was the wisdom which consisted in imagined knowledge superior to that based upon conscious ignorance? To maintain such a position would be to oppose the central truths of the life and doctrine of Sokrates.

Speculatively, then, and theoretically, Sokrates was a Free-thinker and Skeptic. He permitted no barrier to his intellectual exertions; he recognised no mental compulsion forbidding or limiting the scope of his freest researches, except the self-imposed laws of Dialectic itself.¹ Nor could he discern in the condition of the universe any distinct impediment or authoritative prohibition of human inquiry; on the contrary, the reason of the wise man he regarded as the only conceivable method of ascertaining truth. His mental liberty, therefore—both subjectively and objectively—was as complete as even a free-thinker like himself could desire.

But there is another aspect of Sokrates' many-sided character we have not yet touched upon: I mean what relates to his practice. A philosopher and thinker cannot, however much he might desire it, limit all his faculties to thought; he must needs be to some extent a doer. The exigencies of natural laws, of social relations in their simplest form, entail some amount of practical activity. Sokrates was convinced that he knew nothing, was certain that he did not share the assumed knowledge of his fellow-citizens. Still, imperious necessity commanded him to regulate his life and action in some form or manner. This might seem to him incongruous, but it was none the less compulsory. Sokrates in this shared the fate of all thinkers whose intellectual tendencies are most widely removed from the beaten paths of ordinary speculation and action. The idealist, *e.g.* who is most averse to matter and material existence, is still obliged to take it sometimes into account. The Skeptic, again, whose nescience is most pronounced and complete,

¹ It should be noted that Sokrates disclaims the knowledge of Dialectic, *i.e.* the formal science professed by the Sophists, and professes to be guided only by the instincts and methods of common-sense. Comp. on this point the *Euthydemus* and *Ion*.

dare not ignore the facts of existence. Sokrates never dreamt of extending his ignorance into the region of necessary and palpable truths. Besides physical and social cravings demanding to be satisfied, he was conscious also of intuitions, mental cravings which he must needs allay by the adoption of formal principles best fitted for the purpose. Accordingly, he assumed certain abstract truths or speculative probabilities of the same kind as those which the great German Sokrates—I mean Kant—afterwards called categorical imperatives. These Sokrates did not pretend to be able to demonstrate dialectically;¹ he could not even account fully to himself for their possession. They did not, therefore, interfere with his Skeptical nescience. Still they satisfied urgent requirements—partly intellectual, partly sentimental. They formed certain rough connecting links between his philosophical position and the popular creed, and they afforded a basis for ordinary action. These indemonstrable principles but practical essentials were :

1. God. 2. Virtue. 3. Reason.

1. The main charge on which Sokrates was tried and condemned was that of Atheism and Impiety. He had denied, said Meletos, the gods of the country, and had materialized even the semi-divine powers, the sun and the moon. This had been an old indictment against his teaching. Twenty-four years previously Aristophanes had affirmed that Sokrates had not merely abandoned the popular belief in the gods of Olympus, but had substituted for their sway the rule of physical forces. This is the argument of the well-known drama 'The Clouds,' which we may take as expressing in an exaggerated caricature the popular conception of the drift of Sokrates' teaching before he had altogether abandoned his physical-science researches, and this estimate is confirmed by much that we find in the 'Dialogues' of Plato. Sokrates was evidently, though he expresses himself with a characteristic combination of caution and banter on the subject, far in advance of the mythological ideas that still formed the basis of Greek religion. But he was not alone in this attitude of Skepticism. Free speculations on this and kindred subjects were, as we have hinted, not uncommon among the leading classes of Athenians at the end of the fourth century B.C. In the theatre, the market, the public baths, a tone of religious Neologianism was distinctly observable. The age was one of Transition. The ancient deities, in the form in which they were recognised by Homer and Hesiod, had almost ceased to exist. Nominally they

¹ Comp. Lactantius: "Recte ergo Sokrates, et eum secuti Academici scientiam sustulerunt, quæ non disputantis, sed divinantis est."—*De Falsa Sapientia*, cap. iii.

were still held in reverence. Temples and statues continued to be raised in their honour. Sacrifices were offered to them. Their priests were maintained at the public expense. So far as a state religion existed at Athens it was still the worship of Zeus, Hêrê, Aphroditê, and Athênê. But among the cultured classes this had degenerated into a mere formality, more cold, heartless, and indifferent than Naaman's bowing in the House of Rimmon. Among the populace, however, the ancient creed continued to possess much of its pristine power. Aristophanes shows us how closely it was associated in the minds of Athenian Conservatives with the former glories of Attica, with the hardness and endurance of its population, the simplicity of their manners, the greater purity of their lives. Nor were its effects less considerable, regarded as a political engine. The popular fury kindled by the mutilation of the Hermæ is a conclusive instance of the potency of the old creed, when reanimated by religious and political excitement. It was frequently charged against the novel speculations of the Sophists that they had introduced moral and political laxity in the place of the rectitude, austerity, and courage that distinguished, *e.g.* the men of Marathon. But we must accept the evidence of such a *laudator temporis acti* as Aristophanes with a large allowance for political partisanship. At least it is difficult to conceive how the worship of Zeus and Aphroditê, with the legends attached to their names, could have contributed to popular morality more than belief in the *νοῦς* of Anaxagoras or the 'Vortex' which the comic poet ascribed to Sokrates as his substitute for Zeus. We have noticed that the earliest symptoms of religious Skepticism in Greece were evoked by the immoral deeds which mythology attached to those names; and the use made of these divine escapades by unscrupulous reasoners is a prominent feature in the works of the dramatic poets. The belief of Sokrates appears to me to have been more Theistic than that of most thinkers of his time. With the evidence of the 'Apology'—the work on which we must chiefly rely for the ultimate form of his religious faith—before us, we cannot deny his profound conviction of the existence of a supreme divine power, whose different attributes, leaving out those that were immoral, he was prepared to recognise under the various names of the Olympian deities; but whose practical energies he conceived of under the form of natural laws and powers. Deeply into the question I do not think Sokrates ever penetrated, or for that matter desired to penetrate. Convinced that there was an overruling power that took cognizance of men and their doings, he was also persuaded of its identity with absolute truth, absolute wisdom, absolute righteousness. But this conviction, real though it was,

was arrived at and expressed with the utmost guardedness and reserve. Far, indeed, was Sokrates from wishing to dogmatize on such a subject. He himself confesses that he 'does not know the truth about the gods, and that his belief is a matter of probability and human conjecture.'¹ He might have said with Clough—

O Thou! in that mysterious shrine
 Enthroned, as I must say, divine,
 I will not frame one thought of what
 Thou mayest either be or not.

Nor does this intuitive conviction detract from the Nescience which is his common intellectual standpoint. He frequently allows intuition as a faculty transcending the limits of Dialectic. Besides which, the unconditional nature of everything pertaining to the Supreme Being renders a position of partial suspense and Nescience the most natural and becoming for erring humanity. Aristophanes had ludicrously represented the intellectual suspense of Sokrates as a material elevation in a basket, and made him boast that from that position he could look down on the gods. It would be truer to say that from that position he was able to look higher than on the earth-born divinities of the Greek mythology—to contemplate not as objects of knowledge, but of devout imagination and feeling, the highest abstractions of Infinite Wisdom, Righteousness, and Truth.

But the question remains, How far was Sokrates guilty of Atheism from the point of view of his accusers and his judges? To them, no doubt, the name implied merely a different theological belief from their own. This was in reality the meaning of the Indictment for 'Impiety' which the Athenians preferred against Anaxagoras and Prodikos, Perikles and Pheidias. If Sokrates did not hold the mythological doctrines of the Athenian populace—if his conception of Deity tended to divest it of the crude anthropomorphism common to the unthinking crowd, if its tendency was partly a recognition of natural forces, partly a monotheistic abstraction such as had been attempted by the *voûs* of Anaxagoras, this was, no doubt, equivalent in the minds of Meletos and Anytos to a distinct promulgation of Atheism.

The mode in which Sokrates deals with this change in the 'Apology' is instructive. With every desire to side with such a genuine martyr for truth, it must be admitted that he rather waives and tries to explain it away than meets it with a direct negative. In point of fact, the gulf between Sokrates and his accusers, or, what amounted to the same thing, between the old

¹ *Cratylus*, 401 A, Jowett's Trans. i. p. 672.

mythology and the new insistence on general laws or unifying abstractions, was not easily bridged over. The issue between himself and his accusers was not met by a confession of belief in the sun and moon as semi-divine, accompanied by a significant silence as to the existence of Zeus and Hêrê and the other divinities of the Hellenic Pantheon. So far, therefore, as a cautious, equivocating Skepticism as regards the existence of these potentates constituted Atheism, and was held to be a capital crime against the State, there can be little doubt of the justice of his condemnation.

In estimating the theological beliefs of Sokrates, it is impossible to sever his general notion of the Divine Being from the particular intimations he professed to receive, whether from the Delphic oracle without or from the Daimon within him; for it cannot, I think, be denied that a general harmony or feeling of congruity does underlie all his ideas of the supernatural. To suppose that his own view of the forbidding whispers he felt within him was in any sense a recognition of revelation as we understand the term, would be a transference into his system of an alien idea irreconcilable with it as a whole. Perhaps his Daimon bears some affinity to the Greek belief in a good or lucky genius which inspired men to fortunate enterprises, with the Sokratic distinction that in his case the impulse was mainly ethical. But I incline to the opinion that it is nothing more than a pronounced and intense subjectivity such as profound reflection combined with a definite tendency of thought may engender in any man.¹ Satisfied that the monitions of a good Being must be good, Sokrates did not require much convincing that a virtuous, unselfish, noble suggestion must needs be divine. Nor would this persuasion be at all affected by a conscious ability to trace the suggestions to his own excogitations, and to identify them as the matured products of his own Thought-evolution. For once granting that what is true and virtuous is divine, the precise origin of any ethical prompting, even if determinable, becomes a matter of secondary importance.² If Sokrates expressed himself, while following this self-evolved guidance, as if some *alter ego*, or personality distinct from his own, were the source of his admonitions, this would be quite in har-

¹ Comp. Zeller, *Gesch.* lib. ii. pt. i. p. 69, and Mr. Riddell's learned excursus on τὸ δαιμόνιον in his edition of the *Apology*, Appendix A. See also Hegel's interesting account of the genesis of such a subjective unconscious Intuition. *Gesch. Phil.* vol. ii. pp. 77, 78.

² Comp. Xenophon, *Mem.* iv. viii. 11: εὐσεβῆς οὕτως ὥστε μηδὲν ἄνευ τῶν Θεῶν γνώμης ποιεῖν.

mony with his habit of expressing his own truths in a popular form. His fellow-citizens would more easily understand an appeal to the Delphic oracle, or to his good genius, than they would a direct assertion of his subjective wisdom, while the results from his own point of view would be identical. Moreover, the clear spiritual intuition, the determined moral self-assertion that Sokrates professed, gave to every precept or prohibition of which he was conscious a pronounced character that they could not have had in the case of ordinary men.

2. Though I have made it the second of his unconditional verities, Sokrates's view of virtue, as must needs be the case with every assertor of absolute morality, established it as the first principle of his faith. Ethical perfection was neither originated by the gods nor was it dependent on their existence or volition; on the contrary, it was their supposed justice, rectitude, and truth that gave them their divine authority, and alone justified human recognition of it. No other conception of that authority would have been possible to the advanced thinkers of Greece in regard of the manifold turpitudes of the Olympian deities. It was only by an *arrière pensée* that assumed Zeus and his fellow-gods to be actuated by principles of rectitude in their dealings with men—whatever their mythology might assert to the contrary—that gave the old creed the vitality it continued to possess in popular opinion. Sokrates as a moral teacher imparted a healthful and much-needed impetus to the thought of Greece by seizing on that fact, and elevating it to the rank of a new truth. If what men really revered in the denizens of Olympus was the virtue and goodness supposed to characterise them, it was a proof that in their opinion, though in a latent form, goodness and virtue were superior to the gods. As the gods did not create, neither could they destroy, those supreme moral entities. They were even powerless to modify their definition. The good man is therefore, in the view of Sokrates, the equal, if not the superior, of the gods. He is also superior to fate, that eternal and inevitable destiny to which Zeus himself must perforce submit. No fate can hurt the virtuous man. The worst calamity that could befall him would be his own self-caused declination from the paths of virtue. Wrong-doing is more disgraceful than wrong-suffering; and assuming the existence of a deity, malignant, unscrupulous, and tyrannical, he could not inflict on the good man the least portion of the disgrace that would follow his own voluntary fall from goodness.

A nobler ethical system than might be extracted from the utterances of Sokrates, and which is confirmed by his life and

death, it is impossible to conceive. But his ethical principles sprang in his case, as in that of other great thinkers, from his Nescience. The wreck of his speculation, so far as definitive truth is concerned, gave a new impulse and energy to his practice. Though his physical researches had ended in confessed doubt, though he acknowledged he knew not the truth about the gods, nor about other subjects in which humanity is interested, though his Dialectic itself terminated in a *cul de sac*, though his consequent conviction of Nescience was firm and unalterable, Sokrates had not the least doubt as to the primary and indefeasible obligations of morality. He did not doubt that under any circumstances virtue was preferable to vice, temperance to luxury, chastity to lust, self-sacrifice to selfishness. He might not be able in the complications of varied human relations, and with the flexible and elastic instrumentality of logic, to demonstrate in every instance the reason of the superiority, but of the fact itself he had not the least doubt. The demands of virtue operated on him like the consciousness of bodily wants. Hunger, for instance, though he could not explain the physiological processes induced by eating food, had an inherent imperiousness he could not disregard. Similarly his uncertainty on the subject of the gods or of a future life made no difference in his appreciation of the absolute obligation of virtue and duty.

The conclusion to which Sokrates arrived on this matter he formulated in his well-known dictum, 'Virtue is Knowledge.' In this proposition he expressed the necessary transference to human practice of the energy that could not be satisfactorily applied to speculation and its nugatory results. Not that Sokrates would have been satisfied with an ethical practice apart from self-knowledge. This would have been merely conceited and pretentious conduct, the accidental walking in a straight path by a man who was stone-blind. Man must be disciplined by an insight self-acquired into his actual relation to the problems of existence and to the false-knowledge which claims to interpret them. He must practise the maxim Pythagoras impressed on all his disciples of so many years' apprenticeship to dumbness (*ἀφασία*). He must 'Know himself,' and the nescience that knowledge entails, before his good conduct can possess that flavour of disinterestedness and humility requisite for free moral action; poverty of spirit being, in the judgment of Sokrates, as of Christ, an essential pre-requisite for entry into the kingdom of truth.

But here the question may be asked, What was the Sokratic standard of moral action, and how far is it open to the charge sometimes brought against it of utilitarianism? To me it seems

that Sokrates had in reality two ethical standards: one abstract, the other concrete—the first speculative and ideal, the second practical—but differing from each other in degree not in kind. Supreme justice and righteousness, like the highest truth, he regarded as the exclusive prerogatives of the gods. As human Nescience could not attain the former, so neither could human impotence reach the latter. But in practical life, and in view of the more immediate needs of man, whether as an individual or a unit of the social community, there was extant a rough-and-ready standard of duty sufficient to guide those who submitted to it. Every man knew, *e.g.* what was good for himself, and knew also the kind of action best adapted to secure that good. But this language had the defect of being necessarily ambiguous. Sokrates undoubtedly meant by the good what was beneficial to man's highest interests considered as a rational being born for truth, virtue, and disinterestedness. That the good should have implied his material advantage was an implication utterly opposed to the life and teaching, and I will add the death, of Sokrates; it conflicted especially with his noble maxim that it is better to suffer than do ill. But it is quite conceivable how in the crude superficial comprehension of such disciples as Xenophon, the term 'good,' as an end of human action, might be held to mean material prosperity, and for that reason might have been abused by some of his disciples. While Sokrates, however, maintained that human acts are not ordinarily incapable of determination in accordance with the rule of rectitude, he disavows all attempt to teach speculative ethics. The Sokratic query, 'Is Virtue Teachable?' is truly answered thus: as a theory, No; as a practice, Yes. Here again comes in the Nescience that attaches to all human ratiocination as such. Men must practise virtue, but in its essence virtue is not definable. Friendship, courage, piety—all the other excellences of humanity—are integral parts of a good man's duty; but no verbal ingenuity can devise definitions of those qualities that will meet all the subtle and refined distinctions Dialectic can bring to bear upon them. The elementary truths of arithmetic, *e.g.* such propositions as $2 + 2 = 4$, may be commonly acknowledged truths, but the abstractions of the higher mathematics are as indeterminate and uncertain as anything can well be.

What seems rather remarkable in the mental character of Sokrates is that he makes little allowance for minds differently constituted from his own. He could hardly comprehend a code of moral practice so indissolubly joined to abstract dogmas as to be altogether dependent on them. He could not conceive that the

insoluble difficulties of the intellectual problem might with some persons be transferred to the practical duty. If Lysis, *e.g.* cannot define 'courage,' or Euthyphro 'impiety,' this is no reason for doubting the existence either of the one or the other. Truth, in his estimation, was above and beyond all human conception considered as the object of ratiocination. The attempt to find it involved the seeker in an inextricable labyrinth. But of the existence of truth, and of the duty of all mortals to pursue it, he has not the slightest doubt. The difference between a Skeptic who affirms the non-existence of truth, and of another thinker who, asserting its existence, denies that men can ever attain it, might to some persons seem palpable. But the moral distinction between them is nevertheless very great, and it is mainly this difference that separates Sokrates from his Skeptical successors, Pyrrhôn and Ainesidemos.

But we cannot leave Sokrates's 'unconditional obligation' of morality without observing that in one particular he allows a departure from his ideal of absolute justice so far as to maintain the binding character of even unjust laws or legal decisions when promulgated by competent authority. This opinion—so strikingly illustrated by his own fate—was no doubt mainly grounded on the idea of subordinating the interests of the individual to the welfare of the body politic. It pointed, therefore, in the direction of self-denial; but it is easy to see that an extended application of this theory would make the accidental and changeable laws of a country the real standard of human action to the exclusion of any higher or more permanent rule of conduct. It would seem that the Greek reverence for patriotism was capable of occasionally assuming, even in the mind of her greatest thinker, a predominating form quite inconsistent with his own sublime ideal of 'unconditional morality.'

3. I have already incidentally touched upon the belief of Sokrates in the autonomy of the human reason, and the infallibility that he claims for Dialectic. He did not derive this opinion from any teacher, though it might have been suggested by the Eleatic philosophers. Probably it was the pure spontaneous result of his own self-analysis. A man who has himself experienced the efficiency of any given instrumentality to accomplish a certain purpose does not need the recommendation of another to induce him to adopt it. The introspective tendencies of Sokrates were innate and vigorous, and, whatever the path of inquiry he might have followed for the time, he must sooner or later have come home to the inner circle of his own thought and speculation. Such a return was implied

in his abandonment of physical-science studies. He had thereby ascertained the power of the intellect to analyse and test all supposed truths brought to the bar of its judgment. The extent of that power it would be difficult from the Sokratic standpoint to exaggerate. A knowledge-test that ended in Nescience, an analysis that ceased its functions when nothing was left to analyse, might claim to be the *ne plus ultra* of destructiveness. It was a gun that annihilated the foe, but in the act of firing blew itself up. But of its suicidal tendencies Sokrates took no heed. He knew he could reaffirm as an absolute postulate what Dialectic had destroyed. Perhaps, too, he purposely overlooked them in consideration of the deadly effect of the weapon. False knowledge he deemed so mischievous that any method of destroying it was to be welcomed. Few Skeptics, as we shall find, have been greatly influenced by the reflection that their method must needs include self-destructive elements. Sokrates was aware that his Nescience, like a scorpion, was armed with a deadly sting which might, on emergency, be turned against itself. The paralogism implied in the very phrase 'Knowing nothing but nothing,' and which is expressed in the epigram—

Nil scis, unum hoc scis ; aliquid scis et nihil ergo
Hoc aliquid nihil est : hoc nihil est aliquid ¹

—had no power to frighten Sokrates from the career of his Skeptical humour. As Coleridge said of ghosts, he had seen too many (paralogisms) to be frightened at them. Nor was it only from his own experience of the power of his elenchus that Sokrates came to regard it as the sole avenue to knowledge. Reflection in another direction convinced him that to men as rational beings no other method of pursuing truth except the enlightened human reason was even conceivable. Whether the method were intrinsically perfect or imperfect, or whether its results were satisfactory or not, it was the only method in human power. Man had no choice but to employ it. Nay, more, if the reason were the sole means of acquiring truth, it was right that it should, if only on that account, be made the most of. Hence it must be employed with vigour, with the most unrestricted freedom, and the most implicit confidence. No limiting dogma must impede its course. No ancient prescription, no authoritative belief, no current definition must claim immunity from its research. All things heavenly and things earthly must be submitted to its sway. Dialectic being 'the nature,' was also the sole ruler, 'of all things.' The wild, lawless manner in which

¹ *Joannis Audoeni Epig.* Bk. iii. No. 191.

Sokrates, animated by these principles, employs his logical weapons has been often animadverted on. Genuine admirers of the Sokratic elenchus have frequently expressed a wish that its author had been more moderate and methodical in its use. But we must not forget that the view of ratiocination those persons maintain is altogether different from that which commended itself to Sokrates. According to them, reason must be employed warily, or its employment will cause mischief. Like fire and water, they consider it a good servant but a bad master. In no respect, therefore, must freedom be conceded to it. All this narrow, suspicious feeling on the subject of the greatest of human faculties was alien to the mind of Sokrates. According to him, Reason was self-existent and autocratic, subject to no law, restrained by no barrier. It occupied the position not of a slave but a mistress. Indeed, to speak of restraining her powers and activities was itself a contradiction, for to what other principle in the internal economy of man could an appeal be made? She was herself not only the supreme but the sole judge in her own court. Accordingly she must needs, by virtue of her autonomy, her independence, her indefeasible right as the sole deliberative principle of humanity, be allowed to conduct her ratiocination in her own way. What Sokrates conceived that way to be, we have already noticed in the 'Dialogues of Search.'

It is easy to blame this unlimited Dialectic, to pronounce it captious and contentious, to assert that the procedure cuts away the ground from beneath all truth. So no doubt it does, and Sokrates himself both admits and contends for this very effect. But we must remember that great minds are great not only in virtue of unusual capacity, but by the possession of multifarious many-sided activities, as well as an inordinate appetite for every kind and amount of truth. They unite in themselves the powers of a magnifying and multiplying glass. They not only see objects larger than ordinary men, but they see them in diversiform aspects. You remember the anecdote in Boswell's 'Life of Johnson,' when Boswell avowed his belief in second-sight. 'The evidence,' he said, 'is enough for me, though not for his (Johnson's) great mind; what will not fill a quart-bottle will fill a pint-bottle. I am filled with belief.'¹ No doubt the relation described in Boswell's tavern simile was one that existed between Sokrates and his disciples; the definition or idea that was capable of filling the mind of a Lysis or Charmides was totally insufficient to fill his

¹ Coleman's cynical rejoinder may be worth noting as indicating a principle of which Skeptics and Free-thinkers have made large use—'Then cork it up!'

own. But in addition to difference of amplitude, we may say that a great mind differs from a smaller just as a machine adapted for various purposes differs from one whose uses are more limited. To note this versatility in the case of Sokrates we have only to read the 'Dialogues of Search.' I have often thought that one of these dialogues might stand for a verbal portrait, so to speak, of the mind of Sokrates; that the tortuous windings and twistings we find in it represent the varied zigzag movements of his own mind; that his keenness to discover objections, to note ambiguities, mark the zest with which he was accustomed to pursue a controversial theme in his own thought. He is like a zealous hunter in pursuit of some exceedingly wild and cunning game. It is not merely the pursuit when the quarry is in sight that excites him, but the outmatching its stratagems and subterfuges, the hunting it out of secret and unlikely recesses, the unmasking all its tricks, disguises, and pretensions, the complete unveiling of its insidious character—it is in this that the excitement of the chase consists; it is this that constitutes the 'sport' of Sokrates the intellectual hunter, as it does of every genuine sportsman of whatever kind.

Hence what appears to some an irreconcilable dissentience, an obstinate determination not to be convinced, may really have another character. It may be the insatiable craving for absolutely demonstrable and ideal truth—truth free of every sort of objection, or faintest ground of suspicion, truth untainted by imperfection either in itself or in its relation to other truth—that haunts, though, alas! vainly, many a noble human intellect. In other words, it is the yearning of the limited for the illimitable, of the relative for the absolute, of the finite for the infinite. But while Sokrates pursued the search with passionate earnestness, he recognized its futility. The prey was worth the catching, if it only could be caught and held. But still more was it worth the hunting, and the latter was in human power, if not the former. Sokrates himself returns from the chase in triumph, gravely announcing, as its most precious result, the discovery of his inability to achieve supreme success. I have already admitted that Sokrates was aware of the incongruous aspect this result presented to others. Nescience was not far removed from Nihilism. Might it not be possible to push it a stage further and plead his non-knowledge even of his Nescience—thus reducing his intellectual condition to a state of complete vacuity, like that which Hindus and Buddhists, by pursuing similar paths of negation, are wont to attain? Besides, Nescience conflicted with the sovereignty claimed by Dialectic. Sokrates, as we have seen, is so persuaded of the autonomy of

Reason as to attribute to it a volition of its own. But on this point a brother Sophist might have replied, 'How can we be confident that our ratiocinations always point in the direction marked out by infallible reason? Who is to assure us that the path of the logician is under all circumstances a true path?' In controversy the course of the argument is often determined by accidental impulses and spontaneous suggestions. The paths of the intellect, like its desires, are many. How are we to know that a specific conclusion is the only one that true reason can approve? Besides, do not the Sophists continually 'make the worse appear the better cause?' And how would this be possible if all human ratiocination must infallibly evolve truth? Even Sokrates himself is continually warning those with whom he converses to watch him carefully, lest he should play tricks, thereby admitting the flexibility and fallibility of ratiocination. On all sides, therefore, human reason is shown to be illusory and deceptive. But it must be added, this untrustworthy character of human truth, though harmonizing with his own Nescience, does not destroy the confidence of Sokrates in absolute truth. That he still continues to contemplate with an eye of desire and imagination. That remains undisturbed by human imperfection, just as the light of the sun is not affected by shadows thrown by terrestrial objects. Thus in idea Sokrates compensates for the actual imbecility of the human intellect. For if reason is self-annihilated by its product of absolute ignorance, if, being itself the instrument of thought, it destroys thinking, it must nevertheless be affirmed as an unconditional postulate, an intuitional verity transcending and despising demonstration. We are, at any rate, compelled to employ it, while recognizing that it yields us no truth, just as we are to acknowledge the Supreme Being, though his existence is indemonstrable; and to fulfil moral and social duties, though we know that in speculation all such duties and definitions pertaining to them are inconclusive.

We are now in a position to determine more accurately the relation which Sokrates bore to other Sophists; in other words, to the general philosophic culture of his time. Firstly, his starting-point was altogether different. The objects of knowledge the Sophists aimed to teach were various—Grammar, Rhetoric, Geometry, &c.; but they were all objective sciences, dealing with supposed theories or facts of the universe. Sokrates, like our own Locke, took human nature as his starting-point. In order to know, he maintained, we must diligently scrutinize the mechanism for acquiring knowledge. Knowledge must direct its primary energies to knowing the knower, and this starting-point must be adopted unreservedly,

and without prejudice to its result whatever it might be. 2. In harmony with this starting-point there was a distinction of method. The Sophists in their origin were allied with the Rhetoricians. The majority taught Rhetoric, and all practised it. They are alluded to in the Platonic Dialogues as being connected with Rhetoric and Poetry. Consequently their lessons were very largely didactic and persuasive. Setting forth their themes in glowing language, they endeavoured to convince their hearers of the truth so affirmed, as well as of the exceptional wisdom of the teacher. The art of Sokrates, on the contrary, consisted in awakening the individual consciousness, and stimulating reflection by raising doubts and forcing men either to solve them or honestly to admit their insolubility. 3. There was also a marked difference in the extent and appreciation of intellectual freedom. Doubtless the Sophists were, as I have already contended, free-teachers. They were far from considering themselves bound by the beliefs or methods they found already in existence. Still they professed to teach sciences, *i.e.* branches of knowledge possessing to a certain extent systematic arrangement and well-defined rules. Teaching as they did for pay, they must needs have professed, whether rightly or wrongly, to impart some definite and tangible attainment. Sokrates, on the other hand, proposed to teach nothing, and that for the best of reasons—he knew nothing. How great soever the value he himself placed on Nescience, he knew that the Athenian public would estimate ‘Nothing’ at its mere nominal worth. It was in entire consistency with his conviction on this point that he declined to receive even the smallest present if it were offered him in the shape of payment. Indeed, he says that his devotion to his mission, or as he phrases it to the commands of the god, had caused him to neglect his own affairs and had brought him to poverty. 4. On the score of disinterestedness, then, there was a very important distinction between Sokrates and the Sophists. The latter acquired riches and political and social power by their teachings, Sokrates obtained only poverty. The Sophists estimated truth, or what they chose to denominate truth, by its money or market value. Sokrates, who did not pretend to have any truth of his own to communicate, still held that truth and truth-teaching should be free. 5. But the difference just alluded to carried in its train other distinctions. The Sophists taught generally attainments and so far dogmas. They professed to turn out their disciples accomplished debaters, rhetoricians, politicians, &c. Sokrates disclaimed all such pretensions. He who knew nothing was not likely to be able to mould these finished products of human knowledge. All that he inculcated was pure search for truth—investigation for its own

sake without a morbid anxiety as to definitive results, still less a predetermination that they must be of a certain kind. By this teaching Sokrates necessarily took a fuller view of the rights of the individual conscience than was possible to other Sophists. His Eristic was quite free and independent, and he watched over its freedom with an extreme jealousy. Enlisted in the service of no special science, it was bound by no laws except such as were self-imposed; pledged to no dogma, it was able to exercise its activities, and even to indulge its caprices, as it thought fit. Sokrates thus assigned to individual liberty, the rights of self-consciousness, a fulness and vigour it had never as yet attained in Greek philosophy, and in that respect he is far in advance of the Sophists. 6. But as a *per contra*, the moral distinction between them was profound. Both the Sophists and the post-Sokratic Sceptics seem to have agreed that the *only* authoritative sanction for ethical action was the legal enactment or customary rule of the nation or people among whom the individual might chance to dwell. Sokrates, as we saw, took generally the higher and truer principle of absolute virtue, an eternal unconditional obligation binding alike on gods and men. That this sublime conception was not fully realized by the Athenian citizens is probably true, and even if it had been they would have regarded it as a confirmation of his atheism, as being the establishment of an extra-Olympian rule; but to Sokrates himself, perhaps also to the more profound of his disciples, it presented a moral anchorage, wherein he might find refuge from the political and social divergencies he saw in seething commotion around him.

As a result of our comparison, then, we find that, in respect of Skeptical method and free-thought, Sokrates was far in advance of his brother Sophists. When the more unscrupulous among these teachers professed to be able to prove the opposite sides of any given thesis, their boast was rather a claim of personal versatility or argumentative power than an assertion that the contradictories were equally true. Nor were they forced, as Sokrates was, by such antinomies into a confession of Nescience. So far as appears, no Sophist either claimed the attribute of complete ignorance for himself, still less insisted on it as a desirable condition for others. Sokrates's true successor in this respect was Pyrrhôn. Moreover, no one of the Sophists carried Eristic, in the sense not of verbal quibbling but of a rational disputatiousness, to such an extent as Sokrates. Notwithstanding the sneers of some portions of the Platonic Dialogues at the captiousness and puerilities of the Sophists (which, however, may be caricatures), they themselves furnish instances of perverse ratiocination, of transparent fallacies, of deter-

mined logomachy, quite as glaring as any of those we find in the writings of the Sophists or even in the 'sophistical elenchi' of Aristotle.

We cannot, therefore, be surprised that when Aristophanes wished to ridicule the teaching and pretensions of the Sophists (*ψυχῶν σοφῶν*) he chose Sokrates as a master Sophist,¹ the acknowledged chief of the new school of thinkers, the teacher whose doctrine appeared most dangerous to the well-being of the community. For I see no reason for believing that Aristophanes cherished any personal animosity towards Sokrates, as has been asserted; nor do I think that his caricature of Sokratic teaching exceeds the ordinary limits of dramatic licence. A careful comparison of 'The Clouds' with the Platonic Dialogues shows us that the primary characteristics of his doctrine are the same in both. The supposed natural-science pursuits of Sokrates are, no doubt, extravagantly caricatured in the comedy; but even this is met by his own admission in the 'Apology' of the passionate devotion with which he once pursued them. But the characteristic features of his later thought are also not wanting: *e.g.* his insistence on self-knowledge as a preliminary to conscious ignorance; his stress on contemplation; his fondness for discussion without much regard to its results; his undisguised neologianism; and most of all the Sokratic suspense, which is ridiculed in a variety of ways.² Hence, if we are to accept the testimony of the only contemporary writer outside the pale of the Sokratic circle, Sokrates was regarded as a Skeptic and Sophist at least a quarter of a century before his death, and that on the strength of doctrinal peculiarities to which he himself laid claim. Nor do we find anything in the narrative of his trial and condemnation which proves that the popular estimate of him had at all altered since 'The Clouds' was first published. When he himself alludes in the Platonic 'Apology' to the indictment of Meletos and Anytos, and to the common fame on which it was grounded, he employs the precise terminology which an Athenian would have used in speaking of the Sophists. 'Sokrates is an evil-doer, and an inquisitive person, who searches into things

¹ *Clouds*, line 94; comp. lines 360, 361, and *passim*.

² *E.g.* as a condition of being suspended in baskets, walking in the air, &c. So Sokrates recommends his disciple to let his mind loose into the air, like a cockchafer with his leg tied to a string. Indeed, the condition of suspended baskets is put forward by Aristophanes as the central teaching of the Sokratic thought-shop. Comp. *e.g.* lines 868, 869—

Νηπιτίος γάρ ἐστ' ἔτι
καὶ τῶν κρεμαθρῶν οὐ τρίβων τῶν ἐνθάδε.

under the earth and in heaven. He also makes the worse appear the better cause, and teaches the aforesaid doctrines to others.' His accusers too, we must recollect, were declared opponents of the Sophists, and there is little doubt they thought that in impeaching Sokrates before the Dikastery they were striking a blow at the sophistical spirit and method so widely prevalent in Athens. Nor does it appear to me probable that this contemporary estimate of Sokrates as a Sophist and Skeptic was at all likely to be modified in the popular mind by his more positive moral teaching. The judgment of the many-headed is based not on the profounder principles or esoteric instruction, but on the surface thoughts and sayings of those whom it criticizes. Even allowing that Sokrates spoke in the eloquent terms Plato has preserved for us, of the divine nature of truth, virtue, and wisdom, yet if he regarded them as intuitional verities, or else defined them as existing in perfection only with the gods, we can easily understand how these sublime truths soared too high for popular comprehension, or were regarded as too ideal for practical utility. All 'categorical imperatives' and intuitional affirmations, when put forward as make-shifts for speculative impotence, are apt to be looked upon with suspicion. The 'unideal' Athenian (to use Coleridge's expressive word) might have retorted against Sokrates, as some German Philistines did against Kant, 'We understand your skeptical principles, your attitude of suspense, your antinomies of the reason, the radical impotence of the intellect which is the outcome of your system, but we know nothing of your transcendental verities and your unconditional obligations. These are *ex hypothesi* purely subjective, a standard of truth or conduct you may haply possess, but which you cannot even expect to communicate to us.' Without some such admission of the esoteric and intransmissible character of those ultimate bases on which Sokrates placed his ethical and religious teaching, we seem unable to account for the full extent of the ill-fame that attached to his ordinary doctrine. In the superficial judgment of Athenian philistinism there was little to counterbalance the destructive effects of the elenchus. After removing from their immediate ken the gods of Olympus, and destroying not a few home-made idols in the shape of hasty and unverified conclusions, it left them with the barren and unsatisfactory compensation of Nescience.

We must now turn to the painfully interesting close of the Sokratic mission.

For about half of his long life (70 years), Sokrates had diligently pursued his ungrateful office of public censor and critic of

his fellow-citizens, urged on both by an impulse he counted divine and by an intense passion for what might be termed 'mental vivisection.' Day after day he reiterated his exhortations to self-examination, mental discipline, and spiritual candour. Day after day he placed his unfortunate victims on the rack of his elenchus and watched their impotent wriggles with something of the grim sympathy with which Isaac Walton contemplated the struggles of the worm he had impaled on his fish-hook 'in such a way as if he loved it.' Daily were the Silenus visage, the snub nose, the goggle eyes and protrusive lips of the Athenian 'Inquisitor-general' to be seen in the market, the gymnasia, and wherever else men were wont to congregate. With execrable iteration the Athenians heard him avow the 'Je ne sçais pas' which he proclaimed as the concentration of all human wisdom. Again and again they heard him demonstrate the futility of popular notions and commonly received definitions. No person, no institution, no opinion could be considered safe from his covert irony or open satire. From its very nature, the elenchus covered the whole ground of human thought and action. Just as an English Skeptic (Gibbon) ridiculed the essential absurdity of hereditary government, so Sokrates with all his patriotism could not keep the keen edge of his Dialectic from vivisectioning the existing government of Athens, and exposing among other things the unwisdom of electing archons by the vote of the majority, *i.e.* the ignorant and unthinking. In this, as in other cases, his elenchus occasionally trespassed beyond the bounds which his own sentiment and feeling of propriety would have assigned it. His own conceptions of Olympian deities, *e.g.* differed widely from those generally current; and yet, although he gave 'the gods' external deference for political and social reasons, he could not help expressing himself sometimes in a sarcastic manner as to their claim. But above all other causes for the unpopularity of Sokrates we must place the general character of his 'mission,' and the determination with which he pursued it. It entailed unremitting attacks on the self-complacency of his fellow-citizens. It stripped them of their vaunted knowledge and wisdom, and tended to show them up to each other as foolish, prejudiced, and ignorant. His own assumption of Nescience, so far from really lessening, must have increased and confirmed the antipathy of the Athenians. For was it not true that his ignorance was triumphant over their supposed knowledge, so that their actual condition was demonstrated to be one inferior even to ignorance? There was a peculiar aggravation in seeing their tenets and ideas put to the rout by an instrument ostensibly so impotent and

unworthy. Their sensations were like those we may suppose the Philistines felt when they saw their gigantic champion succumb to no worthier adversary than a shepherd's boy, armed with a sling. Had Sokrates chosen to attack their knowledge from the standpoint of superior wisdom openly claimed as such, they might have borne with his preaching. As it was, not only the teacher, but his theme, and his mode of presenting it, were all alike distasteful.

Besides, his choice of a standpoint removed by the greatest conceivable distance from ordinary modes of conviction discloses another element of his general character, and one hardly conducive to popularity—I mean his contempt for the 'vox populi,' his regal disdain of the unthinking crowd. This is, I fear, a fault—or shall I say an idiosyncrasy?—pertaining to all the highest thought, whether dogmatic or skeptic. We shall have many examples of it among the Skeptics on our list. Though Sokrates intermingled freely among his fellow-citizens, his familiar discourses were limited to the few (not necessarily of noble birth) who were capable of understanding and appreciating them. Perhaps he would have applied to his followers his own proverb, 'Many are the wand-bearers, few are the mystics.' The particular knowledge on which he most insisted, introspective knowledge, was of a peculiarly unpopular kind, and would have sufficed of itself to place an impassable gulf between him and the unidea'd mass of Athenian citizens.

With all these elements of discord as regards his environment, we cannot, I think, feel surprised, not only at the growing unpopularity of Sokrates, but at its attaining such a climax as it unhappily reached. There was hardly a prejudice, a sentiment, a belief in the Athenian mind on which he had not placed the iron foot of his ruthless logic. Though he himself was actuated by the purest motives, though his devotion to truth and earnestness in its search were above suspicion, though his life was blameless, the enmity he provoked can scarcely be pronounced either strange or unreasonable. Whatever the intrinsic value of his mission, and the undeniable importance of the self-knowledge it inculcated, it soared too far above the nature, not only of Athenians, but of humanity, to give it much chance of success; it postulated a reverence for truth, and a determination at all hazards to acquire and realize it, which are among the rarest attributes of mankind. It demanded a single-hearted devotion to intellectual freedom, which is unhappily only the possession of the few. As a free-thinker he arrayed against him all the forces of intolerance, dogmatism, and

antiquated prejudice, and his mission was so far a self-imposed sentence of human malignity and death.

Nor was the extreme danger that attended his mission hidden from himself. Every free-thinker who has set himself as a life-task to cope with prevailing and injurious dogma has foreseen the peril he must necessarily incur. Sokrates, like Ramus, Giordano Bruno, and Vanini—not to mention the supreme instance of Christ Himself—had a distinct presage of his coming fate. Here at least his customary nescience was transformed into prescience. To use his apt illustration, he was in the position of a physician who had long been accustomed to administer to children nauseous and bitter draughts—not a few of them *emetics*, I may add—and who was now tried by a jury of his thoughtless patients. That the children, with little knowledge or regard for the real service done to them, should wish to be rid both of ‘the doctor’ and his emetic powders, was both child-like and natural. When they once had him in their power he could not but anticipate they would adjudge him to death. From the very nature of his ‘mission,’ therefore, I am persuaded that the unpopularity of Sokrates was a sentiment of long growth, and that his trial and condemnation was by no means the sole instance of the malevolence of the Athenians towards him. The ‘Clouds’ of Aristophanes clearly show that twenty-four years before his trial Sokrates was the butt of popular obloquy and ridicule, and that the contemptuous indifference with which he was wont to bear this abuse was a feature of his character so strongly marked as to be thought a fitting subject of parody by the popular comic poet.¹ In this respect the Sokrates of ‘The Clouds’ is undoubtedly the Sokrates of the Platonic ‘Apology,’ and his equanimity under the petty insults of the streets is but a lower degree of the calm philosophical serenity which defied the Dikasts, heaped scorn on his accusers, and despised the threat of death.²

The trial and condemnation of Sokrates is an oft-told tale in the history of philosophy. The theme of so many variously gifted pens, it has been considered from every possible point of view, and narrated in every conceivable style of literary art. Our present concern with it depends on the circumstance that it is a martyrdom in the cause of free-thought. It occupies a foremost place in the long list of outrages which intolerance and dogmatism have perpetrated against humanity. We shall have to compare Sokrates before the

¹ *Clouds*, line 412, &c., also 910, &c.

² The classical scholar will hardly need to be reminded of Cicero’s eloquent description of Sokrates’s ‘*liberam contumaciam*.’ *Tusc. Disp.* lib. i. cap. 29.

Athenian Dikasts with Ramus in the clutches of the infuriated butchers of St. Bartholomew ; with Giordano Bruno confronting the Roman Inquisition ; with Vanini before the bigoted parliament of Toulouse. We shall thence learn that obscurantism and intellectual tyranny are not confined to any age or people, creed or religion ; we shall perceive how the pretensions of arrogant and exclusive dogma exercise a malignant influence wherever they find a sphere of operation. Among the most enlightened and tolerant nation of antiquity it compels a Sokrates to drink the cup of hemlock, while it turns even the sweet wine of Christian charity to vinegar and consigns the noblest and rarest intellects to prison, the rack, and the stake.

From what we have seen of the nature of the Sokratic 'mission,' we may readily anticipate the charges preferred against him by his accusers Meletos, Anytos, and Lycon. They are in fact the stereotyped charges made against Sceptics and free inquirers in all ages ; or, as Sokrates himself describes them, 'the commonplace impeachments which are made against all philosophers indifferently.' First there was a general charge of neologianism, 'Sokrates was an inquisitive person who searched into things in heaven and earth, and made the worse appear the better cause.' It would have been difficult for Sokrates to have met the charge of 'searching' with an open denial. Whatever might be its illegality or obnoxiousness to Athenians, it was indubitably 'a true bill.' Sokrates, to his immortal honour, was and had been throughout life a confirmed searcher. There was no phase of physical or metaphysical knowledge he had not attempted to explore. He was a born inquirer whom no difficulty arrested and no ordinary result satisfied. Search for truth had been his sole life's work ; to pursue it he had neglected his occupation, lost his property, and was involved in the straits of poverty and privation. Nay, it was a veritable synonym to him of life itself. Take away his right of exploration in whatever direction he thought fit, and existence were not worth retaining at the price. He accordingly details before his judges what he considered the primary, heaven-suggested impulse of his search, and expatiates on the method he pursued and the results he attained. The conclusion could hardly have been agreeable to his judges. Sokrates had gone forth among his fellow-townsmen to discover their knowledge, their wisdom, the truths they claimed to possess. With his Diogenes lantern, the elenchus, he had explored the streets of Athens in broad daylight to find a true man, a man whose conscious knowledge was on the exact level of his real acquirement. But, alas! Sokrates, as

we saw, had returned empty : the statesmen knew nothing ; the poets knew nothing ; the rhetoricians knew nothing, even of the arts they professed to know ; the mechanics could tell him little beyond their manual craft. Knowledge that he could realize and substantiate did not apparently exist. But though Sokrates returned empty as to real knowledge, he found everywhere plenty of false knowledge, plenty of its conceit, its arrogance, its insufferable dogmatism. No doubt some of the 507 Dikasts had themselves been the objects of the elenchus, and could hardly have been gratified by hearing the barren results of its operation put forward so nakedly. In an ironical form Sokrates had preferred a counter-charge of ignorance, pretentiousness, and conceit against most of his fellow-citizens. This, as a mode of rebutting the indictment preferred against himself, was not likely to better his position in the eyes of his judges. To the allegation, ' You are a curious, inquiring person, searching into things in heaven and earth,' Sokrates, in effect, though with ironical deference, replies, ' And you, for the most part, are a set of conceited, contented Dogmatists, mere antiquated obscurantists, ignorant both of the knowledge you claim to possess and of the ignorance you actually do possess.' Clearly the only adequate defence in the eyes of his judges—at least it would have been so esteemed by them—would have been a humble apology for his supposed misdemeanour, a promise to forswear for the future his unfortunate zetetic propensities ; and instead of continuing a search that led to nothing, to content himself like the rest of mankind with the possession of imaginary truths. The model Athenian, from the standpoint of the Dikasts, was the uninquiring citizen, the man who plodded on blindly in the old paths, who received implicitly the convictions, truths, and opinions of his forefathers. What need was there of new ideas or new methods ? Did not the old suffice to create the men of Marathon and Salamis ? to advance Attica to the foremost state of Greece ? —the precise line of argument, in short, which the advocates of mental stagnation and philistinism employ in all ages. Couched in varied phraseology, it formed the common impeachment of Christ before the Jewish Council, of Luther before the Diet of Worms, of Bruno and Galileo before the Inquisition, of Abelard before the Councils of Soissons and Sens. As a loyal witness for truth Sokrates declined to apologize for attempting to discover it, and refused to promise to forego such attempt. To the charge of neologianism, therefore, he returned the proud and defiant plea of ' guilty,' coupled with the admission that if released on this occasion he would at once take up again the obnoxious employ-

ment of extorting truth from whatever person or quarter he thought likely to yield it.

Nor must we forget that Sokrates's plea for search was hardly strengthened in the judgment of the Dikasts by the result he professed to have gained. Nescience must have seemed to them an anomalous and perilous outcome of truth-investigation. The ordinary inquirer starting with Dogmatist preconceptions does not dream of finding the issue of his search to be Nothing. He starts with the determination to find something, some positive infallible truth, and as he is not content without discovering it, it is needless to say he generally succeeds. To Sokrates, however, the interests of Truth and Reason were paramount. Wherever these led he was determined to follow. If they issued in the commonly received convictions and opinions of his time he would acknowledge them. If they pointed in another dogmatic direction he would still follow; and—hardest alternative of all—if they resulted in a conviction of Nescience, he would accept it. But this was a single-minded devotion to truth of which his judges had no conception. The only construction they could have placed on Nescience was to regard it as a dangerous deficiency of ordinary conviction, or, what was the same thing, of all truth. Little sympathy can the avowed Skeptic ever expect from the Dogmatist. They represent not only different but opposite mental conditions, and we might apply to any attempt to find a common bond of sympathy between them the Scotch proverb, 'It's ill talking between a fu' man and a fastin'.'

But in addition to the general charge of 'searching' was that of employing Sophistical methods. This was the current charge against the Sophists, and although often alleged against Sokrates he does not appear to have taken any pains to repel or even deny it. In one respect the charge was indubitably false. Sokrates had never prostituted his Dialectic to the service of Falsehood or of Vice. On the contrary, it was in his estimation an instrument of and preparation for virtue. At the same time his method was entirely free, so free that it might easily be wrested to pervert the cause of truth and justice. This freedom seemed dangerous to the Dikasts. Like other timorous Dogmatists, they were unable to distinguish it from licence. They failed to grasp the Sokratic idea that Free-thought and Dialectic constituted the most invaluable heritage of humanity, which though liable, like any other useful agency, to abuse, was not on that ground to be despised. Sokrates had a wholesome conviction that no amount of speculative freedom could permanently injure truth. He was fully persuaded of the

inherent power of the reason to rectify, if need were, its own abuses and perversions. That the interest of Truth could be served by a ratiocination bound down by laws, circumscribed by formulas, and fenced in by restrictions of every kind, seemed to him a proposition at once anomalous and untenable. He had the same implicit confidence in Truth as most jurists have in the inherent, self-asserting, self-rectifying power of justice. Eminent English advocates, with considerable influence over juries, like Follett or Scarlett, might certainly be thought open to the charge of 'making the worse appear the better cause;' but were such an accusation actually preferred against them, they would have treated it with the same contempt as Sokrates. They would point out that an advocate's duty to his clients was paramount over every other consideration. They would urge that juries were not so utterly destitute of common-sense as to allow themselves to be deceived by absolutely worthless ratiocination. They would submit that precisely the same unrestricted freedom was open to their adversaries in the causes contested. Justice, they would argue, was still free and unrestricted, notwithstanding their *ex parte* argumentation. No doubt an outsider might instance cases in which a chance miscarriage of justice might be traced to a specious and one-sided argument, but even this contingency would be nullified by the twofold reply—first, that complete infallible justice is, under any conceivable theory of the advocate's duty, unattainable; second, that examples of such miscarriage would be more frequent when the ratiocination on either side was restrained and forced than when it was perfectly free. But if these considerations serve to exonerate the advocate in making the most of his causes, *à fortiori* are they available in the case of a free-thinking philosopher like Sokrates, who refused to be bound by any prescribed line of argument of whatever kind. An advocate is of course a partisan, and Sokrates regarded the standpoint of a partisan as conflicting necessarily with that of a free-inquirer. But both the advocate's and the Sokratic point of view are alike in this, they are based on a strong conviction that Truth must ultimately prevail and vindicate her rights. The partisanship of the one, the unrestrained liberty of the other, are equally unable to compromise or injure fatally the indefeasible rights of the human reason. Hence, though not wholly impossible, it is improbable to the very verge of impossibility that the worse cause should be able to assert a final and invincible superiority over the better.

II. But Sokrates's position as a Sophist and Free-thinker did not constitute the most formidable item in the charge preferred

against him. He was also guilty, said Meletos, of 'Impiety'—that grave indefinite charge which was the analogue in ancient Athens of the 'heterodoxy' and 'heresy' of ecclesiastical Christianity. He did not regard as deities those whom the State so regarded. We have already noticed Sokrates's answer to this accusation, and have seen what were, so far as we can gather them, his real views on the subject-matter of theology. He limited his defence to declaring his general belief in a supreme being or supernatural agency, whom he does scruple to designate by the ordinary appellation of 'the gods,' but declines to express himself more fully on the subject. His own view, as we know, was opposed on the one hand to the anthropomorphic conceptions of the old mythology, on the other to the materialism of some thinkers of the school of Anaxagoras, and in all probability approximated nearly to some form of theism. How far he extended an outward show of deference to the national deities we are not able to say. Xenophon's conception of him as an habitual worshipper at all the popular shrines seems evidently exaggerated. As the master-thinker in the 'thought shop' burlesqued by Aristophanes, he is described as having given up the Olympian deities and substituted the physical powers of nature. With due allowance for caricature, I think we may accept this as one phase in the mental evolution of Sokrates, and I also think the reasoning by which the 'Clouds' are proved to rain and thunder have a strong flavour of the genuine Sokratic elenchus. But his abandonment of natural science for metaphysical studies seems to have imparted a more spiritual impulse to his ideas of deity, and thenceforward he conceived of it as the Divine Reason, the supreme power whose aims and tendencies are for righteousness, and whose image and attributes have their reflected likeness in the soul of every righteous man.¹

On the ground of theology, then, the accusation of Meletos must be held to be true. Sokrates does not esteem as true divinities the gods of the Athenian populace. Had it lain in his power, he would at least have idealized the crude notions of the old mythology. He is therefore a protestant and a reformer, an assertor of liberty, of free religious thought as against antiquated dogma. He takes his place in history among the dissentients, for conscience' and reason's sake, from widely accepted modes of religious belief—with Luther, with Giordano Bruno, with John Huss, and the many other representatives of protestantism and free-thought. And we may make this admission more ungrudgingly since in many respects the idea

¹ Comp. on this point Sokrates's own theological admissions in the *Euthyphron*, *Gorgias*, and *Apology*.

that Sokrates had of deity bears a remarkable resemblance to that taught by Christ Himself. It possesses both its spirituality and its ethical character. That Sokrates made no attempt to formulate his conception of God in precise terms may well be ascribed partly to the instinctive reluctance of every great thinker to attempt a definition of the undefinable, partly because a definition of deity would have conflicted with his standpoint of Nescience. This, as the final outcome of his investigations, must be preserved at all costs, as the master-key to every portion both of his life and teaching.

III. But the alleged disastrous effect of Sokrates's free-teaching took in the indictment the form of a charge of corrupting the Athenian youth. How early this accusation was made against the Sokratic elenchus is shown by the 'Clouds' of Aristophanes. It was indeed a common indictment against all the Sophists, and the fact of its occupying a foremost place in the gravamen of Meletos and his fellow-prosecutors shows how Sokrates was generally identified with those teachers in the popular mind. The manner in which Sokrates meets this charge is noteworthy. In the 'Apology' he merges it with the other accusation of not worshipping the gods of the country, while by Xenophon he is represented as waiving it from the specific points on which Meletos lays stress. He undoubtedly treats it with a contempt which has always appeared strange to his commentators. The true explanation of this conduct is not, in my opinion, far to find. No feature is more strongly impressed on the character of Sokrates than his conviction of the existence and inherent prowess of truth, as well as of the inborn capacities of the human mind for its investigation. Fully possessed with this belief, he had not the least fear that the mind of any ingenuous youth could be morally corrupted by his cross-examination. His undaunted confidence in truth he impliedly contrasts with the suspicions of his accusers concerning it. His belief in humanity, the thinking portion of it, was as boundless as theirs was contracted. That any injury could arise from free speculative inquiry, was as absurd as to suppose that a man of healthy constitution could be injured by taking abundant exercise. In this respect Meletos and Anytos were the Skeptics, not himself. Like all dogmatic obscurantists, they distrusted truth, regarded every free mode of investigating it with suspicion, had no belief in human progress, would fain make the human intellect march in chains lest by any possibility it might wander from its appointed path. To Sokrates such a mental attitude was inconceivable, and not unnaturally he treated it, with a contempt perhaps somewhat

beyond its deserts; for with due allowance for the pure disinterestedness of Sokrates's noble trust in truth, virtue, and humanity, one can hardly help suggesting the question how weak, unstable, immature, unprincipled intellects were likely to fare after his teaching. That some of his hearers were forward in asserting their independence of paternal and other restraints, we are told by Aristophanes and Xenophon. Probably such weaklings were in a very large minority, indeed his own appeal before the Dikastery is a sufficient proof that this was really the case, and Sokrates, pressed with the objection, might well have replied that no possible method of teaching could be devised which might not in isolated cases and peculiar circumstances act prejudicially on its recipients. Certainly the examples adduced of Kritias and Alkibiades out of the many pupils who had come under the influence of Sokrates could hardly have been deemed, except by political adversaries, a cogent proof of the pernicious nature of his teachings. Besides, the implicit trust which Sokrates had in humanity, as well as his indifference to the alleged mischievous effects of his elenchus, must also be attributed to his belief that the tendencies of human nature were towards good rather than evil. His proposition, 'No man is voluntarily evil,' however questionable to us, was a leading principle of his thought and action. Indeed, it is only another mode of asserting the identity of virtue with knowledge, and vice with ignorance. With these convictions, Sokrates was not likely to be alarmed by practical ill-consequences incidentally resulting from his teaching. But what, it might be asked, were the precise effects contemplated by Sokrates as the legitimate products of his Dialectic upon the youth of Athens? An instructive answer to this question is furnished by his remark before the Dikasts as to the treatment he desired for his sons when he was dead. He wished them to be submitted to the same pitiless analytic to which he himself submitted his youthful disciples whenever they appeared to care for other things more than virtue, or seemed to think too highly of themselves. Whence it is clear that Sokrates imagined his elenchus adapted for the twofold purpose—(1) of inducing Nescience, and thereby humility and caution, in speculation; (2) of directly promoting virtue in practice. The former result we can have no difficulty in understanding. It is merely the inculcation of self-denial, the conviction of ignorance, and the stern repression of dogmatic assertion which are initiatory stages of most systems of teaching, whether dogmatic or Skeptical. A genuine persuasion of Nescience is with most persons not only a preparation for but a stimulus to the acquirement of knowledge, and to attain it in some

form or other is therefore a common aim both of philosophers and religious teachers, whatever might be their difference of opinion as to the extent to which the feeling of mental vacuity is to be cherished, or the manner in which it is to be filled up. More difficult is the practical bearing of the question—Nescience regarded as a propædeutic to virtue. Our more positive habits of thought have made it difficult to comprehend how the consciousness of ignorance could, in the way supposed by Sokrates, Pyrrhôn, and other thinkers, have contributed to ethical action. That the idea was not confined to the Greeks is shown by its prevalence among Hindu thinkers as well as Christian mystics. Perhaps a few considerations may enable us to discern the sequence of thought, if not to appreciate its importance.

1. We must remember that the consciousness of Nescience operates in practical life as in speculation by engendering a feeling of distrust and dissatisfaction, and a desire to escape from it, either by the road of independent moral practice—the Skeptical road, or by attaining and accumulating positive knowledge—results—the dogmatic road. In the former case moral conduct—the performance of obvious duty—may receive enhanced consideration from the reflection that it is the only road possible to man, the sole alternative of man's acknowledged impotence in speculation. This is certainly the *rationale* of the stress which not only Greek philosophers, but modern thinkers like Spinoza and Kant, placed upon Ethical action.

2. Sokrates is satisfied of the efficacy of introspection and perpetual self-analysis in counteracting vicious tendencies. Once a youth could be induced to proceed in the path of *γνώθι σεαυτόν*, to watch diligently and discriminate accurately the process of ratiocination, the play of passion, the way in which actions are evolved from motives, the inborn bias of individual idiosyncrasies both of thought and conduct, the whole working, in short, of the machinery within him; once he could be persuaded to hunt out and unmask the pretences, false assumptions, plausible semblances beneath which human thought and action so often hide their real character, the less inclination would he manifest for pursuing blindly the paths of vice. This was only another form of St. Paul's antagonism between flesh and spirit. Sokrates undoubtedly maintained that if a man 'walked in the spirit, he would not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.' This opinion was also in complete harmony with his identification of vice with ignorance—the uncultured and thoughtless apathy that took no cognizance of its real state, and therefore took no heed to reform it.

3. It would contribute to virtuous conduct by inducing a state of intellectual and moral honesty, by substituting self-knowledge—the only knowledge possible to humanity—for ignorance, sincerity for deceit, and truthfulness for falsehood. No virtuous conduct or moral excellence could proceed from those impure sources, and the endeavour to extirpate them, the aim of the Sokratic mission, was the best service he could render to morality. Sokrates was here taking up the position of a preacher who insists that a consciousness of shortcoming is itself a distinct advance on the road of reformation and practical righteousness.

4. Nor was the social effect of his teaching less in inducing a proper value by the only agency capable of making it, of individual worth and attainment, and thus determining in the consciousness of the individual the exact relation which he as a unit of the social system bore to all the rest. Pretentious ignorance was, in the opinion of Sokrates, not only an individual but a political vice. The man who thought he knew what he actually did not know was a source of danger to the State. We may readily believe that in the recent political changes that had taken place in the government of Athens there was no lack of special instances which served to confirm his opinion, though with his customary deference to the existing government he did not care to allude to them pointedly. At any rate, he was convinced that Nescience was a better bond of cohesion between one man and another than arrogant science. Theoretically, at least, it was a leveller. In a nation of Skeptics—of men whose conviction of ignorance was a ruling principle in their lives—no man could with any show of reason attempt to domineer over another. Tyrannies and mis-governments were the baleful progeny of vaunted wisdom and baseless science, not of humble conscious ignorance.

But the ostensible issues of Sokrates's trial as contained in the charges of Meletos and in the reply of the Platonic Apology must not shut our eyes to its real significance. It was no question of transient interest that was being tried before the Dikastery. As Aristotle and other clear-sighted contemporaries saw, it was philosophy that was really arraigned in the person of one of the noblest of her sons.¹ It was the right of free-thought, the claim of the human reason to exercise its powers in whatever direction it chose, without limit or hindrance of any kind save those imposed by its own laws, that was contested by the accusers of Sokrates. In

¹ Aristotle quotes from a Sokratic apology by an anonymous rhetorician the words: μέλλετε δὲ κρίνειν οὐ περὶ Σωκράτους ἀλλὰ περὶ ἐπιτηδεύματος, εἰ χρὴ φιλοσοφεῖν. *Rhet.* ii 18.

short, he is the representative of a cause, that of intellectual freedom, of religious liberty, of human progress, and it is this fact that gives to his trial, condemnation, and death the peculiar sacredness and importance they have always had. The questions then tried in Athens and resolved by the calm, unwavering courage of Sokrates, were of paramount interest to humanity at large. Was it right that men should use their reason? Was it right to avow honestly the results of life-long and patient research? Was it right under any circumstances to dissent from generally received beliefs? These were some of the latent issues of the trial considered from the standpoint of philosophy.

Nor were these issues of less importance regarded from the point of view of religion. Sokrates, like other free-thinkers on our list, was really a martyr for religious liberty and a victim of dogmatic intolerance. Neither his philosophical Skepticism nor the political enmity he had provoked contributed so much to his condemnation as his heterodoxy.¹ He had dared to ignore the national deities, and to ascribe divine authority to other and more human agencies. His accusers were able to appeal to the powerful sentiment of religious prejudice, and the pretended deference but real contempt with which Sokrates encountered the charge was hardly likely to impress the Dikasts with his innocence. Notwithstanding the free speculation current among the thinkers and higher sections of Athenian society, Zeus was still the sovereign deity of Greece, and a worshipper of Zeus in his popular mythological presentation Sokrates did not even pretend to be. We might therefore say that Sokrates was sacrificed as a victim to the manes of the moribund deities of Olympus.

In short, the real issue between Sokrates and his enemies was between enlightenment and human progress on the one hand, and the intellectual stolidity commonly known as philistinism on the other. Reasoned discussion on every topic and in every direction constituted for him the chief good of human existence. It was a duty that had the sanction not only of personal idiosyncrasy, of the general reason of humanity, but also of religion. To stifle inquiry, to repress the innate inquisitiveness of the Reason, he regarded as more than an intellectual crime, it was a veritable act of sacrilege. The outcome of enlightened Nescience, in which it resulted in his own case, had received the approval of the deity. It was the Nirvana which he regarded as the highest attainable point of human exploration. That all enlightenment should be

¹ Comp. the allegations put into his mouth in the earlier part of the *Euthyphron*.

attended with drawbacks, that the tree of knowledge should open men's eyes to their nakedness, was both natural and reasonable. An Eden of uninquiring innocence and inexperience would have been no paradise for him. On the contrary, this was what his enemies deprecated and feared. An inquiry into the nature of the gods, into the source and authority of popular notions on virtue, impiety, courage, was equivalent in their estimation to atheism, and the denial of all distinction between vice and virtue. Besides, where would the daring investigator cease? What was to be reputed sacred and inviolable from the profane grasp of an elenchus so audacious, so omnivorous, so pitiless? Remove the old landmarks of the belief of their ancestors, and irreligion and immorality must needs run riot through the State. The gods would no longer be safe in Olympus. The laws would no longer be obeyed, the authority of parents would be set at nought. Social restraints of every kind would disappear. So argued in good faith the enemies of Sokrates, the representatives of Athenian obscurantism. They are thus the prototypes of men common enough in every age of the world, who see in each extension of freedom a source of danger both to the individual and the common weal; who are suspicious of all unrestrained research, of every novel discovery, of every attempt at intellectual emancipation. Sokrates before the Athenian Dikastery occupied precisely the same position as Giordano Bruno and Galileo before the Roman Inquisition. In all such cases of bigotry and fanaticism there is no question as to the conscientious motives of the perpetrators, the only doubt relates to their wisdom and far-sightedness. They seem animated by the deepest distrust of humanity and, what is of graver import, of human reason. In part they are misled by the fallacy common to all dogmatists of enforcing on others the limits and conditions they find necessary for themselves: and as their sole idea of freedom is bondage; of religion, blind adherence to unverified beliefs; of morality, external restrictions of a narrow and cramping nature, it cannot be wonderful that their ideals do not attract freer and more generous natures. The Athenian Dikasts could not have been brought to acknowledge that Sokrates with his Nescience and elenchus stood on an infinitely higher platform of truth than themselves; that he was more religious in his belief in divine agencies, in his persuasion that deity symbolised the highest justice and righteousness, than they were in their worship of Zeus, Hêrê, and Aphroditê; that he was far more ethical in his conviction of absolute morality than they could possibly be, guided only by customary restraints and human enactments.

I have thus attempted a rough sketch of the position which Sokrates, as an avowed free-thinker and Skeptic, occupied before his judges. The main features of his defence, assuming it to have agreed in substance with the Platonic Apology, are indifference and defiance. The former we may take as the practical analogue of the intellectual suspense he prescribed in philosophy. The key-note of the 'Apology,' like the final chord in a strain of solemn music, seems to me the expressive words with which it concludes: 'The hour of departure has arrived, and we go our ways—I to die and you to live. Which is better, God only knows.'¹

The sublime indifference to his fate here disclosed sheds a flood of reflected light on the mind of the great thinker. It denotes the calm self-possession, the unruffled composure of a man who has long resolved on what he considers his highest duty, and is determined to follow it at all costs. It reveals a profound conviction that no evil from any source, human or divine, can harm the good man. He is no more terrified by the uncertainties of the next world than he has been by the insoluble problems of this. So far as in him lies, he will explore the former with the same eager intentness, the same philosophical serenity, the same zeal for truth, that he brought to bear on terrestrial questions. He has attained that unmoved equanimity in adverse circumstances which after Skeptics believed to be one direct outcome of their teaching. The elevation above mundane considerations which Aristophanes had burlesqued so many years before is now manifested in a peculiarly noble manner in the supreme hour of his fate. For the same reason, he defies his enemies and challenges their hostility, not in any arrogant, obtrusive manner, but with the calm intrepidity which is the result of long and intense self-concentration. Were it true, as some persons suppose, that the manner in which a man encounters death is a test of the motive principles that actuated his life, few could claim superiority over the unrestrained Dialectic, the conscious Nescience, the absolute verities which sustained Sokrates before the Dikasts, and nerved his hand to receive the cup of poison.

The narrative of his condemnation we need not stop to particularize. Out of 501 Dikasts 220 had voted for sparing his life, a number which, considering his unpopularity, much surprised him. He was condemned to death on the day after that on which the vessel had been despatched to Delos, on the periodical theoric mission. Until its return no State criminal could be executed.

¹ Jowett's trans. i. p. 356.

For thirty days, therefore, Sokrates was kept in prison, and there he employed himself with his accustomed serenity in making attempts (the first in his life) at poetical composition, and in philosophical discussions with his friends. At last the ship returned from her sacred voyage, and Sokrates had to prepare for death. His manner of doing this is described by Plato in language of such exquisite and simple pathos that I shall take the liberty of reading to you from Professor Jowett's translation¹ the paragraph that recounts it. This will be the more fitting as we shall have to compare with his martyrdom that of other free-thinkers on our list. His friend Kriton had been urging Sokrates to defer drinking the cup of hemlock till later in the day, but the philosopher refuses, and requests that it might be brought to him at once. The story then proceeds; the narrator being supposed to be Phaidon, who was present:—

‘Kriton, when he heard this, made a sign to the servant; and the servant went in and remained for some time, and then returned with the jailor carrying the cup of poison. Sokrates said: “You, my good friend, who are experienced in these matters, shall give me directions how I am to proceed.” The man answered: “You have only to walk about until your legs are heavy, and then to lie down and the poison will act.” At the same time he handed the cup to Sokrates, who in the easiest and gentlest manner, without the least fear or change of colour or feature, looking at the man with all his eyes, as his manner was, took the cup and said: “What do you say about making a libation out of this cup to any god? May I, or not?” The man answered, “We only prepare, Sokrates, just so much as we deem enough.” “I understand,” he said: “yet I may and must pray to the gods to prosper my journey from this to the other world—may this, then, which is my prayer, be granted to me!” Then holding the cup to his lips, quite readily and cheerfully he drank off the poison. And hitherto most of us had been able to control our sorrow; but now, when we saw him drinking, and saw too that he had finished the draught, we could no longer forbear, and in spite of myself my own tears were flowing fast; so that I covered my face, and wept over myself, for certainly I was not weeping over him, but at the thought of my own calamity in having lost such a companion. Nor was I the first, for Kriton when he found himself unable to restrain his tears had got up and moved away, and I followed; and at that moment, Apollodorus, who had been weeping all the time, broke out into a loud cry, which made cowards of us all. Sokrates alone retained his

¹ Vol. i. p. 468.

calmness. "What is this strange outcry?" he said: "I sent away the women mainly in order that they might not offend in this way, for I have heard that a man should die in peace. Be quiet, then, and have patience." When we heard that, we were ashamed, and refrained our tears; and he walked about until, as he said, his legs began to fail, and then he lay on his back, according to the directions, and the man who gave him the poison now and then looked at his feet and legs; and after a while he pressed his foot hard, and asked him if he could feel; and he said no; and then his leg, and so upwards and upwards, and showed us that he was cold and stiff, and he felt them himself and said: "When the poison reaches the heart, that will be the end." He was beginning to grow cold about the groin, when he uncovered his face, for he had covered himself up, and said (they were his last words): "Kriton, I owe a cock to Asklepius.¹ Will you remember to pay the debt?" "The debt shall be paid," said Kriton. "Is there anything else?" There was no answer to this question; but in a minute or two a movement was heard, and the attendants uncovered him; his eyes were set, and Kriton closed his eyes and his mouth. Such was the end,' continues Phaidon, 'of our friend, whom I may truly call the wisest and justest and best of all the men whom I have ever known.'

I will not detract by any words of mine from the solemn beauty of this picture. The death of Sokrates has always and most deservedly occupied a high place in the lugubrious chronicles of similar events. A termination in completer harmony with the current of his life it would be impossible to conceive. There is almost a peculiar fitness in his execution as a Neologian and Free-thinker—like a brave soldier dying, not on his bed, but on the battle-field. We are almost inclined to forgive the philistinism, the intolerance, the religious dogmatism, the philosophical narrowness which could achieve such results. Nor is the melancholy satisfaction we feel at the mode of his death diminished when we bear in mind attendant circumstances. His life's work was clearly done; whatever efficacy was likely to attend his mission had been already attained; it was most improbable that it could have been increased by a few more years' labour in so ungrateful a field. His unpopularity was on the increase, and his memory was hated by his fellow-citizens after his death. Besides, he was now seventy years old, many more years he could not have expected to see, and,

¹ Probably to be taken in the sense that death is the supreme physician, the healer of all human evils. This interpretation is entirely in harmony with Sokratic irony, and with his custom of paying homage to the deities of his own choosing, though employing popular designations for them.

as Mr. Grote has remarked, it is a consolatory thought that he probably suffered less after his hemlock-draught than he would have done had he died of disease, or even by the general decline of old age.

Sokrates is the first eminent Skeptic who has appeared in European philosophy, the first who asserted the rights of the human reason to inquire in whatsoever manner or direction it thought fit—who proclaimed Nescience as the highest human wisdom. As I have already more than once remarked, he is more Skeptical than Pyrrhôn; not that his Skepticism is more pronounced, nor that he arranged its method and conclusions into a definite system, nor that he devised the formulas, definitions, &c., which mark succeeding Skeptics. Against dogmatic negation such as that of Pyrrhôn, Sokrates would have recalculated more vehemently than against dogmatic assertion. An unbelief which started instead of terminating with Nescience he would have deemed spurious; but he is Skeptical by virtue of his confessed ignorance and his unremitting search. His Nescience was mainly a personal conviction, a peculiar idiosyncrasy by which he was in theory distinguished from all other men. No doubt it was at the same time a starting-point in the downward path of negation. It only needed the transference of the thinker's standpoint from the individual to the race to make his personal suspense assume the form of universal negation. Such a transference was almost inevitable, and we shall on the next occasion have to discuss it as the next stage in the Skeptical evolution of Greek philosophy. Nor were the other personal peculiarities of Sokrates of less importance in the interests of free-thought—the individualism which marks the personal consciousness and the reason, the ultimate standards of truth; the indomitable courage and independence which pursued the path of research with little regard to popular obloquy and malignity; the final scene of his life, the imperturbable *sang-froid* with which he took his evening draught of hemlock as if it had been some harmless beverage—all these influences combined to attach to his personality a vigorous and predominating power.

Thus Sokrates, the central figure of Greek thought, represents the culminating point of its Skepticism. His position of personal doubt stands midway between the half-formed Skepticism of the Eleatics, the Atomists, Herakleitos, and the Sophists on the one hand, and the determined and universal negation of Pyrrhôn and Ainesidemos on the other. Accordingly his name stands high as an authority among the Greek Skeptics, from Pyrrhôn to Sextos.¹

¹ Sext. Emp. *adv. Math.* xi. 2; comp. Cicero, *de Orat.* iii. 17, who says:

Not that I would maintain that the influence of Sokrates on succeeding thinkers was exclusively Skeptical. A gigantic intellect like his throwing itself with ardour into every object and mode of thought operates on after-speculation like a stone thrown into a pond. It induces movement not in one but in all directions. The waves of agitation which it raises are concentric, and all have the same central impulse. Hence all the subsequent mental activity of Greece may be traced directly or indirectly to its great freethinker. The transcendentalism of the Platonists; the Dialectic, the stress on induction, the versatility of Aristotle; the Hedonism of the Epikouræans; the absolute morality of the Stoics; no less than the negation of Pyrrhôn and Timon; the probabilism of the Academy; the suspense of Ainesidemos and Sextos Empeirikos, are all so many ramifications of Sokratic teaching or emanations of the Sokratic spirit. Still, I contend, the chief impulse was Skeptical. Partly the exaltation of Nescience, partly the stress on self-consciousness as the root of all knowledge, partly the individualism and self-assertion begotten of the last principle which Sokrates manifested both in life and death, gave an impulse to Greek free-thought which it never afterwards lost. The extent of this is seen by a brief observation of the various directions in which his disciples proceeded after his death. Plato, the most famous of the companions of Sokrates, carried out the Sokratic introspection into an elaborate scheme of idealism, which is, however, not without Skeptical elements and self-contradictions. Like his master, he proclaims the sacredness of search after wisdom, while its actual attainment is pronounced impossible for humanity, at least in this sphere of existence. The mode in which he works up the antinomical discussion of his Dialogues, though derived originally from the *viva voce* of Sokrates, clearly proves the stress he himself placed on controversial Dialectics, as well as the supreme indifference with which he contemplated their inconclusive results. If the spoken 'Dialogue of Search' represents Sokrates as a free-thinker and unscrupulous logician, it is difficult to see why the written dialogue, often with additions, should not prove Plato himself to possess similar tendencies. His method is Dialectical. He is more thoroughly convinced than Sokrates that 'Dialectic is the nature of things.' This renders all the more remarkable his admission of the self-destructive character of logical exercitation, and of the danger of imparting Dialectics to immature intellects. But besides allowing the Skeptical issue of unrestrained Dialectic, Plato does not hesitate to

'Fuerunt etiam alia genera philosophorum, qui se omnes fere Socraticos esse dicebant: Eretriacorum, Herilliorum, Megaricorum, Pyrrhonorum.'

affirm that extreme metaphysical abstractions are in their nature self-destructive. Incidentally, this is shown in most of the later Platonic discourses, but it may almost be taken as the theme of that remarkable dialogue 'Parmenides.' Here we have Plato attacking with his remorseless logic his own doctrine of ideas, and triumphantly exposing their groundlessness. This phenomenon has appeared so strange to some critics that they have pronounced the 'Parmenides' spurious. But if we remember the school in which Plato had been trained, and the perfectly unscrupulous manner in which Sokrates allowed his Dialectic 'to play the two sides of the game,' the self-refutation of Plato will not seem so surprising. We shall find other cases of Sceptics, who in the mere exuberance of intellectual freedom allow their Dialectical weapons to attack and annihilate each other. Montaigne is a conspicuous example of this mental suicide. He takes as much pains in controverting his own opinions as he does in establishing them. As he wittily expresses it, he is quite ready with the old woman in the story to light one candle to St. Michael and another to the dragon. The 'Parmenides,' and in a lesser degree the 'Philebos' and 'Sophistes,' represent Plato in the same impartial mood.

We have also in Plato and in his relation to Sokrates what I take leave to call sentimental Scepticism. The search for truth that actuated Sokrates was mainly an intellectual craving, a natural propensity or rational instinct. In Plato, with his greater tenderness and profundity, the search after the undiscoverable assumes the form of an engrossing and vehement passion, which takes its form and attributes from sexual desire. Plato contemplates truth or wisdom as the object of a devouring love, a yearning for unattainable fruition. In this picturesque form the sentiment has found a place in beliefs of various kinds; we have it, *e.g.* in Neo-Platonism, in Oriental and Christian mysticism, and, in literature, in Dante's Beatrice and the etherealized Laura of Petrarca's later days.

With these Sceptical elements both in the form and substance of his writings, we cannot be surprised that the reputation of Plato in Greek philosophy is to a great extent Sceptical,¹ nor that the schools that affiliated themselves directly to his teaching, *i.e.* the older and newer academy, professed free inquiry and a distrust of dogmatic and definitive truth as the basis of their teaching.

Nor are the Sokratic schools, the Cynic, Megaric, Kyrenaic, and Pyrrhonian, free from the Sceptical leaven derived from their common source. They represent in the different directions of Ethics, Dialectics, sensualism, and Scepticism, developments of Sokratic

¹ Comp. Sext. Emp. *Pyrr. Hyp.* lib. i. chap. 33.

teaching, real or assumed. Antisthenes, the founder of the Cynics, based his doctrine on the moral teaching and practical austerity of Sokrates. He aimed at a complete independence of external objects by means of abstinence and voluntary privation, thus making the Sokratic Nescience, intellectual abstinence so to speak, a general principle of self-mortification. Virtue, absolutely and for itself, he regarded as the chief good, all other knowledge and speculation being worthless. Science he despised because the natures of things cannot be ascertained. All mere human opinions he considers equal both in want of authority and impossibility of refutation. Antisthenes came nearest his master in pursuing the dangerous office of public censor, and advising and reproving all whom he cared to address, without the least regard to rank, wealth, or social position. Indeed, his contempt for these gewgaws of humanity was stronger, or at least more forcibly expressed, than in the case of Sokrates himself.

2. Eukleides and the Megaric school seized on the Dialectic of Sokrates and the Eleatics, and developed its many-sided capabilities into a system of extreme Eristic. From this standpoint of virtual Skepticism, combined with an unreserved belief in the omnipotence of Dialectic, they made war on all dogmatic systems, and principally against the empiricism of Aristotle. They thus pursued against systems of knowledge the course Sokrates pursued against the knowing individual. The Megarics served by their stress upon mental processes of every description, by propounding and investigating various kinds of ambiguities and uncertain issues verbal and otherwise, to advance the science of logic, and they thus form the connecting link between the free Dialectic of Sokrates and the formal logic of Aristotle. In the Aristotelian treatise on Sophistical arguments we have a full account of the Eristic in which the Megarics with the Sophists were in the habit of indulging; while the later Skeptics, especially Sextos Empeirikos, seem to have drawn largely from the same arsenal of unrestricted and minute Ratiocination.¹ The school also furnished, as was only reasonable, some apt disciples to the negation of Pyrrhôn and his successors.

3. The Kyrenaics seem to have carried out the free-thought of Sokrates in a perverted direction by exaggerating his teaching as to the foundation which sensuous perception affords to ratiocination, and also by mistaking his observations upon the supreme good. They made the central doctrine of their system to be a sensual

¹ The best account of the Megarics, their Eristic, and their relation to subsequent Skeptics, is contained in Prantl. *Gesch. d. Logik*, i. pp. 33-57.

hedonism—a conclusion far removed from both the theory and practice of Sokrates.

The subsequent influence of the Sokratico-Platonic philosophy in the Neo-Platonism of Alexandria, in the Christian Fathers and the Schoolmen, is a large subject, upon which we cannot enter. Its evolution in the direction of negation will meet us when we come to investigate Pyrrhonism. As a rule we may say that it continued to manifest in varying proportions the combination of Free-thought with Idealism which we have in the Platonic Dialogues. I am far from thinking that in Christianity the bias of Platonism was exclusively Skeptical. Harmonizing in many points with the growing dogma of the Church, Plato's abstractions and speculations occasionally hardened into definitive and infallible truths, or else his ratiocination was employed to confirm tenets already promulgated authoritatively by the Church. But the Sokratic elenchus produced its usual effect wherever it found a congenial soil, whether in individuals or in epochs of thought. Justin Martyr, Clemens Alexandrinus, and Augustine may stand as types of men within the Church whose intellects were profoundly stirred by Sokratic reasoning, while one of the most distinguishing marks of the Renaissance, both in Italy and France, consisted of the growing recognition of the merits of Sokrates as a Free-teacher. In the literary revivalism in Italy his acquaintance was first made through the medium of Cicero's philosophical works, and next by the study of the original works of Plato and the founding of the Florentine school of Platonists. Men soon learnt from thence the real import of Sokratic teaching. They perceived in its unrestricted freedom a powerful weapon against dogmatic teaching of every kind. When, *e.g.* Ramus was struggling in the meshes of the dominant Aristotelianism of his time, the study of Plato impelled him to throw off the Scholastic yoke. 'What is to prevent me from Sokratizing?' was the question by which he established his individual right to doubt and inquiry. When Picus Mirandula entered the lists against the same dogmatism, he also drew his weapons from the inexhaustible armoury of the Sokratic Dialogues.¹ Similarly, when a German writer of the sixteenth century (Puy Herbault) fell foul of Rabelais' 'Pantagruel,' he described its author's daily occupations as 'Drinking, love-making, and Sokratizing.'²

¹ Comp. J. F. Pic. Mir. *Examen Doct. Vanit. Gent.* lib. iv. *op. om.* ii. p. 1011, &c.

² See his work *Theotimus, sive de tollendis et expurgandis malis libris, &c.*, Parisiis, 1549, pp. 180, 181. The author's Latin name was Putherbeus. Rabelais avenged himself on his monkish adversary by classing his kith

The name of the greatest thinker of Hellas had become, in short, a synonym for Skepticism both moderate and extreme. On more modern thinkers the Sokratic elenchus has continued to exercise its ancient electrifying and awakening stimulus; though invested in the mystic robes and chameleon hues of Platonic idealism, it has made more doubters than idealist dogmatists. Indeed, I have no hesitation in saying, after Scaliger's well-known remark as to the Apocalypse finding or leaving its students mad, that a careful and thoughtful study of the Sokratic method either finds men Skeptics or leaves them so.

ARUNDEL. I frankly own, Doctor, that your conception of Sokrates is one I cannot accept. In appearance, your attempt to make him not only a Sophist but a Skeptic is more *grotesque* than Grote, but in reality you agree with the historian, for you limit Skepticism to suspense or uncertainty, whereas Grote understood by it negation. You have also eliminated to a considerable extent that most picturesque element of the Sokratic method—I mean its irony; for if his Nescience was his own sincere conviction there is no room for irony, and on that point, I suspect, few students of the Platonic Dialogues would agree with you. I also think you might have presented his belief in God, Reason, and Virtue (and I should have added Immortality) more as subjects of his daily teaching, instead of relegating them into the abstruse region of esoteric conviction and unconditional imperatives. Why not suppose that he had attained them by the usual course of ratiocination, though his ironical rôle of *ignoramus* prevented his disclosing the fact?

TREVOR. In making Skepticism mean suspense, I am justified by the genesis of the thing itself as well as by the use of the word in Greek philosophy. The mark of the Skeptic proper was his *ἐποχή*, his withholding assent, not his denial of any given truth, which might be altogether arbitrary and dogmatic. Now I am aware of no distinction which can possibly differentiate the Nescience, *οὐ γινώσκω*, of Sokrates, from the *ἐπέχω*, '*οὐκ ὀρίζω*,' and similar formulas of suspended belief of later Skeptics, or from the '*Je ne sais*' and kin among clerical fanatics, under the name of '*enrajiez Putherbes*' (*Pantagruel*, lib. iv. chap. xxxii.). Comp. C. Cantù, *Gli eretici d'Italia*, vol. i. p. 259.

pas' of Montaigne. I regard it, therefore, as a serious blot upon Grote's perspicacity and his knowledge of thought-evolution that he did not discern the close connection between Sokrates and later Greek Skepticism, as Tennemann, Hegel, Brandis, and a few other writers have done. As to Sokrates having formally inculcated virtue, this is disproved both by his unpopularity and by his standpoint of Nescience. Positive teaching of every kind he disowned; for, as he pertinently asked, how could a man teach anything who knew nothing? His ethical method was indirect and incidental; or else it was presupposed as an ultimate truth transcending demonstration and discussion. That Sokrates had strong convictions I have already granted; all I maintain is, they must have been, both in themselves and admitted by him, unconditional affirmations of his intuition. So far from being reasoned conclusions of his intellect, he distinctly intimates that such conclusions were to him indemonstrable. We must be careful, I repeat, not to lay anything to the charge of Sokrates which conflicts with his position of Nescience. This is the root-thought of his life and teaching. The irony which I am far from denying I consider as merely the mask or colouring of his Nescience, it is not the feeling itself. If it were true, as some have asserted,¹ that his Nescience was merely assumed, it would make his life and teaching an organized hypocrisy as great as any of those which he condemns. We must also bear in mind his confidence in Dialectic. This, indeed, appears to me to have been somewhat extravagant. He refused or was unable to see what Plato afterwards found out, that Dialectic is a two-edged weapon to be employed only by persons of staid principles and mature years, that in its essence it is utterly lawless. . . . That suggests to me to ask if you, supposing yourself to have lived at Athens about 410 B.C. and having sons growing up, would have liked to put them one and all under the tuition of Sokrates?

ARUNDEL (after some hesitation). To tell the truth, I am not sure that I should, at least without some kind of discrimination. If they were thoroughly steady, well taught

¹ Comp. Cicero, *Lucullus*, chap. v.

in moral and social duties, and in reverence to the gods—in short, if in these respects they were like Sokrates himself, I should regard his teaching as invaluable. But I do not think the Sokratic elenchus eminently calculated to develop in raw unformed youths what we commonly understand as a firm character. Logical exercitation with ‘unlimited liability’ is likely to result in a character as oscillating and uncertain as that of a Montaigne. That Sokrates’s method did not produce such mischievous results is a proof to my mind that his teaching extended itself far beyond the inconclusive results of the ‘Dialogues of Search,’ and embraced a great part of the didactic exposition we have in the other dialogues, as, *e.g.* the ‘Phaidon.’

HARRINGTON. For my part, I quite agree with the position of your paper, that there is little or no difference between Sokratic Nescience and Pyrrhonic Suspense. The latter is an imperative development of the former; but I must protest, Doctor, against your remark as to the tendency of unlimited Dialectic, for, as you must see, it reduces human reason to an absurdity. You may have, of course, a captious, contentious Eristic that will dispute any truth or fact, no matter how obvious; but that in reality is not Dialectic, it is only a specious and unworthy imitation of it. It bears as much resemblance to reasoning as the simious imitation of human action by an inferior animal bears to the wise conduct of rational and civilized men. Besides, if all ratiocination end in absurdity, the reasoning that makes the discovery is also absurd.

MRS. HARRINGTON. Another objection that might be alleged to Dr. Trevor’s view is, that it makes the life of Sokrates a failure. He trusted implicitly in Dialectic; but if the end of all Dialectic is intellectual Nihilism, the trust was misplaced in itself and misleading in respect of others. Could Sokrates, I wonder, have had a dream of the future, in which he foresaw that by his method men would ultimately attain truth as well as freedom?

TREVOR. That is not impossible, though such an outlook is not justified by the history of philosophy. But whatever fate he anticipated for his philosophy, we may be

assured he did not consider his life as a failure. Lightly as we may consider his conviction of Nescience, he unquestionably valued it very highly as an incentive both to intellectual inquiry and to ethical excellence. A 'mission' that could have brought home to men a firm persuasion of their ignorance he would have considered beneficial, just as Christians might regard the life-work of a Thomas à Kempis, Augustine, or Pascal. That his mission failed to effect its object for the time being is, I think, probable. . . . But, however that may be, all I am concerned to maintain is that in method and result Sokrates is a Skeptic.

ARUNDEL. But allowing him 'the comfortable doctrin' o' his ain naethin'ness,' to use a phrase I once heard from a Scotch Calvinist, Sokrates had no right to infer the Nescience or nothingness of others.

TREVOR. I do not think Sokrates did this on a large scale, though the analogy you have suggested shows how tempting the generalization '*ex uno disce omnes*' is, for was there ever an especially great sinner who did not include all mankind in the same category? I believe, as I said in my paper, that Sokrates never came to the conclusion that Nescience is the property of all men. I do not think he carried his conclusion beyond his actual induction. He had certainly tested a good many and found them as ignorant as himself, but I do not think he would have made a few of his fellow-citizens, or even all Athens and Attica, commensurate with the universe. The great desideratum of the Platonic Dialogues in their relation to Sokrates is that they reveal little of his inner life previous to commencing his 'mission.' His innate tendency to introspection warrants us in concluding that his own self-examination must have been very severe. He learnt, I think, something of the byways, crooked turnings, and pitfalls of human investigation 'at home.' This is also confirmed by his own statement, that he tried to analyse the *modus operandi* of his Daimon, but unsuccessfully. Most likely he tested his other convictions, e.g. his absolute verities, in the same way, probably with a similar failure. Perhaps that was the very reason why he was not anxious to find established foundations for the

truths he taught. He found that his faith in his Daimon was not affected by his inability to discover any rational ground for the belief, and he thought that the useful necessary convictions of others would remain intact, even though he showed that in final ratiocination they were baseless.

ARUNDEL. I suppose you are right as to Sokrates being a seeker, and not caring to find or at least to pronounce dogmatically on his 'findings;' I confess that is a state of feeling with which I have little sympathy. There are people who in intellectual research are always itching to 'gild refined gold and paint the lily,' who are never satisfied with the actualities of existence, but long after potentialities for which they have no other ground but a morbidly eager fancy. Perhaps with the people themselves one might feel some sympathy if it were not for the ill effect of their phantasies upon others more slenderly endowed with imagination. I am willing to concede that Skeptics may not do much harm to themselves by their incredulity, for their distrust of realities may be compensated by a larger store than common of ideality (just as Trevor's Sokrates made up for his denial of ordinary convictions by his absolute truths); but other men see their Skepticism who, having no ideals to fall back upon, intuitive or other, when they are deprived of actuality are left with a sense of vacuity hard to fill up. If my neighbour, *e.g.* finds me denying truths which to him are not only obvious but indispensable, both as a religious creed and as the mainspring of a well-regulated life, it is possible that my Skepticism, if he notices it, may affect the stability of his convictions, and may lead him to an excess of irreligion or immorality into which I from a higher ideal standpoint might be in no danger of falling.

TREVOR. Excuse me, Arundel, but you are surely adopting a curious and unsatisfactory reason for your belief. That our conduct should be guided to a great extent by the rules and restrictions of the society in which we live, I readily grant. But that our creeds, *i.e.* our personal beliefs on speculative matters, should be determined by the wishes, prejudices, and caprices of other men, is a proposition to

which I could never assent. Your notion, in fact, strikes at the root of Protestantism, which is a man's sole responsibility to God for his belief. No small amount of the terrorism which dogma has exercised on humanity is due to the supposed dire consequences of independent or individual belief; and in protesting against the *à priori* obligation of any man to be a member of any sect, community, or school, whether religious or secular, the greatest value of our free-thinkers consists.

HARRINGTON. No doubt Arundel has been defending a principle which has been overstrained by Romanism and other types of extreme dogma. Still there is something to be said for the reticence or suppression of convictions when their avowal would cause needless pain or offence to others. I remember hearing of a Socialist who, being at a funeral when the relatives of the deceased consoled themselves by the hope of seeing him again beyond the grave, took occasion to avow his own materialism, and attempted to demonstrate the impossibility of a future life. The man might have been sincere in his convictions, but in feeling and humanity he was a brute. People speak in laudatory phrase of a man 'having the courage of his opinions.' Of that courage we may say as of physical valour, that 'discretion' is not unfrequently 'its better part.' The great difficulty of perfect tolerance is to allow the respect that is always due to the sincere and conscientious convictions of others, when these do not seem injurious to the interests of virtue and civilization. Of course the point at which they become so must depend on circumstances.

MRS. HARRINGTON. I must say I share Mr. Arundel's puzzlement as to the indifference of Sokrates to realized truths. It appears to me to detract from his devotion to truth itself, and that is an imputation one would be loth to make on Sokrates. Dr. Trevor said he delighted in the road, but did not care where it ended. But with all his uncertainty he must have felt at least sure of the way he had actually traversed, the milestones or wayside objects he had passed as he went along. He must have felt certain of his past if he did not care to prognosticate his future.

TREVOR. All he felt certain of was his conclusion of

Nescience. He could not have evinced any great anxiety as to the truth he was in search of without postulating its nature and anticipating its attainment, and this would have vitiated the purity of its search in respect of sincerity and disinterestedness. As to his preference of search, I have no difficulty in sympathising with Sokrates. Let me tell you a story bearing on the point. When I was a child about seven years old, I was once sent by my mother, in care of my nurse, to a neighbour's house some few miles distant, where I had been often invited to play with the children. The day was a lovely spring day. The whitethorn, I remember, was in bloom, the willows in the hedges were besprinkled with catkins, and our road was bordered with buttercups, primroses, and other spring flowers. I had never been that way before, and was enchanted with the walk. Every step we took I saw some new object deserving or at least attracting my notice. Now I was chasing a butterfly, now I requested my nurse to get for me a more than usually fine spray of catkins. I must needs stop and watch some tadpoles in a stagnant pool by the side of the road. Every time a bird flew out of the hedge I was urgent on my nurse to find me the nest. My nurse endeavoured to hurry me on, but with little success. She tried to allure me with the picture of what awaited me at my journey's end—the nice children I should meet, the many games we were to have, and other seductive appeals to my imagination; but it was of no use: I enjoyed the road, and did not care for our destination. At last we arrived, very late, but I remember it was with a pang of childish disappointment on my part. It seems to me that searchers for truth may be as I then was, so entirely taken up with the pursuit, the delights of the wayside, as to be, like Sokrates, really indifferent to any specific termination of their walk.

ARUNDEL. But every road is a path some whither, and it is bounded by hedges, if not furnished with direction-posts and milestones, and all these facts imply a direct purpose and intention. The idea of science you have given us seems to partake of the character of aimless wandering, instead of a single-eyed devotion to our pursuit. The truth-searcher

who labours to any useful purpose must start with a hypothesis, if only as a guide to his experiments, and a hypothesis is nothing else than presumed or anticipated truth.

HARRINGTON. No doubt a scientist employs hypotheses largely, but he is, on valid reason shown, just as ready to discard as to adopt them. He does not walk along a road as much as select one out of many tracks on the mountain-side, or very often he has to carve out a road for himself in a new direction. I agree with Trevor as to the standpoint of Sokrates; and there seems to me another answer to Maria's objection: Men of eager spirits are not given to consider or calculate possible attainment. They have no regard for the past, but only for the future. Enamoured of Prometheus, they rightly despise Epimetheus. You have examples of men of that type in every class of life. You remember, *e.g.* St. Paul's words, 'I count not myself to have attained: but this one thing I do, forgetting the things behind, and looking forward to the things before, I press forward to the mark,' &c. Similarly, though in a different province, I have a friend who is a successful business man, but who always declines to say or realize to himself what he is worth. He says that the process of acquiring money, the skill, energy, prudence, requisite for getting it, is more to him than the most magnificent fortune. My friend is a kind of mercantile Sokrates. What the great Greek delighted in was discussion for its own sake, or at least a means of finding out just what it might chance to find out, and delighting in the pure exercise of his intellectual acuteness, his wit, sarcasm, and irony. Had Euthyphron or Lysis propounded a definition of impiety or courage as perfect as human ingenuity could frame, nay, had the gods offered him solutions of his queries and problems, he would have rejected their overtures with scorn if he thought they would render discussion and search needless.

MISS LEYCESTER. A truth that should absolutely exclude all discussion seems to me inconceivable, for, if satisfied of the fact, you can always demand a reason why. We must not forget that the Sokratic Nescience occupies the twofold position of being a result as well as a starting-point of his inquiry. And what I admire especially in him is his bold

announcement of complete ignorance as the final outcome of his truth-search. Speaking with due reverence, it was an 'obedience unto death'—fealty to truth pursued to intellectual inanition. Most inquirers start with a presumption of what the truth they are looking for must needs be, and a predetermination that their search will agree with their forecast. There is nothing of this *arrière pensée* in Sokrates. . . . I wonder when the time will come that all honest, reasonable inquiry, no matter what its individual conclusions, will receive the meed of honesty and *bona fides*, even if it cannot claim veracious or widely accepted results?

ARUNDEL. That time seems to me to be dawning, and for my part I have no objection to see the dawn developing into full daylight. *Bona fides* I regard as a primary condition of all honest search, and so far a justification of most rational convictions. What I am doubtful about is the effect of this perpetual worry of truth-search upon men's dispositions. There is enough disquiet in the world already without making intellectual inquiry pursue its eternal round reckless of definite attainment or finality of any sort.

TREVOR. On that score I think a contemplation of Sokrates's character ought to have the effect of dispelling your alarm. Its most remarkable feature is its immovable serenity, its simple joyousness of temperament. Most truth-seekers who profess to be satisfied with their search occasionally indulge in plaintive wails over the lot of humanity. They cannot help bemoaning what they nevertheless consider the inevitable outcome of their efforts. Although if the choice were offered them they would, like Lessing, choose 'Search' rather than 'Truth,' yet they cherish as a sentimental grievance their chosen privation. To use a common proverb, they would fain keep their cake as well as eat it. Now there is nothing of this half-hypocritical sentimentality about Sokrates. He accepts his lot not only with acquiescence but with positive pleasure. He never whines about the impossibility of finding absolute truth. He never finds fault with the constitution of the universe or humanity. He never takes a maudlin pleasure in compassionating himself on account of his privations, he apparently regards them as normal incidents

of his lot. It is enough for him that he fulfils the highest dictates of his nature by his search for truth and his practice of virtue. For the rest, fate, destiny, fame, honour, death, he is supremely indifferent. Here is his creed, and I do not know a better philosopher's creed :

'Renouncing the honours at which the world aims, I desire only to know the truth, and to live as well as I can, and, when the time comes, to die.'

HARRINGTON. I cordially agree with your estimate of Sokratic equanimity; it would be difficult to eulogize it too highly. He always seems to me an admirable exemplification of the Hellenic attribute of repose—the common quality of all the literature, art, and philosophy of Greece. He represents repose in activity just as the Skeptics professed to find Ataraxia in the perpetual equilibration of antagonisms and antinomies. . . . But there is one more feature of the Sokratic search—search for search's sake—that I should like to notice. It seems preferable to a definite looking-for of some particular truth in the respect that it imparts to the mental activities a wider, freer, more generous scope. Inquiry instituted to establish a foregone conclusion labours under the defect of having a limited object, whereas an investigation completely untrammelled by any theory or predetermined issue will achieve, though perhaps incidentally and unexpectedly, general results of far greater value. Truth-search may, I think, be likened to the Spanish and English expeditions of the sixteenth century to discover the famed *El Dorado*: they never found the golden town, but they opened up the continent of America to commerce and civilization. Or it may be illustrated by the old fable of the farmer who bequeathed to his sons a pot of gold hidden somewhere in his orchard: their zealous digging did not turn up the specified legacy, but incidentally the cultivation of the orchard proved highly remunerative. Most of the discoveries of science have been 'flukes' of this kind.

MISS LEYCESTER. What an advantage it would be if every centre of modern thought and life had a Sokrates for a philosophical Father Confessor!

ARUNDEL. Nay, Miss Leycester, not as a Father Confessor,

to whom only those need have recourse who are so minded, but as a genuine Hellenic *Sokrates redivivus*, duly armed with authority to stop, question, examine, and convince whomsoever he pleased. Imagine him, *e.g.* taking his stand in some of the populous London thoroughfares of the present day, arresting some over-anxious and perhaps not scrupulously honest stockbroker, and convincing him by his own admission that money was not the only good in life, and that it was better to endure than do an injustice; or accosting some brainless worldling and extorting from him an admission that his butterfly existence was not worth living; or eliciting from the mere sensualist a confession of the unworthiness of his pursuits. Or, taking his stand on the steps of some literary club, suppose him to attack a zealous materialist as to his complete knowledge of what took place at the Creation, or his boasted preference of matter for mind. Into what pitfalls might he not entrap the dogmatic evolutionist, with his assumed infallibility as to the only conceivable progress of things for the last million years, or the scientist who is more positive as to the constitution of distant planets and fixed stars than he dare be of the formation of our own globe?

HARRINGTON. No doubt the Sokratic elenchus is applicable to much of our existing scientific bumptiousness, but it is equally applicable, my dear Arundel, to the topics which concern your own profession. Imagine, *e.g.* Sokrates standing somewhere near the Court of Arches—as in the ‘Euthyphron’ he is supposed to stand in the porch of the king-archon—when a prosecution for heterodoxy was going on, and button-holing some zealous opponent of heresy, just as he did Euthyphron on the subject of impiety, and extorting from the young bigot a reluctant confession—(1) that orthodoxy was by no means capable of any distinct definition which should completely differentiate it from its opposite; (2) that he was really ignorant what was either one or the other. His task, I imagine, would be just as easy as his triumphant victory over Euthyphron.

ARUNDEL. Oh, of course: I did not intend to exempt my own profession from Sokratic castigation. To tell the truth, I do not know one more deserving of it. A little

more rigorous sifting of the individual bases of each man's religious faith, as well as a calm survey of the essentials of Christian doctrine from alien and even hostile standpoints, would render our clergy greater adepts than most of them are in arguing with 'Jews, Turks, Infidels, and Heretics.'

TREVOR. The only mode in which a Sokrates could now conduct his 'mission' would be giving him the chair at discussions, clubs, and meetings of that kind. Even then I fear the result would be incongruous. Among our artificial conditions of life and thought, our respect for conventionalisms of all kinds, the freedom of the Sokratic elenchus would be as much out of place as its author would be in a fashionable dress coat and white starched cravat. Still there is one thing most men can do. They can 'Sokratize' a little on their stock of acquired beliefs, and eliminate the unworthy or self-contradictory among them.

ARUNDEL. I was greatly surprised, Doctor, at your audacity in making Plato, with his enormous budget of transcendental beliefs, a Skeptic. In my opinion, no man is so well adapted for accepting dogmas of whatever sort as the extreme idealist. Doubt implies divergence, but the metaphysician who can identify thought and being is, one would suppose, proof against disruption and contradictions of all kinds. I should like to know a system of belief that a Hegel, *e.g.* could not have justified from his idealistic standpoint.

HARRINGTON. No doubt idealism has a marvellous faculty of transmutation, but the complete identity it claims to effect between Objective and Subjective, Thought and Being, and similar antinomies, appears to me in ultimate analysis quite superficial. While Being is contemplated persistently as a modification of Thought, or as long as the outer world is surveyed exclusively in the mirror of consciousness, the unity may be preserved. But the least attention to external phenomena as such, breaks the spell, and the irreconcilable duality again makes its appearance. Thought in its transcendental alliance with objective Being is in the position of the man in the nursery story who married a favourite cat which the fairies had transformed for the purpose into a

beautiful woman—the first live mouse behind the wainscot suffices to dissolve the connexion.

TREVOR. My reasons for defining Plato a Skeptic were briefly these: 1. Every consistent scheme of Idealism must be founded (as Harrington has just hinted) on the forcible and persistent repression of all extraneous knowledge-methods and results. 2. He himself admits that Dialectic in ultimate ratiocination is nugatory. 3. The general character borne by his writings in the history of philosophy.

ARUNDEL. But surely the fundamental axiom of Sokratic teaching, *Γνώθι σεαυτὸν*, ought to have preserved Plato and all his disciples from immoderate and dogmatic Idealism.

HARRINGTON. No doubt, had they always been careful to confine it within Sokratic limits. As it was, the *σεαυτὸν* became by idealistic perversion a synonym of the Universe. The chief of the Florentine Platonists, Picus Mirandula, thus interprets the maxim, '*Qui se cognoscit, omnia in se cognoscit*':¹ 'Who knows himself, knows all things in himself.' So that what Sokrates regarded as the justification and method of Nescience became to subsequent Platonists a claim of Omniscience.

TREVOR. Not exactly; the *omnia in se* of Mirandula merely expressed the subjective limitation of the thinker, and was not an equivalent for objective Omniscience. Whatever be our opinion of Idealism, we must admit in ordinary fairness, as well as in harmony with the saw of Protagoras, that individual knowledge must of necessity be *individual all-knowledge*—it must imply a *totality* of cognition. . . . But it is getting late, and I therefore propose that we adjourn.

¹ Pic. Mir. *De hominis Dignitate, Op. Om.* i. p. 320.

EVENING IV.

POST-SOKRATIC SKEPTICISM.

PYRRHÔN TO SEXTOS EMPEIRIKOS.

Τούτο μοι, ὦ Πύρρων, ἰμείρεται ἤτορ ἀκούσαι
Πῶς ποτ' ἀνὴρ ἔτ' ἄγεις ῥᾶστα μεθ' ἡσυχίας
Μοῦνος ἐν ἀνθρώποισι θεοῦ τρόπον ἡγεμονεύων.

Timon of Phlius.

'Ye Powers, why did you man create
With such *insatiable* desire?
If you'd endow him with no more *estate*,
You should have made him *less aspire*;
But now our appetites you *veax* and *cheat*
With *reall* hunger, and *Phantastic* meat.'

Norris's Miscellany, 'The Complaint.'

'I had always a humble opinion of my own powers as an original thinker, except in abstract science . . . but thought myself much superior to most of my contemporaries in willingness and ability to learn from everybody; as I found hardly any one who made such a point of examining what was said in defence of all opinions, however new or however old, in the conviction that even if they were errors there might be a substratum of truth underneath them, and that in any case the discovery of what it was that made them plausible would be a benefit to truth.'

J. S. MILL, *Autobiography*, p. 242.

'Incertainties now crown themselves assured.'

SHAKESPEARE, *Sonnet cvii.*

EVENING IV.

PYRRHÔN TO SEXTOS EMPEIRIKOS.

MISS LEYCESTER. Our forthcoming discussion will bring us to the very citadel of Greek Skepticism. Pyrrhôn, Ainesidemos, and Sextos Empeirikos we must take as its extremest exponents.

TREVOR. Not altogether, Miss Leycester; if, at least, we are to keep to the primary meaning of Skepticism as complete mental equipoise or suspense: of that the most influential teacher in Greek philosophy is Sokrates.

ARUNDEL. But do you really maintain that Sokrates was more Skeptical than Pyrrhôn?

TREVOR. 'Distinguo!' as the Schoolman would say when pressed by a dilemma. The position of Sokrates, as we saw, was Nescience, Skeptical equipoise—a determination not to affirm or dogmatize on any matter in which a conflict of views was reasonable or possible. Now this suspense is the climax, or, I might say, the only form of pure Skepticism, and must be carefully discriminated from negative dogma as well as positive dogma. But Pyrrhôn, or rather his followers, do not seem to have always maintained that rigidly judicial attitude. They fell occasionally into that determined negation which I regard as the next stage in the development of Greek Skepticism subsequent to its first distinct expression by Sokrates.

HARRINGTON. Well, Doctor, I cannot see what other development we could have expected. The proposition, 'I doubt,' or '*Je ne sçay,*' once propounded though only personally as a *lex credendi*, cannot be accepted as definitive. It immediately raises the question of the reason why, the relation of the doubter with brother-thinkers, and you are incontinently launched into absolute negation.

TREVOR. That tendency I have already admitted in my remarks on Sokrates. The *facilis descensus* from personal doubt to absolute Skepticism or dogmatic negation is easily accounted for. Man possesses an uncontrollable instinct to conjugate every personal verb; thus 'nescio,' once confessed, drags in its train 'nescis,' 'nescit,' or 'nescitis,' 'nesciunt.' The peculiar excellency of Sokratic wisdom partly consisted in this, that he did not care to prove mankind at large partakers in his Nescience, though no doubt he thought the extension of such a conviction among men highly desirable.

ARUNDEL. The standpoint of personal Nescience that refuses to take cognizance of its implications appears to me unnatural and for most men impossible. Nor can I concede that Nescience is the middle term of which the extremes are positive affirmation and negation. Regarded as a starting-point, Nescience has much greater affinity for negation than for affirmation. Look, *e.g.* at the Greek Skeptics, from Pyrrhôn to Sextos (Sokrates, I admit, is more persistently neutral): what they attack are affirmative dogmas.

TREVOR. Many reasons might be given for that. First, there is the proverbial difficulty of demonstrating a negation. Secondly, affirmations are not only more distinct and tangible, but more obtrusive and polemical, than negations. Thirdly, They are infinitely more prevalent and more mischievous. Skepticism, as I have more than once said, is produced as a reaction from or antithetical to dogma; but conceive all dogmas in existence to be negative and expressed in negative terms, and Skepticism would not lose its functions, but would be considerably impeded in their exercise. A mediæval warrior, given the choice, would much rather grapple with an earth-born, material foe, than with a disembodied spirit or emissary of the evil one, though he would regard it as his duty to combat either. Besides, the warfare which Skeptics wage against dogmatic affirmation is for the most part defensive, though it bears so often the semblance of an exclusively offensive polemic as to be confounded with it. (This, I may parenthetically remark, is the reason of the common confusion of Skepticism with negation.) What the Skeptic says to the dogmatist is not 'There is no truth,' but 'I de-

cline to accept your definition or statement of it as incontrovertible.'

MRS. HARRINGTON. I must say I agree with Mr. Arundel, that doubt has more affinity with denial than assertion. Is it not commonly admitted that doubt is the first stage in complete negation?

TREVOR. So is it of well-founded affirmation. It is the first stage of all rational independent inquiry, irrespective of its object or result. Let me take an instance of justifiable doubt. . . . It is questioned, *e.g.* whether the planets Jupiter and Saturn are inhabited. In itself, the matter is clearly indemonstrable, but there is ample scope for presumptions, probabilities, &c., on either side. The enthusiastic believer in 'more worlds than one' thinks that all the presumptions of the case point in the direction of its affirmation, while more cautious thinkers believe that the astronomical conditions of those planets make human life, such as we know it, a thing impossible. Here clearly is a case for the 'Je ne sçay' of the pure Skeptic, whose standpoint thus avouched is not a whit nearer one thinker than the other. In the same way, the existence of God as a Personal Being, though I myself hold the probabilities of the case preponderate immeasurably in its favour, cannot be said to possess such imperative demonstration as to interdict all doubt. Now what seems to me both unfair and intolerant is to confound mere doubt or hesitancy on such a point with absolute denial, so that the man whose conviction of deity did not at all times possess the same degree of assurance or coherence should be liable to be branded as an Atheist. This is only another form of the intolerance of Romanism and the narrow bigotry of the Inquisition, which similarly classify hesitation or non-affirmation as positive disbelief. I know few misconceptions that have worked more mischief in the world than this same confusion of mere doubt with positive negation. . . . Moreover, with regard to such beliefs as the question of God's existence, men of undoubted piety and orthodoxy have confessed to occasional qualms of doubt on the subject. All beliefs which are in part emotional must needs depend largely on particular moods and conditions of feeling.

ARUNDEL. But such moods are only occasional and temporary, whereas the equipoise or neutrality of the Skeptic professes to be persistent.

HARRINGTON. We may solve our difficulty perhaps in this way. Theoretically, Skepticism is the neutrality of complete suspense between negation and affirmation. Practically, and regard being had to the conditions of ordinary human existence which depend so much on decision and action, there is an affinity greater or less between doubt and positive negation. I agree with Trevor, we ought to make a greater distinction than we commonly do between the theoretic states, and there can be no question that our confusing them must be ascribed to the despotism of Dogma.

TREVOR. I am willing to accept your amendment, which indeed is only another mode of putting my own 'substantive motion.' Our standpoint in the discussion is theoretic and philosophical. I may add, that without a distinct recognition of Skepticism as a mean between the opposing extremes of negation and affirmation, we shall not be able to understand the reasoning or appreciate the position of the chief Greek Sceptics.

ARUNDEL. But I thought your own contention was that the pure Nescience of Sokrates became transformed in Pyrrhôn and his successors to an impure and positive negation.

TREVOR. In great part so it did; still the equipoise of the Skeptic was not altogether forgotten as its primary and ideally perfect standpoint. All the Sceptics from Pyrrhôn to Sextos made the withholding assent (*Epochê*) a distinctive characteristic of true Skepticism.

HARRINGTON. The progress in Greek Free-thought from Sokratic Nescience to Pyrrhonic Negation appears to me unquestionable as a fact in its philosophical history. It is, moreover, marked in the popular creed by a corresponding growth in Skepticism and rejection of once-cherished dogmas. This is instructively illustrated by the distinct and growing signs of Skepticism in the Greek drama. Taking only its three greatest names, Aischylos, Sophokles, and Euripides, the extent of dissonance between the popular faith and the speculations of these dramatists seems to me very noteworthy.

In Aischylos we have represented what might be termed theological Skepticism—the conflict that had arisen between the rational instincts of the nation and the old mythology. ‘Prometheus Bound’ is especially the drama of ancient Skepticism. Its hero—the noble, generous, indomitable Titan—is remarkable as being an exponent of Free-thought and aspiration long before Greek history commences. In the interests of justice, of human culture and freedom, he boldly defies Zeus, scorns and ridicules the rule of Olympus, carries out his mission of human enfranchisement and enlightenment—not, however, without a melancholy foreboding of unsatisfactory results—and proclaims in tones that have reverberated through all succeeding ages the inherent supremacy of virtue, disinterestedness, and duty. I would not myself dare to term Aischylos an actual Skeptic, but the author of ‘Prometheus’ was undoubtedly cognizant of the world-problems from which Skepticism has in part taken its rise, and was also aware of the imperfect solution of them which is all that our human faculties can offer. In Sophokles, Free-thought finds another mode of presentation. He delineates the conflict between that supreme Fate from whose law not even Zeus himself could claim exemption, and the lot of ordinary mortals. He recognizes also the dissonance that emerges between human instincts and affections, and the necessary restraints of law and social order. But the sense of puzzlement and awe—the suppressed murmur at the hard conditions, divine and human, under which man must realize truth and happiness—which are the general manifestations of intellectual disquiet in Aischylos and Sophokles, pale into insignificance when contrasted with the open Skepticism of Euripides. It is difficult to name any article of Hellenic belief on which the popular dramatist does not pour the cold water of his scorn and ridicule, and his attitude in this respect is of peculiar significance to our present subject from the fact that he was a disciple of Sokrates. Thus he questions the existence of Zeus,¹ points out the diversity which according to popular conceptions exists among the divinities of Olympus, euhemerizes Zeus as ether and Demeter as earth, dwells on the incon-

¹ Comp. on this point Welcker, *Gr. Trag.* ii. p. 844.

sistency, deceitfulness, and other ungodlike attributes of the popular divinities, maintains that mortals surpass the gods in virtue, says that religion—the worship of the gods, as well as morality—is determined by law and ordinary custom, thinks that the gods may be worshipped for form's sake even when they confessedly are not divine. He is more cynical and indifferent in questions of moral obligation than the generality of even professed Skeptics. His celebrated line—

The tongue has sworn, unsworn remains the mind

—passed into a proverb as a maxim of prevarication and duplicity; and on one occasion his open preference for gold as superior to piety and patriotism so irritated his audience that they wished to expel him from the theatre.¹ This mark of disapprobation seems, however, to have been exceptional. Throughout his dramatic career Euripides was undoubtedly popular. We must therefore allow that audiences who heard with composure, if not with approbation, such dramas as 'Hippolytos,' 'Herakles Furens,' could have been neither ignorant nor unappreciative of the main principles of Free-thought. . . . What seems to me very remarkable in estimating the amount of Skepticism current in Greece during the fourth century B.C. is, that there was such a distinction made between free speculation founded on ratiocination, and any overt act of profanation of rites or temples. The former was allowed to pass unquestioned, the latter was certain to entail the formidable charge of impiety (*ἀσεβεία*). This distinction might possibly have suggested the general consensus of all the Greek Skeptics to allow and even to worship the gods of the State as a mere matter of patriotic and social convenience.

TREVOR. With your last suggestion I am unable to agree. The observance by the Skeptic of the religious rites of any country in which he lived was based on his general plan of not allowing speculative or individual opinion to interfere with his duties as a citizen. His observance of a religion whose creed he doubted was founded on the same principle as his obedience to laws whose justice he disputed. His

¹ Comp. Welcker, *Op. cit.* ii. 790.

conception of religion (I am far from thinking it a high one) was that it was a powerful agency to secure the order and well-being of the community, and that its sanctions and restrictions were not to be lightly disregarded. He considered it as the homage which speculation is frequently compelled to render to actuality or utility.

ARUNDEL. That was the notion of Montaigne, Charron, Hobbes, and a few more of that ilk, and in my opinion a more unworthy conception of religion it would be impossible to devise. Once take truth out of religion, and you deprive it of all vitality. It is a mere ghastly corpse—a thing possessing the organs and lineaments, but none of the real attributes of life.

HARRINGTON. It is at any rate susceptible of another interpretation. The primary demand of all great churches is that the individual should give up his mental independence as a sacrifice to the opinions of the majority. For my part, I see little valid distinction between a man who conforms to a religion of the truth of which he is doubtful, and another, a Romanist pervert, for instance, who defers his religious convictions to a creed which cannot command his full intellectual sympathy. Such sacrifices are often made, and they are not only regarded as meritorious by Romanists, but as possessing merit in proportion to their greatness.

ARUNDEL. But the sacrifices you speak of are made by men whose intellect and feelings are entirely under the control of the will, and therefore may be sincere. The Skeptic makes the offering of a confessedly disingenuous and pretended faith.

MISS LEYCESTER. He may, however, allege a Scriptural precedent—the well-known ‘bowing in the house of Rimmon.’ Independently of that, I agree with Charles that between the Skeptic conformist, and the Romanist who sacrifices his private convictions, there is no vital distinction. Coercing the will to accept what the reason of itself would reject is just as disingenuous as any other enforced agreement with a creed imperfectly acknowledged by the intellect. The Skeptic, moreover, might plead that his conformity was ultimately determined not by truth, but by such motives as general

utility, peace, order, &c. ; indeed, he would all the readier fall back on the inferior motives from his persuasion that truth was unattainable. But waiving this point, and returning to Greece, Charles's mention of Prometheus as a legendary instance of Free-thought going back far into prehistorical epochs, reminds me of a speculation I have long entertained on the subject of Greek mythology. I confess to a strong feeling of repugnance to the attempt to make all the legends of Greece turn upon physical phenomena. I really cannot see why they should not express metaphysical facts as well. Nothing is more evident in the history of the Hellenic race than the early and wonderful development of its introspective powers. Why might not some of the results of that introspection have been embodied in the current language of the time, *i.e.* as myths? Take, for example, the fact—coeval, I suspect, with the early maturity of human speculation—of the persistent efforts of all higher intelligences to attain or propagate truth. This idea might have animated such legends as the attempt of the Titans to scale heaven, just as it did the legend of Prometheus or Phaethon; or take, again, the experience which thinking men acquired so early in human history, of reiterated attempts to attain truth completely frustrated, yet just as often renewed—why might not such an experience have suggested the myths of Tityos, Tantalos, and Sisyphos? The latter case is especially appropriate, because the name is, I understand, a reduplicated form of the word *σόφος*. Let me add that I claim no credit for the idea as novel; indeed, it is as old as Sokrates. You remember the passage in the 'Euthydemos' where Sokrates calls the Hydra a she-Sophist, 'who had the wit to shoot up many new heads when one of them was cut off.' Elsewhere he thinks that the names Chronos and Rhæa could not have been accidental; the giver of them must have known something of the doctrine of Herakleitos. Supported by such high authority, I should contend for a series of Skeptical myths. Of all legends that describe frustrated effort, engagement in impossible enterprises, a perpetual alternation of success and defeat, I would say that they embody some such experiences as those we find in the careers of our Skeptics.

HARRINGTON. Your hypothesis is at least favoured by the fact that one form of the legends both of Tantalos and Sisyphos makes their retribution a punishment for having divulged the secrets of the gods. So far, those legends have the same *motif* as the Promethean. The last-named legend, together with that of Phaethon, has always exercised an irresistible fascination on Free-thinkers.¹

ARUNDEL. The reason why I should hesitate to accept a metaphysical origin for many of the old Greek legends is because I think it an unusual employment of the Mythopœic faculty. Men, in the infancy of humanity, readily transform into Mythes, natural phenomena, or the events of history; but the complete grasp of mental processes and results, and their presentation as external acts or events which is involved in their mythification, represent a much later stage of development. Hence I incline to the old theory that legends like those of Prometheus were primarily derived from historical characters—wise men or rulers who in ancient times endeavoured to elevate and enlighten their barbarous subjects or benighted fellow-mortals, and who failed in the attempt.

MISS LEYCESTER. I could understand that the external events of any great human career might become the object of mythology. But in the class of legends I speak of much more seems implied than the attempt and failure that outwardly characterize such a career. There is indicated a passionate desire to attain and diffuse a property held to be divine. The enterprise is not only difficult but sacrilegious. If the result is represented as successful, the success is attended by after-disappointment. If the attempt is frustrated, it is again and again renewed. The enterprise is noble, spite of all results. The hunger is divine though it can never be appeased. I fail to see how those mental desires, struggles, disappointments, could ever have become represented in Mythes unless by those who had actually felt them.

TREVOR. You may add to that the historical argument: It is difficult to point out any stage of Greek thought undistinguished by profound introspection. We find it marked in the language before the birth of its earliest literature.

¹ Comp. chapters on Giordano Bruno and Pomponazzi in this work.

The legend of Prometheus was already popular when Hesiod wrote, while the introspective power of Greek thinkers about 500 years B.C. is shown by Pythagoras and the Eleatics. Besides, we have similar 'knowledge-myths' in Hindu mythology, as well as in early records of Hebrew and Chaldee tradition. In the latter case we seem to have a whole collection of legends of which the narrative in the third chapter of Genesis represents one type. These have all the same general character—a tree of knowledge 'desirable to make one wise' is forbidden to certain representatives of humanity. The prohibition is disregarded. The fruit of the tree is eaten, and divine knowledge is acquired; but in speedy succession follows the punishment of lasting disgrace and disappointment.

ARUNDEL. The result of our discussion seems to be that Pyrrhôn, who is generally regarded as a kind of philosophical outcast, was in reality a late-born Prometheus, who, having attempted to discover truth and finding only error, thereupon set up a system on the basis of the impossibility of all truth. I confess I read the noble allegory somewhat differently. Prometheus not only believes in the divine fire, but actually transfers it to earth and places it in human possession. The result of his divine beneficence is described as by no means vain, but only inadequate. It is not that the fire is not omnipotent, but its human employers are impotent. . . . Returning to Greek Free-thought in the century after Sokrates's death, I thought Harrington evinced a disposition to over-estimate its extent, judging from the popularity of Euripides. To that I would oppose a few important facts. First, it seems evident that Sokrates, with his ill reputation as a Free-thinker and despiser of the gods, was unpopular among the Athenian demos long after his death. Secondly, the frequency of prosecutions for impiety between 500 and 400 B.C. Thirdly, the fact that during that period we have the birth and rapid development of the greatest dogmatic system in the whole of Greek philosophy, viz. that of Aristotle. I am inclined to regard the Peripateticism which was the dominant philosophy of Greece at the end of the fourth century as a dogmatic reaction and protest against the Skeptical laxity, the unlimited Eristic, and intellectual con-

fusion that ensued on the teaching of the Sophists and their successors.

TREVOR. The second of your reasons might have been omitted. The frequency of *Asebeia* prosecutions is an argument which makes as much for the popularity as for the unpopularity of Free-thought. Besides, the accusation was often made to get rid of a political opponent. It was the readiest mode of appeal to the passions of the Athenian mob. As to Peripateticism, I think you are right so far that Aristotle regarded his system as reactionary and constructive, contrasted with the preceding period of disintegration. It was certainly so regarded by his disciples. As Mr. Maurice remarks: 'Aristotle to a great extent proclaimed the search for wisdom to be at an end. He left the impression on the minds of his disciples that the whole scheme of the universe could be brought under the forms of the understanding.' But I agree with a recent writer who thus comments on these words: 'Could any announcement be more provocative of the latent Skepticism to which the Greek mind had always by its peculiar constitution been rendered more or less prone?'¹ What Aristotle and other dogmatists really did was to provide the Free-thinking schools with materials for their Skepticism, just as the Schoolmen and mediæval theologians prepared the way for the Free-thought of the Renaissance. Every distinct dogma or asseveration of truth was converted into a target for the keen arrows of the doubter. Hence, if Peripateticism implies a reaction towards prior methods and systems of thought, it also represents a fresh starting-point for the ruthless scrutiny and analysis of all subsequent Sceptics. No inconsiderable portion of the polemic of Sextos Empeirikos is directed against Aristotle and other dogmatic systems more or less connected with his own. During the Renaissance it was said, 'Had Aristotle never written, the dogmas of the Church had been fewer.' We might say that under like circumstances much of the controversial writing of the later Greek Sceptics had been needless.

HARRINGTON. There is, however, another side to your observation. The points of sympathy between Aristotle and

¹ Mr. Levin's *Lectures on the Philosophical Writings of Cicero*, p. 116.

Sokratic Free-thought are neither few nor unimportant. If the bent of Aristotle's intellect was towards dogma and definitive conclusions on all subjects of human knowledge, he was far from being dogmatic in the sense which the Athenian populace considered orthodox. His antipathy to the national worship was both greater and more unreservedly expressed than that of Sokrates. In point of fact, Aristotle was a Theist. His conception of deity was the 'mind' (*νοῦς*) of Anaxagoras, only more comprehensively reasoned and boldly asserted. He probably escaped the fate of Sokrates by a hasty flight from Athens; not wishing, as he said, to give the Athenians an opportunity of sinning twice against philosophy.

ARUNDEL. From the standpoint of belief in the Olympian deities as they were popularly conceived, you may be right; but, taking Aristotle's thought as a whole, its effect was to impart consistency and solidarity to Greek speculation. Its realism was a protest against the idealism of Plato. Its stress upon experience and observation was opposed to the incertitude and vacillations of mere theorizers. Its demand of and reliance on law, both of mind and of matter, of man and of nature, gave an impulse of fixity to Greek speculation; the effect of which is seen in the fact that all the more influential systems of Greek dogma, *e.g.* Stoicism, Epikoureanism, &c., take their rise after Aristotle, and are largely leavened with his principles. Hence I think its influence on the whole was dogmatic, and antipathetic to Skepticism. That his dogma may have furnished materials for Skeptics may be granted, without conceding that this constituted an impulse to Free-thought. Skeptics being always in a minority, and the overwhelming majority of mankind invincibly attached to fixed beliefs, they are never at a loss for materials on which to test their disintegrating processes. I readily grant that Peripateticism ultimately yielded to solvent processes operating from within, but these were rather Eclectic than Skeptic. Its disciples began to select each for himself the doctrines most congenial to his own intellect or feeling, and discarded the rest.

TREVOR. As a general rule you may say that the disin-

tegration that inevitably follows dogma takes first of all not the Skeptic but the Eclectic form; indeed, I cannot see how you can well discriminate between Eclecticism and Skepticism in such a case. At most the distinction can only be one of degree. A man who discards so many of the articles of a creed or the doctrines of a teacher the whole of which he is supposed to hold, is in all those rejected points a Skeptic. There is no creed in existence that has not a number of these Eclectic dissentients.

HARRINGTON. Probably not, but we must beware of confounding Eclecticism with Skepticism. However similar in incidental aspects, they are really opposed in principle: one implies selection, the other rejection. The instincts of the former are constructive, of the latter destructive. . . . With regard to the dominant influence in the later stages of Greek thought, I should not be very careful to discriminate between Peripateticism and the free systems that followed the lead of Sokrates. A remarkable similarity appears to me to run through all those stages. They agree in the possession of a common goal and a common method. What was to Aristotle happiness, or rather the supreme good, became to later thinkers—Stoics and Epikoureans as well as Skeptics—Ataraxia, or philosophic calm. They all shared also the opinion that this was to be attained by unceasing activity, research, or self-discipline of some kind, for even Epikoureans had to guard against agencies or elements which might disturb their philosophical serenity. This inculcation of search—unceasing, untiring activity—seems to me the very salt of Skepticism, as well as its complete differentiation, both from negation and affirmation. Without it intellectual equipoise would degenerate into apathy and indifference.

ARUNDEL. Combined with equipoise, I regard search as a salt 'that has lost its savour.' Assume that the result of all intellectual effort is an eternal equilibration of antitheticals and divergences, and to what purpose is search? Even if successful, it can only, *ex hypothesi*, result in another condition of equipoise and suspense. I fail to see the advantage of attaining by one's own voluntary efforts a never-ceasing succession of equally balanced uncertainties. If suspense is,

as Skeptics say, the ultimate goal of all human effort, then let us acquiesce in 'the ills we have, than fly to others that we know not of.'

TREVOR. On the other hand, Arundel, it is dogma, affirmative or negative, that renders all search an absurdity. A man who says of any debatable matter, 'This is indubitably true,' or, on the contrary, 'It is unquestionably false,' closes all further discussion. We must bear in mind that the standpoint of the Greek Skeptic had regard not to search considered as a means, but regarded theoretically as an end. To his restless intellectual mobility the conception of definitive conclusions of any kind was utterly repellent. We shall frequently, among our Skeptics, come across thinkers with precisely the same idiosyncrasy. Montaigne, as you know, is an illustrious example of it. Conceive the mental condition of a man like the French Seigneur, who avowed that if restrictions existed for him, although in a distant part of the world, he should consider his freedom limited and his happiness curtailed by them, and you will have a fair idea of the normal state of the Greek Skeptic. As regards the effect on subsequent philosophy which Arundel claims for Peripateticism, it seems to me immeasurably inferior to the influence of Sokrates. Aristotle himself derived unmistakable suggestions from Sokrates, and the Sokratic schools were the birth-places of all the remaining dogmatic systems of Greece; *e.g.* Stoicism was the outcome of the Cynic, and Epikoureanism of the Kyrenaic, just as Skepticism was the especial offspring of the Megaric.¹ On the whole, I regard Sokrates as the actual source of the following tenets and tendencies, some of which are discernible in every stage of the later course of Greek philosophy:—

1. Self-knowledge and its result, Nescience.
2. Knowledge consists in consciousness, individual perception.
3. Non-affirmation or suspense asserted either (1) as a condition of philosophic caution and freedom, or (2) as a state of religious self-renunciation, or (3) as a propædeutik to possible knowledge.

¹ Comp. Zeller, *Gesch.* iii. i. p. 13.

4. Importance of search in and for itself.
5. Belief in the final superiority of truth, coupled with a distrust of positive dogma, at least an absolute determination to avoid the denial of ultimate truth.
6. Eristic and free discussion regarded as the only methods of truth.
7. A tendency to idealism as a necessary outcome of the assignment of all knowledge to the knower, and hence of his self-assertion.
8. Equanimity (*μετριοπαθεία*) as applied to bodily or to mental sensations. There is, *e.g.* an intimate relation between Sokratic Nescience, Pyrrhonic Epoché, the Stoic denial of pain and pleasure, and the Epikourean suppression of all impediments to Ataraxia. In each case there is a repression of individuality or of its constituent elements as a method of securing independence, freedom, and imperturbable calm.

MISS LEYCESTER. I have always thought it a little strange that with the subtle refining faculties of Hellenic thinkers and their love of introspection for its own sake, no school of pure negation ever emerged in Greek philosophy, the nearest approach to it being the mysticism of Pythagoras, and that of Plotinos and the Alexandrian School, which were, however, more Oriental than Hellenic.

TREVOR. That, I think, is easily accounted for. With all their keen subtilizing intellects, Greek thinkers had a vivid sense of reality. To project themselves like Hindu mystics into an abyss of Nothingness—to merge and lose their existence in an inane, infinite void—was an intellectual and personal suicide for which they had not the least inclination. The pure passivity such a condition entailed was a psychological state from which their vigorous vitality and mental energy recoiled. Now Skeptical suspense supplied them with just as much approximate negation as they cared for. It did not involve self-extinction. Far from destroying, it merely rendered doubtful and *ipso facto* energizing, vital and reasoning perceptions. Indeed it allowed a fuller scope for his mental restlessness than either negation or affirmation could of themselves supply. Hence we have the important fact that

Skepticism afforded to the Hellenic thinker the satisfaction of those instincts which among other philosophers is provided by Idealism. For that matter, all the Greek Sceptics, when duly analyzed, are more or less idealists. What they question is chiefly externality, the absolute trustworthiness of phenomena, of elaborate ratiocination, of common opinion. They do not dispute the reality *as mere appearances* of sense-impressions or mental perceptions; nor the binding nature of social and legal obligations; nor again do they deny consciousness as the final test of truth. Indeed, had Descartes or Bishop Berkeley lived in ancient Greece, they would have been classified with Pyrrhôn and Ainesidemos. . . . But I will not trench further upon matters which my paper discusses, so I will now begin to read.

There can be no doubt that Free-thought in Greece suffered a reverse by the death of Sokrates, though its effect in this as in other similar cases was probably only temporary. By the instrumentality of Meletos and his impeachment, the popular orthodoxy of the Athenians had been vindicated, the divinities of Olympus had been preserved in their original status and dignity. The mischief of unrestrained Eristic had been authoritatively affirmed. The subversive tendencies of free speculation in religion and morality had been duly punished. In the eyes of the Athenian mob, it mattered little that this expiation for irreligion and immorality had been consummated in the person of the most religious and purest Greek that ever lived. The denial given by Sokrates's high character to the supposed ill results of his thought was entirely disregarded. His persecutors and judges acted on the principles which have always animated bigoted dogmatists. They were no more inclined to accept an unblemished life as an answer to a charge of immorality, than the Inquisition was to accept a religious life as a reply to the indictment of 'heretical pravity.' The immediate consequence of Sokrates's death was therefore the dispersion of his followers. Plato and Eukleides fled to Megara, other disciples took refuge elsewhere. But like the early Christians, who were 'scattered abroad' by persecution, these pupils of the great Athenian thinker employed their dispersion for the dissemination of their master's ideas. Later on, indeed, this diffusion of thought and philosophy, once concentrated in Athens, became a general movement through

the decreasing importance of that city as the metropolis of Hellenic culture which set in after the battle of Chaironeia. But during the earlier half of the fourth century places as wide apart as Megara, Cyrene, Elis, Eretria, &c., became centres more or less important of some phase of Sokratic teaching. Chiefest of these schools, both as regards the men who co-operated in its foundation and as preserving the most characteristic methods of Sokrates, was that of Megara. From this school proceeded the thinker who in the fourth century before the Christian era most resembled Sokrates, viz. :

*Pyrrhôn.*¹

Pyrrhôn was born at Elis about 365 B.C., and therefore half a century after the death of Sokrates. In early life he devoted himself to painting, and some writers have thought that reflection on the subject of his art might have first suggested the speculations that afterwards induced him to become a Skeptic. He at any rate soon abandoned the brush and betook himself to the study of philosophy. Going to Megara, he placed himself under the teaching of Bryson, a disciple of Stilpon, who was himself a Skeptic and a renowned teacher among the Megaric philosophers. He is also said to have been a pupil of Anaxarchos, a disciple of another Skeptic, Metrodoros of Chios, who followed the traditions of Demokritos. In company with Anaxarchos, he is reported to have joined the expedition of Alexander the Great to India. This tradition is the more interesting because the similarity of his Skeptical creed with some of the methods and tenets of Hindu thinkers was recognized at a very early date. I shall have to touch upon this connexion a little further on. After his return from this expedition Pyrrhôn appears to have settled down in his native town, and to have pursued the calling of a teacher of philosophy. He gathered round him a circle of disciples, some of whom afterwards became famous. It is probable that Pyrrhôn, like most of the earlier Greek philosophers, gave lessons not only on philosophy, but on poetry and general literature as well. He was himself a man of

¹ Besides the usual Histories of Philosophy, of which the best are Brandis and Zeller, compare, on the subject of Pyrrhôn, Zimmermann's two monographs: 1. *Darstellung der Pyrrhonischen Philosophie*; 2. *Abhandlung über den Ursprung, das Wesen, und die historische Bedeutung der Pyrrhonischen Philosophie*, Erlangen, 1841-43. See also, on the chronology of the later Sceptics, *De Philosophorum Scepticorum Successionibus*, P. Leander Haas, 1875. By far the best and fairest English work on the Greek Sceptics is Mr. Levin's *Six Lectures introductory to the Philosophical Writings of Cicero*, Cambridge, 1871.

large and broad culture, and conversant, as most of the Skeptics were, with all the knowledge of his time. It is interesting to learn that Homer was his favourite poet, and that he claimed to find some suggestions of Skepticism in his lines. He also studied the writings of Demokritos, whose doctrines agreed on so many points with the Sokratic teaching he had acquired at Megara. Whatever other success attended Pyrrhôn's teaching, it does not seem to have brought him wealth. His circumstances are described as being marked by extreme poverty, which, however, he bore with the unruffled serenity of mind becoming a philosopher. He was held in so great repute by his fellow-citizens that they made him their high-priest and erected statues in his honour. On the other hand, fables and ludicrous stories were circulated concerning the extremity to which he carried his principle of Skeptical indifference.¹ He was said, *e.g.*, to be generally attended by a body-guard of disciples whose exertions were directed to protecting their master from falling over precipices, being bitten by mad dogs, run over by passing vehicles, or from other dangers to which his sublime indifference to the contingencies of life exposed him. But as more than one of his biographers have remarked, the half-insane man thus depicted could never have been chosen by the Elians as

¹ It is a natural error of the vulgar to formulate all speculative ratiocinations and conclusions in some practical or sensuous form. Closely related as their own minds are to actual phenomena, and impatient of all abstractions, they cannot conceive an intellect finding pleasure in pure speculation for its own sake—watching with interest the birth, growth, and juxtaposition of its immaterial creations, or formulating hypotheses not easily reconciled with the conditions of actual material existence. 'The carnal mind is enmity,' not only 'against God,' but against ideal philosophy. Hence, whenever abstract thought seems to assume or involve concrete absurdity, such men hasten to overwhelm it in the ruins, as they think, of a *reductio ad absurdum*. Thus Pyrrhôn's contemporaries, perceiving the futility in practice of complete indifference, were eager to point out the ridiculous consequences involved in such a position. A satirist of the time might have written—

'And coxcombs vanquish Pyrrhôn with a grin.'

Nor is it coxcombs only who indulge in this easy refutation of abstract philosophy. Dr. Johnson's reply to Berkeley's denial of matter, by striking his stick on the ground, was probably regarded by himself as conclusive. Even Goethe was ready with his dislike of transcendentalism to enjoy an argument of this kind; for when Fichte's house was attacked by riotous students, and his windows were broken, he remarked: 'Fichte might now convince himself in the most disagreeable way that it was possible for a *Not-Me* to exist externally to the *Me*.'

high-priest, nor made the object of so much honour and veneration as we know Pyrrhôn to have been; we are indeed assured by Ainesidemos that though he was skeptically undecided and indifferent in speculation, he was prompt and resolute in action—a combination which our researches will prove is by no means the impossibility that it is often thought. Pyrrhôn lived to be ninety years of age, so that if the effect of a philosophy in producing longevity is a proof of its salutary influence, Skepticism may claim a high rank. Nor is Pyrrhôn by any means an isolated example of a nonagenarian Skeptic. Indeed, I may incidentally remark that the length of days generally attained by the followers of those Greek sects who professed to cultivate Ataraxia—philosophic calm—is a convincing proof that the culture was not in vain.

Pyrrhôn's teaching seems to have been carried on like that of Sokrates, entirely by conversation and oral instruction. He left no written works behind him; indeed, the only mention of a writing of his is an ode he is reported to have addressed to Alexander. We are therefore entirely dependent for our knowledge of his doctrine on the works of his disciples. Chiefest among these is Timon of Phlios, a poet and dramatist who himself earned a reputation as a Skeptical teacher second only to that of Pyrrhôn. He is styled by Sextos Empeirikos, 'the Interpreter (*ὁ προφήτης*) of Pyrrhôn,' a relation which has been compared not very happily to that of Aaron to Moses. Accepting, then, the evidence of Timon as to the teaching of his master, we are told that the road of happiness—the supreme end of man—consists in the observance of the three following precepts:

1. We must consider what things are in their own nature or inherently.
2. We must consider what they are relatively to us.
3. We must observe the consequences or lessons of this relation.

As to the first, Timon, after Pyrrhôn, determines that all things in their real nature are indifferent, indeterminable, indistinguishable, so that neither by our sensations nor by human opinion can we discriminate truth or error. The wise man, therefore, will not trust them, but undogmatically, impartially, and fearlessly will stand apart, and will admit of all things that they no more exist than they do not exist. With this definition of Skeptic wisdom agree other witnesses of the Pyrrhonic philosophy. Thus we learn from a certain Askanios of Abdera that Pyrrhôn maintained there was nothing (inherently) beautiful or ugly, right or wrong, and hence nothing that could be defined as absolute truth. Men were ruled in their conduct by laws and customs, and Ainesidemos assures us

that Pyrrhôn determined nothing dogmatically on account of the equal balance of contradictories that existed in all subjects. In practical life he claimed to be guided by appearances. Another Skeptical position with which he was credited was that nothing was to be accepted as hypothetically true, and hence that the deliverances of the senses or the reason could not be assumed as indubitably certain. The utmost that might safely be affirmed was simply the actual appearance or presentation as such of any thought or idea to the individual himself. This position Pyrrhôn and his school exemplified by quoting the old proposition of Herakleitos and Demokritos: 'That honey is sweet I do not assert, that it seems to me to be so I admit.' The practical outcome of these Skeptical doctrines was naturally Epoché—abstention from all affirmation, or as it was called, with a retrospect to Pythagoras, Aphasia—Skeptical speechlessness. Assertion was to be limited to imperative deliverances of the senses or inward consciousness, and even thus was only to be regarded as a predication of appearance or seeming. As to the final result, Ataraxia would follow the suspense as certainly as its shadow clings to the substance, Ataraxia being in speculative questions that state of imperturbable serenity which in the inevitable ills of existence was denoted by a correlative term, equanimity (*μετριότητα*).

One unfortunate result of Pyrrhôn's having left behind him no written work is our ignorance of the full scope of his Skeptical teachings. So great was his influence on all subsequent Sceptics that theories and arguments were often attributed to him, sometimes even called after his name, in the initiation or development of which he had no concern. Thus it is a disputed point whether we may ascribe to him or to some disciple of his the first enunciation of the celebrated Ten 'Tropoi,' or modes of withholding assent, which might be described as the Decalogue of the Greek Sceptics. They are evidently some of the most ancient of the systematic formulæ contained in their writings, and in that particular bear a close resemblance to the Decalogue of uncertain date found in the Books of Moses. They appear to belong to the age of Pyrrhôn, are frequently called by his name, but they cannot be so immediately traced to his authorship or authority as to be actually attributable to him. Probably he put them forth in some elementary form, or he may have collected and arranged the instances and illustrations on which their classification is based, and they were afterwards elaborated by a later Sceptic. The majority of critics, with whom I agree, assign them to Ainesidemos. I have accordingly reserved their consideration until we come to speak of that thinker.

Confining ourselves to the more authoritative indications of his

teaching, we perceive that Pyrrhonic Skepticism inculcates a position of reticence or suspense, passing into negation, on all subjects of speculation. But we must by no means extend Pyrrhôn's doubt or denial to the dictates of morality or to the ordinary relations of a citizen to the State in which he lived. Pyrrhôn clearly evinced the faculty of Sokrates for discriminating between what was speculatively uncertain and what was practically expedient or imperative. Among the latter he placed the ordinary ethical duties that men owe to each other. Cicero gives it as a maxim of Pyrrhôn's that, 'excepting virtue, nothing was worth having;' in other words, morality was not only the highest but the only good. He is also said to have explained his frequent fits of reverie by saying that he studied how to become virtuous. Indeed his special position as high-priest, as well as the customary deference of all Skeptics to the laws and observances required by the State, demanded a strict insistence on moral obligations. This was further enforced by the pure, unselfish example of his own life. The veneration in which he was held by his fellow-townsmen, not only during his life but long after his death, is only reconcilable with his exemplification of the highest personal social and civic virtues. By his disciples he was almost worshipped. Timon celebrates in glowing verses his freedom from blind reverence for opinion, from the inanepuerilities of Sophists, from the seductions of a deceptive rhetoric, from the trivial pursuits of those who cultivate physical science. He wants to learn Pyrrhôn's secret of living in a passionless serenity far above ordinary mortals, and worthy only of the gods. Nor was this high estimate confined to disciples and personal friends. He is said to have won over to his disposition—the equable tenor of his life—men who refused to accept his philosophy, such as, *e.g.* Epikouros and Nausiphanes. The sublime development of *Ataraxia* that procured for Pyrrhôn this renown was alleged by contemporaries to be the product of his intercourse with Hindu mystics, but a more obvious mode of accounting for it is to attribute it to his assiduous imitation of Sokrates.

With the materials now before us we are in a position to award Pyrrhôn his due place among the Free-thinkers of Greece. Ordinarily he is classified as the first of Greek Skeptics. This can only mean that he first systematized the principles of Free-thought that were current in Hellenic speculation from its earliest commencement. The first Greek Skeptic is Sokrates, in virtue of his enunciation of Nescience as the static and normal condition of the philosophic thinker; and we have already seen that principles and methods more or less implying Skepticism were current long prior even to Sokrates. What Pyrrhôn, therefore, accomplished for Free-

thought was to carry to their legitimate conclusion and consolidate the traditions and methods of free-inquirers from the earliest infancy of Greek speculation. Setting aside the systematic arrangement and terminology, there is nothing in Pyrrhonism that we have not already met with in tracing the course of Hellenic Skepticism. If Pyrrhôn denied the validity of the senses as an attestation of absolute truth, the denial was as old as Greek thought. If he mistrusted the processes of the reason, this was no more than the Eleatics had done. If he made a distinction between individual and relative truth on the one hand, and general or absolute truth on the other, this had long been established by Protagoras. If he maintained Epoché to be the highest mark of philosophic wisdom, this was only the substitution of a general method or procedure for the personal conviction of ignorance which Sokrates asserted. If he laid stress on Ataraxia as the wise man's goal, both the thing and the term had been already affirmed by prior philosophers, notably by Demokritos. No doubt he and his school went beyond all former doubters so far as they suffered neutrality or equipoise to be transmuted into Negation, and the personal experience of the individual to become an indisputable law of the universe; but it seems likely that this step in advance of true Skepticism was taken unconsciously, it was undoubtedly combined with an appreciation of suspense or reticence as the normal standpoint of the Skeptic.

Besides its development in the direction of Negation, Pyrrhôn represents another advance in Greek Skepticism. He not only organized its procedures, but he named and classified them. To his school we must ascribe the numerous terms and formulas by which suspense or dissidence continued to be denoted among Greek Free-thinkers during the next five centuries. Sokrates, as we have seen, did not care to define. Probably no teacher ever existed less solicitous to formulate fixed rules and methods, whether for thought or conduct. The only philosophical prescription that can be fairly associated with his name is the celebrated 'Know thyself,' and perhaps a simple assertion of Nescience. But with Pyrrhôn we reach the technical stage of Skeptical evolution. In his school, if not by himself, was sown the seed of that wonderful harvest of technical terms, axioms, formulas, and definitions that we find in the writings of subsequent Skeptics. Considering its scope, no school of Greek thinkers possesses such an armoury of weapons, offensive and defensive. Every phase and degree of Skepticism, incipient doubt, Nescience, suspense, indifference, apathy, Ataraxia, is the subject of a lavish nomenclature and of a varied and reiterated definition. There seems, we must admit, no inconsiderable

incongruity between a system claiming to be founded on Nescience and such a number of exact formulas, rules, and technical terms. An adverse critic might not unfairly insist that such a phenomenon indicated a consciousness on the part of Skeptics themselves that their principles and processes were those of a minority, and that their due maintenance was attended with some difficulty. At any rate Pyrrhón and his school must be credited with the formal shaping, consolidation, and codification which Skepticism ever after preserved. In that sense it may be allowed he is the first of Greek Skeptics.

Pyrrhón's relation to the general Free-thought of Greece we have already glanced at. We must now consider those affinities, most of them of a Skeptical character, which he shares with Sokrates.

We saw in the case of Sokrates that he regarded his Nescience as an indispensable preliminary to knowledge. The sincere conviction of ignorance must, he thought, stimulate men to its attempted removal. Precisely the same effect was contemplated by the Pyrrhonists as the consequence of their more formal Epoché. The investigation that led up to suspense was not assumed to stop there. It was a condition of unstable equilibrium that presupposed a further expenditure of energy. It merely represented the resting-place between one search and the next. It was the Skeptic's verdict on the past rather than his anticipation of the future. In the future the conditions of the suspense might be changed, the balance of antitheticals become uneven, or a new impulse or direction might be imparted to the Zetetic energies of humanity. But concerning the future the Skeptic did not greatly trouble himself. He was satisfied, indeed he desired, that the future should be as the present, filled up with the congenial duties of suspense and search, the static and dynamic conditions of true intellectual existence. Besides being an incentive to further investigation, Epoché was imperative. The mere act of withholding assent considered apart from search and from its virtue as a deed of self-effacement was not regarded by the Skeptic as a state of ideal perfection—the crowning point of human excellence, as it might be depicted in imagination. It was conditioned not by abstract considerations and potentialities, but by actual necessities. There is a tacit agreement among all Skeptics on this point: they submit their system as a concession to the imperative demands of human existence, as an inevitable outcome of the relation of man to the universe. Epoché was therefore the unavoidable starting-point for humanity, and it operated—

1. Speculatively, by impelling men to search.

2. Ethically, by stimulating men to virtue.
3. Religiously, by inducing self-denial.
4. Finally, by engendering Ataxaria.

1. The first point I have already glanced at. We must always remember that to the active-minded and restless Greek, search was equivalent to knowledge, and whatever standpoint postulated search demanded knowledge. To us knowledge implies certitude, definitive, infallible. The Pyrrhonist, with his profounder insight into the conditions of things, disclaimed all such pretentious arrogance. To him it was a ceaseless inquiry, and Epoché was only the breathing space that heralded and prepared the way for another outburst of energy. We have already seen what a high, unselfish purposefulness this consideration induced in Sokrates. His Nescience was not the cry of despair, but of effort, buoyant, continuous, and untiring; we might compare it to the conviction of moral and spiritual imperfection which so many earnest religionists possess, and which not only incites to perfection, but itself increases, *pari passu*, with every successive advance in that direction.

Like Sokrates, Pyrrhôn was also a Zetetic philosopher. Give him material for search, for a juxtaposition of antitheticals, for Epoché, for a renewal of effort, and you gave him all that he needed for the complete formation and elaboration of a philosophy. His mind, restless, vivacious, untiring, needed not that complacency of knowledge and infallibility which more often deters from than incites to intellectual exertion. Although he sometimes indulged in the sweeping negations that form so easy and tempting a weapon against affirmative dogmatists, he was not forgetful that truths claiming to be unquestionable were but so many examples of finality, indications

the intellect had attained on those specific points the end of its tether. Pyrrhôn therefore prosecuted the ceaseless search which ever after continued the distinguishing characteristic of Hellenic Skepticism. His efforts doubtless met with the same success in kind and degree as have always attended such disinterested inquiries. The wider and more complete the investigation, the more justifiable he found the Epoché from which it started, and to which it was destined ultimately to return.

2. More remarkable, perhaps, were the ideas of Sokrates, Pyrrhôn, and their Skeptical successors, as to the effect of Epoché regarded as a starting-point of ethical action. That Sokrates considered his Nescience to possess a moral significance, we have already seen. It was the active suppression of the self-conceit and opinionativeness which are so often the sources of youthful folly and recklessness.

It tended, by its counteraction of the selfish instincts, to induce that altruistic disposition which is the basis of all social and political life. Similarly Pyrrhôn regarded his abstention from decision as possessing an ethical signification. That he was correct from the standpoint of Greek thinkers, and in relation to their definition of Ethics as a branch of Politics, appears to me unquestionable. The self-distrust and humility it inculcated necessarily subordinated the individual to the community of which he formed a part. In the confessed absence of speculative and absolute certitude, it referred him to the conclusions of experience, to the approved lessons of social and political life, for standards of conduct and practice. Inherently such an authority might not be the highest conceivable, but it was the best obtainable, and even its defects, regarded from a standpoint of philosophy, were more than compensated by its entire harmony with the Greek conception of patriotism. For we must remember that among the foremost thinkers of Greece patriotism was far more than an ordinary human or even social duty. Its motives, sanctions, and prescriptions were esteemed sacred and divine. To a cultured Greek statesman, as, *e.g.* Perikles, his own country of Hellas or Attica was more an object of worship than the deities of Olympus. The existence and tangibility of its interests contrasted favourably with the incertitude in which both the being and attributes of the popular divinities were necessarily invested. The duty of sacrifice to Herê or Aphroditê might be questioned, the obligation of self-immolation if necessary at the shrine of patriotism, was indisputable. Now the Skeptical requirement of a complete deference on grounds of expediency to the laws, customs, and even religion of the State, admirably fell in with this conception of patriotism. It posited the State as an authority whose dictates, whatever their speculative incertitude, had a practical and utilitarian obligation which was irresistible. It is no uncommon objection against Skepticism that the excess of individualism it engenders tends to produce a disturbing influence in the social relations of mankind. This might be true of the negative dogmatism which often bears the name of Skepticism, it certainly is not true of the mere attitude of suspense. Of this, on the contrary, the normal effect is to induce an acquiescence in the thinker's environment, and a deference to customary standards and rules of action. It creates an aptitude and inclination for, not a repugnance to, social existence. I may observe that the connection thus indicated by Pyrrhôn between Epoché and political and ethical conduct is based on precisely the same principles that Jesuits and other extreme religious sectaries employ to procure unconditional sub-

mission to their teaching or authority. In each case the surrender of the individual volition or knowledge is regarded as a pre-requisite of membership.

But Pyrrhonic Epoché contributed to right moral conduct for another reason. By creating a kind of deadlock in the intellectual faculties, it compelled men to have recourse at once to practice, and to the social instincts which among cultured peoples serve as guides of practice. This was one main outcome of the Sokratic Nescience. Ratiocination on ethical subjects being uncertain in its conclusions, an appeal to the direct utterance of conscience, reason, duty, custom, became all the more essential. All Skeptics from Sokrates downward are agreed that difficulties in speculation must not be allowed to hamper, thwart, or even postpone obvious action. No impossibility of formulating an absolute definition of courage, *e.g.* could affect the duty of exemplifying it in any given emergency.

Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die,

is the well-known principle of military obedience, and a similar rule obtains in the ordinary contingencies of life, immediate action being in most cases not only the best but the only solution of a difficulty. This subordination of speculation to the categorical imperative of duty is a principle common to all Skeptics. I need hardly point out that this stress on conscience as a rule of practice is in part the individual and subjective aspect of the obligation already considered of deferring to the laws, usages, and prescriptions of the community, for the conscience of every man will of necessity reflect the opinion of its environment. But among leading Skeptics the sacredness of the individual conscience is nevertheless carefully guarded. In the supreme instance of Sokrates, the authority of his Daimon was clearly regarded as paramount, and with other Skeptics there was generally a point where even the obligations of patriotism, semi-divine as they were, might be compelled to give place to the 'still small voice' of the man himself. Pyrrhôn, at any rate, emphasized the principle laid down by Sokrates. He required the wise man starting from the position of Epoché to look to the spontaneous utterance of his feelings, conscience, &c., for suggestions of action. Not only so, but he demanded that he should carefully train and mould his impulses so that their decision might not be erroneous. In effect—for this is the purport of his recommendation—he advised the creation of an artificial Daimon whenever a man unlike Sokrates might find himself unprovided with a natural one,

with the difference that its behests should be not only negative but positive as well.

This stress upon principles of action, external and internal, forms a necessary part of a general principle of all Skeptics—I mean their preference of practice to theory. Whether this characteristic is to be ascribed to a reaction of the energizing against the proved incertitude and incapacity of the speculative faculties, or as evincing a recognition that over-much cogitation tends to paralyse human activity, as in the well-known instance of Hamlet, is a question we need not decide. Probably both considerations co-operate in producing the idea. At any rate, it is common to modern as well as to ancient Skeptics. Montaigne and Charron, Lessing and Kant, have it no less than Sokrates and Pyrrhôn. All agree that action may be and often is independent of speculation, that it has a sphere of its own into which the ‘nicely calculated less or more’ of theoretic and probable considerations is not allowed to trespass. With the Greeks, as also with Montaigne, Agrippa, and other moderns, the outcome of this feeling was singular. It induced a stress on those sciences which related directly to human motives and rules of action, to the neglect of all theoretic science whatsoever. The disdain of Sokrates for physical science during the latter half of his life we have already noticed, as well as his contempt for the Sophists and the different arts they pretended to teach. Timon also eulogizes Pyrrhôn for his contempt of physicist researches: ‘Thou dost not care to investigate whence comes the atmosphere that surrounds Hellas, or the source and final destiny of each single thing.’ When we come to Sextos we shall find the greater part of his writings directed against the sciences of his day, and endeavouring to prove that their boasted rules and methods end only in self-contradiction and uncertainty. More anomalously, we find a similar distrust of theoretical knowledge even in a professed humanist like Montaigne. The French essayist, like his Greek predecessors, despises all mere book-learning, and regards with suspicion and contempt the physical-science efforts of his age. Here, then, we find the Skeptical distrust of theory in comparison with practice, of speculation compared with ethical action, attaining an extreme of obscurantism, which, whatever we may think of Skeptics as a class, is entirely opposed to their general tendencies.

3. Another of the affinities which Pyrrhôn and his school share with Sokrates is a perception of what might be called the religious nature of Skepticism and suspense. Pyrrhôn, we have seen, was chosen by the Elians as high-priest, the meaning of that office probably being that his precepts and example were regarded as

possessing a salutary, half-religious, half-moral influence. We have also seen that he was supposed to have derived his doctrines on the deceptiveness of outward phenomena, the duty of suppressing assertion, the importance of preserving a serenity that no outward agency could affect, as well as his practice of profound meditation, from the Gymnosophists of India. Both of these traditions point to Pyrrhôn's recognition of intellectual self-abnegation as possessing a religious significance. Nor would it be easy to show that Skepticism may not legitimately bear such a construction. In its essence it is a kind of self-denial, and that of the most difficult and painful character. It is the repression of certain instincts, vigorous in all men, vehement in most, in the direction of assertion or negation, and the greater the measure of Skepticism the more forcible the repression. Now this suppression of self in some form or other is a duty inculcated by all religions as well as by philosophies that claim a religious character. It is common, *e.g.* to Hindu philosophy, to Christianity, and to Greek thought.

In the first case the Sankhya philosopher and the Buddhist exercised self-denial—we might term it self-effacement—as a mode of attaining freedom from matter, final absorption, and Nirvana; the Christian thinker advocated it as a condition of service to God, or to facilitate the reception *ab extra* of ecclesiastical dogmas; the Greek philosopher considered it a salutary act of self-discipline likely to induce such virtues as ingenuousness, impartiality, and philosophical serenity. We shall see in our next discussion the lengths to which this principle was carried by Orientals; but the principle occupies no unimportant position in Greek philosophy, all its profounder and idealizing thinkers, from Pythagoras to Plotinos, recognizing its influence. Sokrates regarded his persistent repression of knowledge-consciousness both as a religious act of obedience to divine command and as a condition of moral progress. The long-continued silence demanded of the Pythagorean became in the Sokratic system the studied repression of all conviction. Both philosophers agreed in regarding dogmatic tendencies and the conceit of knowledge as marks of pride and self-consequence, which in the interests as well of the individual as of humanity it was desirable to suppress. These considerations will help us to understand the religious phase of Pyrrhôn's teaching. So far from laying down any novel theory when asserting the importance of suspense, he was only following some of the earliest traditions of Greek thought. He may have regarded himself as sharing with Pythagoras and Sokrates a divinely imposed mission to suppress imaginary knowledge. He certainly believed that the attempt was a religious

duty as inducing that self-distrustful, meek, and tranquil frame of mind which it is the aim of all religions to create. Nor was its moral efficacy less distinctly marked ; for the man who, in virtue of his Epoché or the intellectual condition it implied, possessed sufficient command over himself as to repress assertion on all doubtful subjects, would not be readily led astray by more ordinary propensities and passions. At this point Pyrrhonic suspense touches that stern self-discipline which is the noblest characteristic of Stoicism. Its practical operation in the case of Pyrrhôn himself is shown by his opinion that nothing was worth striving for except virtue.

4. The Pyrrhonic employment of the term *Ataraxia* may possibly have been derived from Demokritos, but as to the thing signified there can be little doubt that Pyrrhôn, like other Sceptics, found the highest exemplification of that attainment in Sokrates. He was the perennial illustration to all subsequent thinkers of complete mental tranquillity. Whether the anecdote recorded of Pyrrhôn's protesting that life and death were indifferent, and, being asked why he did not die, replying because it was indifferent, be authentic or not, the story is hardly more than a corollary from the later scenes of Sokrates's life. If any man ever manifested a sincere conviction of the indifference of life and death, it was Sokrates : nor can it be questioned that this feeling was a distinct and inevitable product of his teaching. Had he been careful of logical definition and systematization, he might have devised some term with the same meaning as *Ataraxia* in order to mark the philosophical serenity which was the outcome of his principles ; but this was a methodical conception of philosophy absolutely prohibited by his starting-point of Nescience. Sokrates was in this particular much more clear-sighted than the later schools of Greek Sceptics. He discerned the incongruity between a profession of personal ignorance and a systematized scheme of philosophy. With the Pyrrhonists and their successors, however, *Ataraxia* was only one of many terms and formulas employed to denote complete intellectual immobility, the Nirvana of Greek philosophy. Pyrrhôn's manifestation of this characteristic was so transcendent that Timon compared him to a god. In conjunction with this phase of Sokratic and Pyrrhonic teaching, and connecting it still further with Hindu speculation, is the fact that both Sokrates and Pyrrhôn seem to have practised the absorbed reverie so characteristic of Oriental thinkers. One of the best-attested stories in the history of Sokrates is his having remained on one occasion in a state of rapt meditation for a whole night, and the same peculiarity is satirized by Aristophanes so as to imply that it was a common habit of his life ; indeed

this was only the natural consequence of a persistent observance of the injunction 'Know thyself,' no man engaged in earnest introspection being able always to avoid that self-concentration which takes the form of reverie. The same trait is manifested also in Pyrrhôn's character. He recommended profound meditation to his disciples as a method of self-discipline, and as likely to induce ethical perfection. I have mentioned the anecdote of his having been once asked by a disciple the meaning of his contemplative moods, when he replied that he was studying how to become more virtuous. Another of the stories bearing on this point is a little ludicrous. Pyrrhôn being once in a storm-tossed ship, when his fellow-passengers were terrified lest they should be drowned, the philosopher, who displayed the utmost indifference, directed their attention to a pig composedly feeding on deck as an example of undisturbed serenity—porcine Ataraxia, we might term it—which they might worthily emulate. When we come to later Skeptics we shall find this apathy shading off into a mystic idealism and self-extinction little if at all distinguishable from Oriental Nihilism.

Enough has now been advanced as to their community of views and methods to identify Sokrates and Pyrrhôn as men of similar disposition, and as followers of a common Skepticism. Nor are we left in forming this conclusion to a comparison of incidental traits which the traditionary portraits of the two thinkers reveal to us. We have the direct evidence of Sextos Empeirikos and Cicero for the fact that Sokrates was regarded as a high authority by Pyrrhonists, and that different sects of Skeptics called themselves by his name. Hence whatever distinction scholars of the nineteenth century, in the plenitude of their historical infallibility, have made between Sokrates and Pyrrhôn, Greek writers who lived within four centuries after their death, when their traditions were still alive among the schools and disciples created by them, recognized no such difference. 'The conjecture is not improbable,' says Brandis, 'that Pyrrhôn regarded the great Athenian as his pattern.'¹ To me it rather seems that they were men in kind of precisely similar intellectual idiosyncrasy, who, starting from the same standpoint, pursued the same method in order to arrive at the same goal. Setting aside the difference of greater elaboration and systematization in the latter thinker, the chief difference between the men relates to the singular diversity of their fates, the hemlock cup in Athens contrasted with a high-priesthood at Elis, as to which a contemporary of Pyrrhôn might have written:—

Ille crucem sceleris pretium tulit, hic diadéma.

¹ Article in Smith's *Dictionary of Biography* on Pyrrhôn.

Reasons of time, place, and general circumstances would, however, go far to account for this disparity.

But contrasted as schools, the Pyrrhonists, as already remarked, manifest one important divergency from the principles of Sokrates. They represent the transition of pure suspense into negation. Instead of the Sokratic 'I am ignorant,' the formula becomes general, 'All men are ignorant;' in other words, truth is inconceivable. We are able to trace this transition from the subjective to the objective, from the singular to the universal, by the increase of Skeptical axioms beginning with 'all,' or some similar formula of universalism, to which I need hardly say pure Skepticism has no right. Such propositions as 'Truth does not exist,' 'Nothing can be known,' which were to emerge in Greek Skepticism, are negative dogmas, and of the most unjustifiable kind. Indeed, a more glaring instance of *non sequitur* it would be impossible to formulate than the inference from the equipoise of particular contradictories or from individual Nescience that all truth is impossible. It is just this hasty conclusion from the individual to the universe that constitutes the foundation of all intolerant and supercilious dogmatism, and it matters not whether the inference is made in a negative or a positive direction. So far, then, as Pyrrhôn or his followers accepted negative or even largely impersonal conclusions, they evacuated the only safe or justifiable position of the Skeptic, the personal conviction asserted by Sokrates. As a result of these negative tendencies developed by Pyrrhôn's successors, we have even now the term Pyrrhonism employed to signify negation as well as non-affirmation, so that pure Skepticism has been generally confounded with a determinate denial just as hostile to its own standpoint as dogmatic assertion. We may perhaps partly account for this negative development of Pyrrhonists by the growth of peripatetic dogma during the fourth century B.C. It certainly appears a rule in the history of Greek and every other Skepticism that its juxtaposition with positive dogma is certain to produce an additional stress on negation. When therefore this is manifested, perhaps in excess, by those who professedly start from a position of suspense, it should be regarded as an offensive polemic against avowed adversaries rather than the defence of their own position. Skeptical controversialists, I am bound to admit, are not a whit fairer or more scrupulous than those of any other kind.

The name of Timon¹ is so associated with his master Pyrrhôn that few separate remarks are needed to describe him. He is best

¹ On Timon compare the exhaustive monograph of Wachsmuth, *De Timone Phlasiæ*,

known for certain satirical poems in which he attacked dogmatic systems and authors of every kind. He also expounded the leading principles of Pyrrhonic thought in some terse and pungent verses.¹ The animus revealed by Timon against dissentients from and opponents to the Skeptical method illustrates that controversial unfairness of which all the later Skeptics supply us with examples. Speculatively a complete Skeptic, he however agrees with Pyrrhôn that virtue is the supreme good of man.²

The New Academy (Arkesilaos).

The precise mean in philosophical speculation is as hard to preserve as in ethical practice. The common object both of Sokratic Nescience and Pyrrhonic Epoché was to form a barrier against dogmatism or unfounded and arrogant knowledge; but the history of Pyrrhonism shows us that the barrier broke down, and that not by the attacks of its enemies, but by the over zeal and indiscretion of its adherents. No fatality is more common in the history of philosophical principles than that which awaits them by the exaggerated care of their friends. Philosophers being—underneath the long flowing cloaks of systems and dogmas—only ordinary mortals, occasionally condescend to human weakness. Hence they sometimes treat their principles like Puff's actors in 'The Critic'—'Give them a good thing, and they never know when to have done with it.' The Pyrrhonists treated their starting-point of Epoché in this fashion. They extended, generalized, universalized its implication until it became absolute negation. The next move in the history of Greek Skepticism was therefore reactionary. Recoiling from a conception of philosophy which made both itself and the search accompanying it illusory, Greek thought manifested a desire to start afresh from the teachings of Sokrates and the idealism of Plato. Of this movement, our chief exponent is Arkesilaos. This thinker was born at Pitane in Æolia about 315 or 316 B.C. Having first studied in his native town under a mathematician, Autolykos, he came to Athens and put himself under the teaching of the Peripatetics; but he soon joined the Academics, under the tuition of Krantor, and became a leading teacher among those who still kept to the traditions of Plato. We are told also that he gave much attention to Pyrrhôn, and a parody of a Homeric line was employed to describe his masters—

Plato the first, Pyrrhôn the last, between these Diodorus
—an order which, I suspect, we are to take not as chronological, but

¹ Wachsmuth, p. 13.

² Sext. Emp. *adv. Math.* xi. § 20.

as marking his own ultimate philosophical preference. Diogenes Laertius recounts many anecdotes illustrative of his personal habits and disposition. His favourite author, we are informed, was Homer, whom he was accustomed to read every night before retiring to rest. We may incidentally notice that Homer was the author most read for purposes of relaxation by all the later Greek Skeptics, a preference which may probably be accounted for by the well-known fact that Idealists and Skeptics delight in occasional contemplations of a realism alien to their general methods. Arkesilaos was known for his eloquence and for a complete mastery over those words and phrases which as a Skeptic he distrusted. He possessed a keen incisive wit and a talent for Sokratic irony which he did not scruple to employ on philosophical bigots or unidea'd obscurantists. Utterly despising wealth, he was profusely charitable, especially to needy scholars and thinkers. He was entirely free from the small vices of professional jealousy. Though himself the head of a philosophical school, he was not offended if a pupil displayed a preference for a rival teacher. He thus practically exemplified one of the most fundamental maxims of Skepticism—the innate idiosyncrasy of every individual thinker. Anecdotes are related of his having himself taken such dissentient pupils and committed them to the charge of other masters. He lived the modest, retiring life of a studious recluse, declining to take any part in political matters, and rarely leaving his home. He died at the good old age of seventy-five.

The intellectual career of Arkesilaos, so far as we are able to determine it from the scattered and fragmentary intimations which constitute the whole of our information on the subject, consists of two moments or thought-directions:—

1st. The negative tendencies of Pyrrhonists and the positive dogma of Stoics suggested an appeal to the standpoint of Sokrates; in other words, Arkesilaos endeavoured to reassert personal Nescience or pure suspense as the inquirer's true position.

2nd. Having destroyed by means of his Skeptical methods the principal dogmatic schemes then current, he tried to substitute for them a system more or less developed of Platonic idealism.

1. The Skeptical positions of Arkesilaos are more strongly marked in the traditions recorded of him than his later constructive Platonism. He not only reaffirmed the Sokratic principle of Nescience, but he endeavoured to accentuate it. To the profession of ignorance of all things, he added that he was ignorant even of his ignorance. He would not dare to affirm his standpoint of non-

affirmation. Waiving the self-contradictory character of this proposition, we may regard it as denoting an approach to that idealistic nihilism which we shall find in its perfection among Hindu thinkers. We must, however, prepare ourselves for similar manifestations of extreme Skepticism in what is left to us of Greek philosophy, where aversion to simple affirmation even of principles inherently Skeptical is often carried to a ludicrous excess. At the same time, this reassertion of Sokratic Nescience seems to prove that Arkesilaos recognized the individual subjective standpoint which in ultimate ratiocination is the only firm basis of Skepticism, and which the later Pyrrhonists appear to have lost sight of. But with the Sokratic Nescience Arkesilaos also combined the more formal Epoché of the Pyrrhonists. Maintaining the ordinary Skeptical principle, that a counter-proposition of equal validity might be opposed to every propounded proposition, he declared suspense to be the only safe standpoint for the wise man. To search for these antitheticals constituted the main occupation of the Skeptic, to juxtaposit them so as to attain a perfect equivalence was the culminating proof of his intellectual dexterity. Though often and justly chargeable with unscrupulousness, he was yet theoretically anxious that his subjective feeling of suspense should be really as well as nominally justified by an external condition of antinomy. Any inequality in the antitheticals would necessarily prejudice if not imperil its proper outcome of mental neutrality, and it was to guard against this result that the Skeptic was enjoined to employ all the resources of his investigation. Here again it seems pertinent to remark that this conception of search, which we shall find in the whole remaining portion of Greek Skepticism, did not necessarily imply, as often supposed, an unprincipled-dissatisfaction with every assertion that might be preferred, the licence or insolence of contradiction, as Augustine termed it. In some cases, perhaps, it may have produced this result, for it is a great mistake to suppose that Skeptics any more than sectaries or thinkers of any other kind invariably applied their common principles in precisely the same manner. The position of search signified the outlook of the far-sighted, versatile, many-sided thinker, to whom every truth was a nucleus of numberless complex relations, each of which must be determined before a final conclusion could be formed. It sprang from a conviction, common to all the profounder thinkers of Greece, of the infinity of all truth. It was a well-founded distrust of the ability of any human being to attain infallibility on any matter of pure speculation. It also embodied a feeling—itsself, too, a product of the earliest Hellenic

speculation—that language was an imperfect instrumentality for fully expressing all the many-sided aspects that pertain to every truth. Oftentimes it was the protest of a man on the top of a high mountain against the horizon limitations affirmed by his brother on the plain. Nothing can be more evident than the happy results of this perpetual keen-sighted search regarded only as an instrument of culture. It produced a marvellous facility for detecting doubtful or imperfect truths, an instinctive recognition of the manifold diversiform phases that every speculative or moral truth must necessarily possess. It created a readiness to estimate diverse degrees of probability, it engendered a taste for comprehension, for an all-inclusive catholicity in respect of the area and materials of investigation, which at any rate rendered a bigoted or narrow judgment impossible. Setting aside the direct consequences assigned it by the Sceptics, and its occasional employment to establish a deadlock of conflicting antitheticals, the method was clearly valuable in itself, and was admirably adapted to meet human exigencies. It would be difficult to conceive any philosophy as possessing ill tendencies or as being unsuitable for humanity that proclaimed search to be an indispensable part of its method. Arkesilaos, moreover, pursued Sokratic tactics in his intercourse towards others. We are told that in conversation with disciples he suppressed his own convictions, that is, he proclaimed his own Nescience, and directed his attention to extracting and testing their supposed certainties. From this standpoint of Agnosticism he regarded the different dogmatic systems current in his time; he treated Peripatetics, Stoics, Epikoureans as Sokrates had treated the formal teachings of the Sophists. We are told that he likened the formal Dialectic of Aristotle and the Stoics to thimble-rigging—indeed, the uselessness and unscrupulous nature of logic considered as a method of dogma may be regarded as one of the foremost traditions of the new Academy. It possessed, as we know, the combined authority of Sokrates and Plato. Another Sokratic standpoint shared by Arkesilaos was the distinction between speculation and practice. His own blameless, modest, unselfish life was a proof that in his own case the supposed freedom of his philosophical opinions had proved no detriment to his moral conduct, social duties being governed by other considerations than those which govern abstract truths. We have seen in the case of Pyrrhón how strong a basis for practical ethics was found in the Greek virtue of patriotism. The Sceptic was enjoined to submit dutifully to the laws, religion, social customs, &c. of his country. With the new Academy

the same duties are based on a more general and abstract principle, viz. 'Probability is the rule of conduct.' We shall have to discuss the bearings of the Academic theory of probabilism more fully when we come to Karneades, its greatest exponent; here we will only remark that as a rule of ethics it serves to express the consciousness that social duties, laws, and other bonds of human societies are *à priori* likely to be based on what long experience has determined to be expedient. So that in this sense probability is only a formal and generalized expression of the 'common-sense' which as a rule governs the conduct of communities.

Much of the form of Arkesilaos's Skepticism was doubtless determined by the polemical relation of the new Academy to the extreme dogmatism of the Stoics; and this too we shall have another opportunity for discussing when we come to Karneades. We may for the present bear in mind that the Stoics claimed demonstrative certitude as the combined result of the exercise of their physical senses and of their reason. They also insisted so strongly on the reality of the phenomenal world as almost to fall into materialism. Arkesilaos opposed both of these tenets. As to the former, he denied that the Stoic could attain certitude either by his senses or by his reason; as to the latter, he met the materialism of his adversaries by a counter-movement of idealism, taking as his guide the teaching of Plato.

2. At this point we arrive at the second of the thought-directions of Arkesilaos, his constructive idealism. Having destroyed by methodical Skepticism the chiefest dogma-schemes current in his time, he seems to have tried to erect in their place a system more or less developed of Platonic Transcendentalism. The nature of this we are only able to guess from certain obscure and indirect hints. Thus Sextos tells us of the tradition that Arkesilaos had employed his Skeptical battery to clear the way and prepare the ground for Platonic dogma; and the same testimony is also given by other writers. It has been observed also that he is generally left out of the enumeration of Academics when the absolute deniers of truth belonging to that school are reckoned, as if his standpoint in that particular was not altogether unquestionable.¹ We find too that his severance from Timon and the Pyrrhonists was greater than could be accounted for by his adoption of a Skeptical attitude in opposition to their determined negation. Though Timon praises him in one of his writings, he seems to have shown towards him that mixture of indignation and bitter contempt which he was accustomed to bestow upon dogmatists of all creeds. Diogenes

¹ Dr. Haas, *De Phil. Scept. Successionibus*, p. 20.

relates that when Timon first saw Arkesilaos among his own disciples he asked him, 'What doest thou here in our domains who are free men?' and being in turn questioned by Arkesilaos why he had left Thebes to come to Athens, answered, 'To be amused by watching you in your lofty flights,' from which we may infer that Arkesilaos carried his Platonism to some extreme of mysticism. Nor is this transition either improbable or uncommon. On the contrary, the intimate relation of Skepticism and Idealism is a fact that we shall have repeated opportunities for exemplifying in the course of our investigations. Distinctly marked in the intellectual career of prominent thinkers, it is abundantly attested by special historical epochs. In the case of Plato, the Skeptical starting-point of Sokrates is finally developed into a transcendentalism almost akin to mysticism. Giordano Bruno, William of Ockam, and other Skeptics represent a similar transformation. Indeed, whenever we find a consistent idealist, we may always be certain that the starting-point of his mental evolution has been Skeptical. In history, too, the same fact is shown by the Neo-Platonism which followed the final development of Greek Skepticism—by the idealism of Italian thinkers which set in when the Free-thought of the Renaissance had done its work—by the similar appearance of Quietism in France during the seventeenth century following the Skepticism of the two previous centuries—and by the idealism which emerged in Germany, after the wave of free-thought heralded by the French Revolution and its own 'Storm and stress' had spent its force. Nor is it difficult to determine the probable conditions of Arkesilaos's evolution from Skepticism to idealism. We need not have recourse to the theory,¹ that having demolished all other sources of dogma he attempted arbitrarily to supply their place with his own subjective intuitions and imaginative fictions. It is more reasonable to suppose that the introspection which lay at the basis of the Sokratic 'Know thyself,' the determined appeal in every case of doubt to the verdict of consciousness—the very ground principles of Skepticism—may at last have culminated in the adoption of a few subjective theories or presumedly ascertained truths as the foundation of a dogmatic idealism; in other words, Arkesilaos might easily have taken his own personal tests of, and ideas concerning, truth, as possessing not only a subjective but an objective validity. He would thus be an illustration of one of the most ordinary processes of philosophical psychology.

¹ Suggested by Prantl, *Uebersicht der Griech-Römisch Philosophie*, p. 181.

I am, however, far from wishing to exaggerate the constructive idealism of Arkesilaos, especially in our ignorance of its precise extent. There are forms of transcendentalism so closely allied with the denial of physical and rational certitude as to render it difficult to discriminate between them. At bottom Arkesilaos was a Skeptic of the Sokratic pattern. His impulses and efforts were all in the direction of Free-thought. With the sympathetic comprehensiveness which is an inseparable concomitant of expansive intellection he recognised the inherently free tendency of all the higher forms of Hellenic thought. Though Sokrates was his supreme exemplar of Skepticism, he saw that the same characteristic in varied forms pertained to many of his predecessors in the regal line of Greek thinkers. We are told that he directed attention to the Skeptical maxims not only of Sokrates and Plato, but of Anaxagoras, Empedokles, Demokritos, Herakleitos, and Parmenides. He is thus the first who distinctly pointed out the intellectual freedom, the spiritual emancipation from dogma, which is the prime attribute, the collective spirit, of Hellenic speculation, and which historians of philosophy, most of them allies of dogmatism, have either overlooked or unjustifiably minimized.

The reactionary influence of Arkesilaos seems to have died with him, for his successors became undistinguished from the Pyrrhonists; indeed, there seems ample ground for assuming that after his death there was an amalgamation of the two schools.¹ There was, as we have noticed, a sufficiently large body of common principles and methods to connect the disciples of Sokrates with the followers of Pyrrhôn. It is quite possible, too, that the renewed attention to the purer form of Sokratic Skepticism might have contributed to the alliance of the two schools, when the obstacle of his own Platonic Dogmatism had been removed by his death.

Karneades,

one of the most remarkable thinkers in the whole of Greek philosophy, and the undoubted chief of the Academy, was born in Cyrene about 213 or 214 B.C. He is said to have studied under Hegesinos, an Academic teacher, and also under Diogenes and Chrysippos the Stoics. Indeed, he seems to have given his attention to the whole field of Greek thought, for we are told that his Skepticism was directed against all preceding philosophers. He thus partook of the comprehensive many-sided culture which all the Greek Sceptics affected. One of the best known of the few

¹ Dr. Haas, *Op. cit.* p. 49.

recognised traditions of his life is his embassy to Rome, where his eloquence, versatility, dialectical subtlety, and Skeptical ratiocination produced such a startling effect. The anecdote is of peculiar interest as representing the first marked encounter in history between Greek speculation and Free-thought and Roman narrowness and dogma. Karneades died at the advanced age of eighty-five, or according to some writers ninety, years, and is thus another example of the longevity of professed cultivators of Ataraxia. His character is painted in eulogistic colours by friends and disciples. Intellectually his chief attributes were a peculiarly incisive acuteness combined with profundity of thought, a quick and vivacious temperament, a marvellous command of language, and a wonderful skill in the arts of persuasion, a dialectic agile, dexterous, and versatile, an invincible persistency of purpose which abandoned no problem until it had been exhaustively discussed and left no opponent unvanquished. Personally and morally his own habitual serenity prove that his boast of Ataraxia was not unfounded, and notwithstanding his dialectical subtlety and his speculative reasoning on every side of a subject—playing like Sokrates both sides of the game as well in ethical as in intellectual questions—his own conduct was distinguished by moral purity and undeviating rectitude. Like others of the later Greek thinkers, Karneades left behind him no writings, except a few unimportant letters; but in his case we are better supplied than usual with reliable traditions as to his teachings, by means of their ample mention and discussion by Sextos Empeirikos, and in the philosophical works of Cicero.

With Karneades and the most flourishing period of the Academy which he represents, we come in contact with the completest and most determined form of dogma to be found in the whole range of Greek philosophy, I mean Stoicism. The porch whence it issued might indeed be termed the central temple of Hellenic dogma-systems, or, varying the simile, we might term it the Calvinism of Greek thought; for just as Calvin gathered together and concentrated in a coherent logical system all the dogmatically elements of Christianity, or what appeared to him to be such, so Stoicism consolidated and codified all the more positive moments in Hellenic philosophy. Thus it unified the conceptions of the people and the methods of philosophers. It comprehended and systematized the scientific principles and aims of the Peripatetics; the austere morality of the Cynics; the vigorous self-repression of the Skeptics; the stress on practice as contrasted with theory, and the pursuit of Ataraxia which were common to all the later schemes of Hellenic speculation; as well as the chief convictions of the nation on the subjects of fate

and providence. It included, therefore, every department of human thought; theology, physical science, politics, as well as metaphysical philosophy. Stoicism was, moreover, related to Academic Skepticism, as Peripateticism and other forms of dogma had been to prior schemes of Free-thought. It constituted the positive system in regard of which Academic doubt was the disintegrating force. To a certain extent Stoicism, like other dogma-schemes, determined the nature of the Skepticism opposed to it, just as the positive strength, &c. of a beleaguered fortress suggests the methods of attack best adapted to subdue it; and this relation is signified in the well-known saying of Karneades, 'Unless Chrysispos (the chief of the Stoics after Zenon) had existed, I had not been.' It is therefore necessary to observe, summarizing as much as possible the leading positions assailed by Karneades, that the Stoics professed to have discovered a source of indubitable certainty, firstly in the manner in which human cognition was attained, or the junction of subject and object in what they termed 'comprehensible perception.' Secondly, they claimed certitude for their scheme of definite science as to the outer world. They were, in a word, dogmatic both as to the subjective method and the objective form and substance of knowledge.

Karneades attacked this twofold infallibility by denying that there could be any criterion of demonstrable truth, neither sensation, reason, nor imagination being competent to furnish it, for all of these were liable to deception. Besides, even if a criterion of truth were admitted, it could not exist apart from consciousness. Now an animal differs from lifeless things in possessing a capacity of sensation by means of which it perceives external objects. As long as this susceptibility is unawakened, it perceives nothing; but being aroused and as it were modified by external objects, it perceives them. The criterion of truth must therefore be looked for in the act of conscious perception, but this act must needs indicate both the subject and also the junction of the subject with the object in consciousness; the conscious act being inseparable from the mental image or object of thought.¹

We have here, I need hardly point out, the primary position of all idealism, and a standpoint which will always render Skepticism an integral part of human speculation. The Stoic asserted the independent reality of the outer world. His 'comprehensible perception,' the mental image formed by his sensations, he regarded as indubitably and objectively true. Karneades demurred to this conclusion. All that sensation revealed was itself, regarded as a

¹ Sext. Emp. *adv. Math.* vii. 159-61. Comp. Mr. Levin's work above cited, pp. 94-96.

subjective phenomenon. A given act of perception was no more than the change or modification produced by an unknown external object on the consciousness, and the Academics might have defined the material universe in the terms of Mill as an assemblage of 'possibilities of sensation.' Nominally they discriminated in every such sensation between the receptive subject and the object subjectively received, maintaining, however, their real indissolubility in the perceptive act. Thus both the organ and content of knowledge were subjective. Of the outer world as something existing apart both from the thinker and from his powers of perception, sensation revealed nothing. There was no possibility of comparison between the mental representation and its external conditioning object. No man could take up a standpoint outside of himself so as to adjudicate impartially between his subjective impression and its objective cause. He was himself an intrinsic, inseparable part of the impression. The 'comprehensible phantasm' was to a great extent his own creation, from whose conditions it was impossible to escape. Although man was not, as the Stoics averred, the helpless, passive victim of his senses and their external determinations, the subjective conditions of receptivity forming no unimportant factor in the formation of every comprehensible phantasm, yet he possessed no other knowledge than what they furnished. He had no independent standard of veracity that would enable him to ascertain whether the verdict of his senses was or was not correct. No doubt from his own point of view an idealist Skeptic like Karneades will always be triumphant over the crude materialist or the dogmatic assertor of external reality. Plato himself had already and long since shown how the victory of subjectivity might be won. Nay, long prior to Plato the polemic of Karneades against the Stoics had been foreshadowed by the opposition of the Eleatics to their materializing adversaries.

Not that Karneades's position was a definitive idealism. He saw that the validity of external sensations, the 'comprehensible perceptions' of the Stoics, was open to fair question; but had any of his own disciples of extreme Platonic sympathies asked, 'If our subjective impressions do not warrant the conclusion of an external world as an indubitable object of knowledge, may we take it for granted that they are themselves images of an ideal world?' he would no doubt have answered in the negative.¹ From his Skeptical standpoint he would have pointed out that the receptive

¹ His ratiocination, however, seems to have been regarded as leaning in this direction, as is shown by the tradition that, like Arkesilaos, his ultimate conclusions were those of Platonic dogmatism.

faculties are themselves liable to change and uncertainty arising from diversity of conditions, powers, &c., so that any inference in the direction of dogma or perpetuity from such diversiform deliverances of consciousness would be palpably absurd.¹ As a rule Skeptics, and Karneades is an especial illustration, are keen introspectionists. They watch the kaleidoscopic fluctuations of consciousness, the perpetual ebb and flow of emotion, the thousand-fold variations of subjectivity, with as much ardour as the continual changes which take place in the outer world; and if they are unwilling to formulate positive systems of knowledge from their changeful environment, still less are they inclined to do so from the *divers et ondoyant* receptivity that constitutes its only possible realization. We may note in passing that Karneades is fighting against the Stoics precisely the same battle as William of Ockam against the mediæval realists. In both instances the weapons and the aims are the same. Idealism is employed as the natural enemy of dogma to subdue in the one case theological realism, in the other philosophical materialism, and in both to prepare the way for a certain proportion of intellectual freedom.

But we have not yet exhausted the idealistic polemic of Karneades against the Stoics. Not only is man incapable of comparing the actual outward object as such with his own subjective impression, but the instrumentality by means of which he attains the former is itself imperfect and deceptive. Man derives all his knowledge through the inlets of his senses; but who does not know their incertitude, their perpetual liability to error? Hence arises the impossibility of discriminating true from false representations, and the significance of the Skeptic's stress upon mere phenomena regarded as modifications of the individual's subjectivity, and irrespective of their possible truth or falsehood from an independent or absolute point of view. The Stoics asserted that a true representation in consciousness, 'comprehensible perception,' was one that could not refer to non-existent things; but Karneades met them with the patent objection that dreams, visions, and mental delusions were capable of inducing in their subjects representations which, really false, could not be distinguished from true. Here Karneades stood on ground that had long been industriously cultivated by Greek Skeptics. The innumerable mistakes, uncertainties, diversities of sense-operations, had, as we shall see more fully under Ainesidemos, been reduced to something like a system. The mine

¹ The Greek Skeptics, as a designation of contempt for the metaphysical creations of idealism when asserted as absolute or independent truths, employed the expressive term *εἰδωλοποιήσεις*, 'image-making.'

had been so thoroughly worked that the labours of modern Sceptics eagerly directed to further excavation have been well-nigh fruitless.

The result of Karneades's polemic against the conceptual certitude of the Stoics was affirmed in the general formula, 'All things are incomprehensible;' in other words, there is no method, either by the operation of the senses, the reason, or the imagination, by means of which true mental representations may completely and in every case be discriminated from false. No doubt this generalization from individuals to the race is itself a departure from pure Scepticism. No man not endowed with omniscience can demonstratively assert that 'all things are incomprehensible,' any more than he can another dictum of the Academics, viz. 'Truth is unattainable.' Hence we observe that, like the disciples of Pyrrhôn, the Academics were inclined to push their suspense to absolute negation, and Sextos Empeirikos criticizes them with severity on this account.¹

II. Besides demolishing the subjective certainty claimed by the Stoics, Karneades also attacks their general system of positive convictions, theological, physical, and ethical. He demurs to the Stoic argument of the *consensus gentium* (the substantial agreement of all peoples) as a sufficient ground for the existence of deity; adding that even if it could be proved it would be valueless because of the ignorance of the great majority of mankind—the jury to which the verdict was hypothetically entrusted. He also combats the popular idea of providence with its stress upon dreams, omens, prophecy, and similar superstitions. And here I may parenthetically observe that the later Greek Sceptics did singular service to the general cause of human enlightenment by vigorously attacking the beliefs in divination, astrology, magic, &c. that seemed to grow in intensity with the gradual weakening of the popular faith in the old deities of Olympus. Sextos Empeirikos, writing at the beginning of the third century of the Christian era, was not only more advanced on this point than the Christian bishops of his own time, but was more enlightened than most Christian philosophers up to the sixteenth century, Lord Bacon included. Against the Stoic conception of an animated and reason-ruled universe, Karneades urges the difficulty of its proof and the indications occasionally presented by the world of processes and events irreconcilable with ordinary human reason. The Stoics affirmed that man was the sole end of creation; Karneades replied by pointing out the numberless sufferings and dangers to which he was liable,

¹ Comp. on this point the remarks of M. Saisset in his art. *Sextus*, in the *Dict. d. Sci. Phil.*

and especially—the favourite subject of Greek tragedy—the evil destiny of the noblest and most virtuous among men. Nor could it be demonstrated that human reason itself was the highest gift, for the exercise of the same faculty sometimes tended to debase its possessors. Besides, even granting the Stoic conclusion that ‘this is the best of all possible worlds,’ this of itself would not prove its government by deity, for it might conceivably have become so by the operation of purely natural causes. The assumption that the universe is governed by reason because man is a rational being is clearly a case of *non sequitur*, because either condition might be conceived as independent of the other. Karneades insists that the conception of deity as a living being presupposed for us the attributes that we know to be inseparable from life, viz. liability to disease, decay, and death. Similarly the moral qualities ascribed to deity must be conceived by us in accordance with our own knowledge of their nature and operation. Virtue, *e.g.* presupposes effort and a victory over temptation. On every hand, therefore, we see, pleads Karneades, that the deity is circumscribed, according to the highest ideas we can frame of him, by the same conditions of finality that pertain to ourselves. I need not point out that the basis of his argument, as that of all Greek Skeptics on the same subject, is the inability of transcending the finite and fallible conditions of humanity in estimating the nature and attributes of deity, and hence the unavoidable recourse to a greater or less degree of anthropomorphism. Whether we conceive deity as material or spiritual, limited or boundless, we are met on every side by contradictions and inconceivabilities. The ordinary polytheism of the Greeks Karneades combats, by showing how the old mythological divinities are only abstractions and idealizations of physical powers, and he makes good use of the obvious argument derivable from irreconcilable traditions concerning them. The similarly popular Hellenic conception of fate as the omnipotent controller of gods and men, Karneades resists as being irreconcilable with human liberty. He apparently agrees with the Epikoureans as to the freedom and spontaneity of the self-determinations of consciousness, without, however, granting that they were the outcome of chance. Here again he opposed a free intellectualism to what was, in reality, the slavish materialism of the Stoics.

One might not unfairly conclude from the direction of these ratiocinations that Karneades was an Atheist. Such a supposition would, however, be erroneous. Cicero, who had every opportunity of knowing, and who ranks in history as the most illustrious disciple of Karneades, expressly tells us that ‘he employed these

arguments not to destroy belief in the gods, for what were less befitting a philosopher, but to convince the Stoics that their explanations concerning the gods were unsatisfactory.' 'Perhaps,' as a recent writer suggests, 'the divinity of the Academicians was that unknown god whom St. Paul told the Athenians that having ignorantly worshipped he now declared unto them.'¹ In truth, Karneades's contention against the theology of the Stoics is reconcilable with more than one hypothesis as to his own personal conviction of the being of a god. Thus he might have accepted it as a simple deliverance of his instinct, feeling, or intuition—a categorical imperative impatient and incapable of demonstration. The Academics, if we may credit their prime witness, Cicero, undoubtedly believed in a class of truths which were above and beyond human reasoning, for which indeed they had the sanction of Sokrates himself.² Nor must we forget that Karneades, in this respect also like Sokrates and Pyrrhôn, drew a distinction between pure speculation and practice. The first was the realm of the intellect, keen, vivacious, comprehensive; the second, the territory of human action, of social regulations and practical expediency. I may add, as an answer to much misconception on the general subject, that nothing could be more opposed to the genuine spirit of Greek Skepticism, from Xenophanes to Sextos Empeirikos, than a decisive and unqualified Atheism. Men so far-sighted and profound as these thinkers were would not be likely to commit themselves to the dialectic mistake of categorically denying what was incapable of demonstrative proof. Their own position in the matter was, theoretically, suspense; and practically a conformity to the religious usages of those around them. No doubt they tested severely and combated vigorously the arguments of theologians for the existence of deity, and so produced an impression of their hostility to the belief; but all they desired, all they had a right to establish, was the justification of their own suspensive and modest attitude.

Similar considerations will help us to understand the ethics of Karneades. The anecdote, to which I have already alluded, of his pleading at Rome both for and against political justice, which so excited the ire of Cato, may be taken as illustrating his ethical teaching. Indeed, this is no other than the customary method of such teaching among Greek Free-thinkers from the Sophists and

¹ Mr. Levin's *Lectures*, p. 88.

² Comp. the remarkable words of Cicero on the existence of the gods: 'Affers hæc omnia argumenta, cur dii sint: remque meâ sententia minime dubiam, *argumentando dubiam facis.*' *De Nat. Deor.* iii. 4.

Sokrates downwards. Here also we see emerging the distinction between speculation and practice, or between the absolute and the relative in moral science. The Romans, with their lack of mental training and their utter indifference to philosophical studies, failed to appreciate a principle that pervades the whole history of Greek philosophy. As a matter of speculation, of intuition, and ethical spontaneity, Karneades had no difficulty in proving that justice must be affirmed to exist; but as a matter of fact, of expediency, of the supposed needs of social life, it was merely a synonym for political utility. Cato was probably less offended at the latitudinarian speculation of the wily Greek than with his bold but inconvenient illustration of the political immorality which, under the profaned attributes of justice, had always marked Roman polity. As to the preference historians have generally manifested for Cato as opposed to Karneades, that is merely one of numberless instances of the common prejudice that accepts dogmatism, even when combined with Philistine narrowness and gross immorality, as superior to free speculation, though associated with rectitude and moral purity. Notwithstanding his Eristic, Karneades's idea of true justice, and his personal efforts to attain and insure it, were clearly of a much higher order than the knowledge and practice of Cato.

But the efforts of Karneades were not limited to undermining the dogma of the Stoics; he carried his metaphysical incisiveness and his innovating instincts into the field of Skepticism. To him we are indebted for the theory of modified Skepticism which is based upon the acceptance of attainable probability in lieu of professedly unattainable truth. No doubt it is true, as Cicero reminds us, that degrees of knowledge short of absolute certitude had been recognised by philosophers long before the time of Karneades. The principle was indeed involved in elementary ratiocination, and was implied in Skepticism itself, so far as its method claimed to be based on rational procedure. But Karneades first seized hold of and systematized the principle of probabilism; he first endeavoured to discriminate and define successive stages of probability. He called attention for the first time to its relation to absolute truth. He made the important suggestion that, in default of infallible certitude, men might be content to accept imperfect or proximate truth. He therefore adopted a distinctively different standpoint from that of all preceding schools of Free-thought. Not that there was any incongruity between his probability and the Nescience of Sokrates or the Epoché of Pyrrhôn. Karneades disclaimed as fully as any of his brother Skeptics the possibility

of discovering complete truth. His protestations on the subject pass beyond the bound of legitimate doubt into the territory of Negation. But what he did was to seize by means of his metaphysical acuteness the mental process of which definitive Nescience or Epoché were final outcomes. Not a few important discoveries in philosophy and science have been made by neglecting the received products of thought, and directing attention to the processes by which they have been attained, by knowing how to use the discarded and 'waste' products of metaphysical manufacture. This was the mode by which Karneades attained his doctrine of probability. Greek Free-thought had arrived at the results of Nescience and Epoché, but both the personal consciousness of ignorance that Sokrates insisted on, and the more formal suspense of Pyrrhón, were based upon and presupposed prior inquiry, and a discrimination of degrees and stages of certitude. In the formation of every equipoise of antitheticals, which conditioned definite suspense, the same faculty was implied. No man could affirm, *e.g.* the proposition $20=20$ without having a distinct knowledge of numerical values up to the sum of 20, and without being able to determine their relative proportions. There was hence no difference in ultimate principle between Karneades and preceding Skeptics, especially as he agreed with them as to the uselessness of expecting to attain definitive truth.

Moreover, the formal disparity (for such must be allowed to exist) between Karneades's probability and the suspense of preceding Scepticism was diminished by the fact that it was first of all asserted by the Academics as a rule of action, not as a law of speculation. Now, with all their passion for suspense, Skeptics unanimously admitted they must needs act. This necessity was so patent as to be accepted by them as axiomatic. Natural existence involved action. Social life in any human community demanded it. Eccentric as he might be in private thought, the rational Skeptic had no desire to obtrude his peculiarity on his fellow-men. He therefore accepted the customary laws, usages, &c. of those around him, without any distrust or investigation. But such a deference to established laws, customs, &c. was from another standpoint, as I hinted in the case of Arkesilaos, a concession to probability; for these laws and usages were assumed to be regulated by the aggregate experience of the community, to be the final expression of their collective judgments. Thus regarded, probability did not come directly within the scope of the absolute veracity of which the Skeptic despaired. No doubt probability soon became the rule of speculation and discussion as well as of action,

but it was open to its defenders to allege that it was primarily intended as a guide to human practice and conduct.

Setting aside, then, the formal discrepancy between probability and suspense, we must admit that Karneades's teaching was not irreconcilable with the doctrines of preceding Skeptics, while it possessed advantages in the direction of popular acceptance which they did not share. But he was not content merely to assert probability as a standard of action and speculation; he attempted to elaborate the theory by discriminating between different degrees of likelihood. Thus he asserted three degrees of probability, all of which have reference to our perceptions.¹ Thus some perceptions are hardly probable, others are likely and after due reflection may be accepted as deserving belief, others again are inherently probable and of themselves are suggestive of conviction. This is of course but a crude attempt at classification, and is capable inherently of almost indefinite expansion; but it is interesting, as a first attempt to define different degrees of proximate truth, and as the starting-point in a path that has been pursued with varying success by so many other philosophers. You will perceive that in his enunciation of probable knowledge Karneades does not quit the standpoint of idealism whence he attacked the true representatives of the Stoics. Here also his conception of knowledge is subjective knowledge or its approximation, and consists in the union of the subject and object in consciousness. This representation cannot in every case claim to be absolutely true, and as already shown there is no standard by which a true representation may be differentiated from a false. But though we cannot avouch the absolute *truth* of our comprehensible perceptions, we may pronounce judgment on their *vraisemblance*. The probability of Karneades is therefore a compromise between dogmatists and absolute Skeptics. To the former it says: I do not grant your infallible certitudes, I am conscious of no power of attaining them, I possess no standard by which I can judge them, but I concede probability. It is part of my ordinary experience that sensation, ratiocination, as well as the motives of human conduct, are governed by varying degrees of likelihood. I am conscious of choosing instinctively the most probable theory as a solution of a speculative problem, and the most likely course of action in the practical concerns of life. Absolute truth I know not, partial or proximate truth I have no difficulty in apprehending. To the complete Pyrrhonist, on the other hand, it says: Though I agree with you that absolute truth is unattainable, and share your position of Epoché or suspense upon many speculative questions,

¹ Sext. Emp. *Hyp.* i. chap. 33, § 227.

yet it seems to me that probable truth is a fair substitute for the higher kind of veracity of which so many thinkers are enamoured, while it possesses the advantage of being in our power. Besides, it is the ordinary standard of all men in the practical duties of life, and derives from that fact a certain right to regulate our speculation as well. We must, I think, acknowledge that this mediate position of Karneades is open to objection both from the dogmatist and from the extreme Skeptic. The former may urge, as the Stoics actually did, that the power of discriminating degrees of proximate truth presupposed a definite idea of absolute truth, as well as a certain ability to attain it. The difference between absolute and relative truth was at most of degree not of kind, and the faculty capable of attaining the lesser might conceivably reach the greater. There was at least no means of discriminating the highest degree of probability—that which induced immediate and invincible conviction—from absolute truth, so that the difference between them, even granting its existence, was mainly nominal.

More forcible still would be the objection of the extreme Skeptic—with which I also fully sympathize—that by substituting probability for absolute truth Karneades had been guilty, in sporting language, of drawing a red herring across the trail, and so turning aside the energies of truth-seekers to inferior aims. To his highly developed imagination and fastidiously exigent intellect, no amount of relative or proximate truth could compensate for a deficiency in that absoluteness which he regarded as truth's supremest attribute. As to the propriety of meeting his aspirations by the conditions of terrestrial and human limitations—the main argument for accepting probability in lieu of perfect truth—he would have rejected the proposal with scorn, as an unwarrantable circumscription of his ideal desires and an unworthy sacrifice to ignoble reality. The Skeptic, indeed, shares with the idealist the royal contempt for what is, merely because it is, or rather is conceived to be. If the conditions of actual human existence do not accord with his conception of their ideal perfection, *so much the worse for them*. A thinker of this type is supremely indifferent to all appeals to submit himself to human needs and terrestrial limitations, and laughs to scorn such proverbs as 'Half a loaf is better than no bread.' He would infinitely prefer starvation than the unworthy or partial gratification of his most cherished needs. No mathematician would be satisfied with the proximate solution of a problem as long as he thought a perfect one attainable, and a true idealist refuses to limit the possibility of his attainments, either by his own actual acquirements or by the ordinary experience of his

fellow-men. But notwithstanding objections from either side, few doctrines in the later history of Greek Free-thought had a greater success than the probabilism of Karneades. I do not mean that the Academic Skepticism, of which it was the chief outcome, was more popular than the Stoicism against which it was arraigned. On the contrary, the philosophy of the Porch, with its rigid systematic dogma, its austere morality, its introduction of fixity into every part of human speculation and conduct, was more calculated to enlist the sympathies of ordinary unidea'd men than the apparently lax and doubt-instilling teaching of the Academics. Their unequal popularity resembles, in some measure, the similar relation of Augustinianism to Pelagianism, and of Calvinism to the Free-thought of the sixteenth century. What I mean is that probabilism, as a somewhat lesser degree of Skepticism, was destined to obtain a degree of general concurrence hardly likely to be bestowed upon immovable suspense. This scope of Karneades's doctrine was acknowledged by Sextos Empeirikos himself, who, though insisting on the divergency between probability and pure Skepticism, for the reason that the former postulated a definite standpoint whereas Skeptical suspense was indifferent to all definitive conclusions, yet allowed that probabilism might have a useful sphere of labour in combating moderate dogmatism; ¹ it being a maxim of Sextos that the degree of dogma ought to determine the measure of Skepticism employed to oppose it. Nor, although I do not consider probability equal to suspense as a condition of ultimate Skepticism, am I prepared to deny that it may have as a theory of human knowledge much to allege on its behalf. The fact of its being a compromise between dogmatism and suspense, or between Stoics and Pyrrhonists, would be considered by many as an argument in its favour. Confessedly a rule of conduct in many human contingencies, it would thence derive a presumption that it was the highest test of speculation as well, though its effect in the latter direction would be to minimize the range of human ideality and fetter its imagination. In many cases it might perhaps be a stronger incentive to philosophic search than a starting-point of suspense. It may also be made to harmonize very well with the conditions of the universe in relation to human knowledge. Hence I am not surprised that it numbers among its adherents such men as Cicero, Hortensius, Augustine, John of Salisbury, Gassendi, Simon Foucher, and Bishop Butler. And this leads me to make a parting observation on the relation of the new Academy to the general history of Greek Skepticism. If it did not signify an advance in

¹ *Hyp.* book iii. chap. 32. *Comp.* book i. chap. 33.

the direction of pure Skepticism, *i.e.* that of Pyrrhonic Epoché, it was in that of the comprehensiveness and variety of Free-thought in general. It introduced a greater elaboration and versatility into the whole subject. It defined a new type and limit of mental freedom. It posed the human instincts for search and inquiry in a new attitude. It formulated truth in a novel manner, many would say, one more in harmony with man's actual position in the world, and his relation to the problems by which he was surrounded. It possessed the acceptability usually accorded to a compromise by reasonable and candid controversialists. It traded, moreover, with the hallowed names of Sokrates and Plato—typical Skeptic and Idealist—for it is certain that among the new Academics there was always a diffusion not only of Sokratic Nescience and Eristic, but of Platonic dogmas as well, though to what extent we cannot say. It established a school of philosophy, with its own distinctive characteristics both of method and tenet, between the Skepticism of Pyrrhôn and the extreme Idealism of the pure Platonists, and so far was a visible embodiment of the truth so soon recognised in the history of Greek Free-thought that Idealism is closely related to Skepticism, both as cause and effect. It contributed by its stress on probability to found an influential school of Eclecticism. Thus it enlarged the sphere of intellectual mobility by promoting its range through several nominally disparate but really correlated systems of thought. We cannot, therefore, be surprised to find that the influence of the new Academy extended to the whole remaining period of Greek and Græco-Roman speculation, and that it is found exercising, and in some instances moulding, the intellects of great thinkers even down to the fourth century after the Christian era.

Ainesidemos.

The tendency of the later development of the new Academics was clearly to induce, if not hostility, yet indifference to the Pyrrhonic standpoint of suspense. While agreeing in theory that absolute truth is undiscoverable, Karneades suggested an acceptance of partial or imperfect truth. But it was against this final acceptation that Skepticism protested. A semi-truth might not press so heavily on the free instincts of the inquirer as a complete, fully avouched dogma, still it was itself dogmatic. Nay, if asserted as the only possible outcome of all human search, probability became as dogmatic as any other extreme assertion of finality. It is not, therefore, surprising to find that the mingled

outgrowths of the new Academy, consisting of Idealism, Eclecticism, and Skepticism, were opposed by a new assertion of the Pyrrhonic standpoint. The originator of this reactionary movement is said to have been a certain Ptolemy of Cyrene, but its chief exponent for us is Ainesidemos.

Our knowledge of this writer is just as incomplete and uncertain as our information concerning his brother Skeptics. He was born at Gnossus, and taught philosophy at Alexandria. Of the time when he lived nothing definite is known, but he was not improbably a contemporary of Cicero. Unlike most of his predecessors, Ainesidemos left behind him some written works. Of these the best known is his 'Pyrrhonian Discourses,' of which a fragment preserved for us by Photius¹ gives a summary of its contents. Its purpose, we are told, was to point out that Skeptics were no more than other thinkers able to obtain truth, but were distinguished from them by deliberately foregoing such an unattainable object. The Skeptic did not wish to know what was unknowable, and in that acquiescence in the inevitable consisted his superior wisdom. The first book of the Discourses was devoted to a discrimination of the Academic and Pyrrhonic Skepticism. It insisted on the complete suspense of the earlier school, and demanded an equal abstention from negation and affirmation as a primary condition of true Skepticism. The Skeptic knew nothing dogmatically of truth or falsehood, credible or incredible, being or not-being, whereas the Academic expressed himself in terms of assurance of many things, speaking of virtue, truth and falsehood, the probable and improbable, &c. The second book began the exposition of Skepticism in detail, treating of truths, of causes, of passions and affections, of becoming and vanishing, &c. The third discussed motion, sensuous perceptions, and their characteristics. The fourth treated of mental representations, and included the false ideas current respecting the world and the nature of the gods. The fifth expounded the invalidity of the principle of causation. The sixth considered the ideas of good and evil, or things to be chosen and avoided. The seventh treated of the virtues. The eighth, of final causes.

The work, of which this abstract of contents is hardly more than the skeleton of a skeleton, was evidently a methodical and somewhat elaborate treatise—the first of which we have any definite account in the history of Greek Skepticism. It would be exceedingly rash to try to fill up these meagre outlines by a

¹ *Biblioth.* Ed. Bekker, pp. 169, 170.

detailed exposition, as a French critic has done.¹ But we may, at least, gather from them its general purport. We may at any rate infer that it was intended as a defence of the main doctrines of Pyrrhonism. There was, according to Ainesidemos, no criterion of truth beyond the relative one of subjective phenomena. On all subjects of knowledge, *i.e.* generally regarded as such, the inquirer could not go beyond a cautious non-affirmation. I have already acknowledged that on this point we must probably ascribe to Ainesidemos the developed forms of the Ten Tropoi, or modes of suspense, which are the most celebrated formulæ of Greek Skepticism. This will therefore be a fitting place to record them as they are presented to us by Sextos Empeirikos.²

I. The first of these modes is derived from the difference observable in the various physical organizations of animals. For it seems probable that the variety of conformation of organs of senses will imply a diversity in their functions, and thus in the knowledge they acquire. This theory is borne out by the fact that derangements in our own organs affect their deliverances. A man in the jaundice, *e.g.* sees things yellow which a man with healthy vision discerns to be white. A man with bloodshot eyes, again, perceives white objects as red. Now amongst animals there are eyes of many different colours: we may, then, infer that their perception of colours will vary accordingly. Besides, a concave mirror makes outward objects seem smaller than they really are, and a convex renders them longer and narrower. But we find the eyes of animals variously shaped: in some cases they protrude, in others they are sunken; in some they are round, in others long. Hence it is likely that the images of outward objects which they receive are different on this account, and that dogs, fish, lions, men, and grasshoppers do not see the same objects as equal in size or alike in form. This diversity in the visual power of different animals is seen in the case of those birds and quadrupeds which hunt their prey at night, the eye in such cases being differently shaped from the organs of animals that use the daylight. Again, we all know how the flavour of food is affected by the state of the body and the sense of taste. This difference in taste-perception we may assume to extend itself to the whole animal kingdom, for we see how all animals are diversely generated and constituted,

¹ M. Saisset in his work *Le Scepticisme—Ænésidème—Pascal—Kant*. 2nd edition, Paris, 1865.

² *Hypotyposes*, book i. chap. xiv. English readers may find a full account of them in Mr. Levin's *Lectures*, p. 44, &c., or in the English translation of Zeller, *The Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics*, published by Messrs. Longmans.

fed on dissimilar food, manifesting different habits, &c. Nor does the uniformity of an outward object necessarily imply an uniformity of internal effect. The same food, *e.g.*, when taken is transformed into a vein in one place, an artery in another, to a bone or a nerve, according to the receptivity of the various portions of the organism. So the same water given to a plant becomes bark or leaves or fruit.

In connection with this first mode we have those speculations common to ancient and modern Skeptics of the community of faculty between man and the lower orders of creation. According to Ainesidemos, there is not the impassable gulf commonly alleged to exist between man as rational and other creatures as irrational animals. As regards ordinary senses, dogs and other animals far exceed man. Nor in reason are they inferior; for dividing reason into the internal faculty and its outward expression, a dog in reality possesses both the one and the other, and is therefore a perfect animal. The extent of canine sagacity is proved by the instance of Argos, the dog of Odysseus, which recognised his master when none of his human friends and dependants were able to do so. Dogs are, moreover, capable of syllogistic reasoning, and can apply for themselves the law of excluded middle, for when hunting a dog comes to a point where three roads meet, after failing to find scent on two of them he rushes down the third without much preliminary scrutiny. Nor, again, is the dog without moral virtue, for he certainly possesses some ethical attributes, as affection, generosity, &c.; and we are assured by Chrysippos that the virtues are so intimately allied that he who possesses one possesses all. As to the alleged non-possession by dogs and other brutes of the faculty of expressing reason, this may be ascribed to our own ignorance of brute language. Certainly we find that dogs and other animals have a power of communicating their wishes and feelings to each other.

II. As the first mode refers to man as part of the animal creation, considering divergences of knowledge as the lot of all sentient beings, so the second refers to man himself, and discusses the variety that exists in the human constitution. Man has a twofold nature, physical and intellectual. Now the differences between men in respect of the former are obvious: men's bodies are different in shape, size, colour, constitution, temperature; and analogy would seem to indicate that the same differences exist in respect of men's minds. This presumption of analogy is confirmed by our actual experience. We recognise mental disparities of all kinds and degrees. Indeed, the endless variety of human desires

and aversions has been a favourite subject with poets in all ages. As a result, we have the fact that similar things affect men in very dissimilar manners, and this of itself is quite enough to warrant a suspense of judgment as to any general conclusion or truth derivable from either the physical sensations or mental conclusions of men. All truth must necessarily be individual, no man having a right to predicate more than his own subjective impression on any matter.

III. The next mode refers to a possible discrepancy in sense-deliverances. Each organ of sense indicates a separate quality of an external object. They are not five witnesses testifying to the same fact, but to different facts, each one of them independent of the rest. An apple, *e.g.* appears to create different impressions on the eye, the nose, the palate, the touch. These impressions we commonly take for separable objective facts, but for anything we know they may be only subjective varieties of one and the same fact. Nor can we assert either in this or in any similar case that our bodily senses exhaust all the real qualities of any external object. Our knowledge is so limited by the senses we possess that their diminution involves immediately an impaired or imperfect cognition. A deaf or blind man must always possess but a partial and misleading knowledge. Further, the senses do not only differ in the information they convey, like separate witnesses of independent facts, but they frequently seem to contradict each other. Examples of this adduced by Sextos are the divergent aspects of a picture to sight and touch, of honey to taste and sight, of perfumes to smell and taste, &c. But if our senses differ thus among themselves, and are not all in the same story, we cannot rely on their evidence; and if we are unable to believe them, we cannot depend on our reason as a judge of external things, because it derives all its materials for judgment from the senses.

IV. The fourth mode relates to differences in our subjective conditions, and their effect in modifying our knowledge of external things. Among such divergent states are sleeping and waking, youth and age, motion and rest, hunger and fulness, hatred and love, grief and joy. That these contrasted conditions involve a proportionate difference in the knowledge obtained in them, no one would deny. But according to Sextos there is no demonstrable proof that any of these is superior to the rest as a condition for receiving knowledge. Such infallible knowledge can only be maintained by a certain criterion of truth; but this, from the nature of the case, is not obtainable.

V. The fifth mode depends on the difference of position, inter-

vals, circumstances of all external objects, every single object in our environment being affected in our perceptions by other objects inseparable from it. Thus the same colonnade surveyed from either end or from the middle presents a very different appearance. The same object seems great or small according to its proximity to or distance from the observer. The same tower looks round or square according to the position of the spectator. The light of the same lamp varies greatly as it shines by day or by night. An oar in the water seems broken, &c. Hence all that we can say of outward objects is, that they seem to us to have such an appearance at such a distance or under certain given circumstances. We cannot affirm what their absolute independent character is when quite apart from our own perceptions. We cannot even say that they have any such character or separable existence.

VI. The sixth mode carries to a still further extent the complicated nature of all outward objects. We see nothing, *e.g.* absolutely by itself, but in certain media, as air, light, moisture, cold, or heat. These media, being extrinsic to the object, affect our perception of it. Thus colour presents a different appearance in warm and cold air, perfumes have unequal powers in heat, as, *e.g.* in a bath, and in cold air. The same body weighs differently in different media, as, *e.g.* in air and in water, &c. Here again our attempted knowledge of the real properties of external objects is frustrated by the impossibility of detaching them from the environment in which they are necessarily presented to us; and if our senses are thus deceived, our intellect, relying on the judgment of the senses, must needs be deceived as well.

VII. The seventh mode has reference to quantities, the relation of parts to wholes, the chemical or other internal constitution of any object. Thus the scrapings of goats' horn by themselves seem white, but in the horn are black; silver filings by themselves are black, as silver are white. We are, moreover, affected by diverse proportions of ingredients in any given object. Thus a chemist finds that a given combination of drugs produces on its human recipient a beneficial effect, whereas a slight modification in the proportions will produce a deleterious effect, nay, will convert a medicine into a poison. Food and drink must also be taken in definite quantities to insure bodily health; if these quantities are departed from, the result is not health, but disease. If there is this diversity in the relation of parts to wholes, it is evident we can predicate nothing dogmatically either of one or the other.

VIII. The eighth mode, as has often been remarked, is a summary of all the preceding seven. It affirms the relativity

of all existing things considered as objects of knowledge, and is therefore only a reassertion of the canon of Protagoras, 'Man is the measure of all things.' Sextos, probably copying Ainesidemos, discriminates two kinds of relativity, subjective and objective, or the relation of things to us and their relation to each other. The first and only one of which we can have any cognizance has been discussed in the preceding modes, with the general result that we are unable to transcend our percipient faculties, or to attain any idea of the nature of things in themselves, all we can know being their phenomenal aspect to us at a given time and under given conditions.

IX. The ninth mode investigates the relations of human knowledge in respect of time. The impressions we receive from outward objects vary in intensity and value, in proportion to their rarity or frequency. The sun by itself is a much more wonderful object than a comet, but because we see it daily we regard it as a natural object, whereas a comet seen rarely is considered by many a supernatural object and a portent of coming calamity. So also the reason why gold is valued is because of its rarity. If it were as common as flint, we should regard it with equal indifference. Thus time too presents itself as a disturbing influence in our knowledge of things; and as it is a perpetual concomitant of all our knowledge, it renders its perfection a still greater impossibility.

X. The last mode refers to the variety pertaining to human institutions, customs, laws, superstitions, and dogmatic opinions. All these are shown to depend on human agreement, conventions, usages, and therefore vary indefinitely not only among nations and races, but among classes in the same nation, among sects of philosophers, and even among individuals. Hence all these laws and institutions possess only a relative significance; they are not absolute rules binding on the whole of humanity.

It seems not unlikely that these ten modes, which probably formed part of Ainesidemos's fifth book of the 'Pyrrhonian Discourses,' were first intended as a Skeptical rejoinder to the ten categories of Aristotle,¹ as if in opposition to ten forms of knowledge Skeptics had devised ten of Nescience. But the number seems to have varied after the death of Ainesidemos. Agrippa, *e.g.* reduced them to five. Others again to two, viz.:

Everything is comprehended either (i.) by itself, or (ii.) by something else. But (i.) is impossible, for nothing can be comprehended by itself, because we lack both sensuous and intellectual instruments of demonstration; nor (ii.) by anything else, since that also must be proved by something else, and so *ad infinitum*. But

¹ This is suggested by Dr. Tafel in his *Gesch. und Kritik. der Skept.* p. 81.

in reality the ten modes, as already remarked, turn on the one ultimate fact of the relativity of our knowledge. They all tend to throw doubt on positive or general knowledge. They appeal to consciousness for a disproof of absolute externality. Hence they are weapons which have been employed by Idealists as well as Skeptics, they are wielded by Malebranche, Berkeley, and Kant as well as by Sextos Empeirikos, Montaigne, and Descartes; indeed, they are inevitable to every attempt to grasp real knowledge—truth which shall be inherently and absolutely perfect, knowledge which shall be altogether independent of the restrictions, fluctuations, and imperfections of the individual knower.

But besides this elaborated form of the ten modes or reasons for suspense, the name of Ainesidemos is associated with other Skeptical reasonings. Tradition represents him as the author of the celebrated argument against causation, probably contained in the fifth book of the 'Pyrrhonian Discourses.' According to Ainesidemos there were eight modes in which causation might be wrongly predicated. 1. When the cause assigned is not in the category of things known or evident. 2. When one cause is arbitrarily selected out of many possible ones. 3. When of things that happen in order, disorderly and dissimilar causes are assigned. 4. When men judge of non-phenomenal objects by what they know of phenomenal. 5. When various adequate causes are assigned for the same effect. 6. When favourable or plausible causes are insisted on while unfavourable ones are ignored. 7. When causes are proposed conflicting both with phenomena and among themselves. 8. When both the apparent phenomena and the causes assigned for them being equally doubtful, men reason from one to the other.¹ We might suppose from this indictment of wrong causes that Ainesidemos has a true theory of causation to substitute for them. That, however, is not the case; he denies the validity of all reasoning from causation. Sextos Empeirikos reports his argument on the subject in two places: (1) In an abbreviated form in his *Hypotyposes*, and (2) in a very elaborate form in the seventh book of his *Adversus Mathematicos*. A glance at the former will serve our present purpose.² We thence learn that causes are, according to the opinions of philosophers, of various kinds: some maintain they are material, others say they are immaterial; most define cause as that on account of the energy of which the effect

¹ Readers of Mill's *Logic* will not need to be told that most of these illicit causations are met with and discussed in his enumeration of fallacies.

² *Hyp.* book iii. chap. ii Compare Saisset's *Scepticism*, pp. 133-203.

takes place. *E.g.* the sun or heat is said to be the cause of wax melting. But here again thinkers differ; for while some say heat causes the result, others assert it causes the process. Further, causes are subdivided among themselves; some of them contain the effect in themselves, others are co-operative or con-causes, others again are merely contributory and subordinate. Now the existence of cause must be admitted as a probability, indeed causation of some kind is demanded by the laws and order of the universe, and yet the difficulties in its conception and definition are insuperable. Thus cause postulates a relation to effect not transitory and accidental, but inherent and inevitable. Hence we cannot imagine a cause before we comprehend its effect *as such*, and it is equally impossible to conceive an effect *as such* before we know the cause. We are therefore involved in a double perplexity, for a complete absolute knowledge not merely of the causal nexus but of cause and effect as separable knowable things is clearly impossible. Nor is the matter mended if we assume or imagine a cause hypothetically, for if a man does this not having cause he is unworthy of credit, but if he has a cause it is a cause prior to the assigned cause, which hence becomes a mere *petitio principii*. Moreover, in every affirmation of a cause it is necessary for the acquisition of that complete knowledge which every truth-seeker desires, to demand the cause of that cause, and again the cause of the antecedent cause, and thus he is started in an infinite regress of causation. Again, cause produces its effect as being a cause or not; but the latter is impossible, and the former demands a knowledge of its prior existence, which is not attainable. Once more, cause must coexist with its related effect or before or after, but it cannot exist after, for this would be absurd; nor before, for it is related to the effect which must then be held to exist, at least in the intellect: nor, again, can it coexist, for if it is effective of that which afterwards comes into being there must be a prior cause of that effect. Lastly, we cannot imagine anything prior to that before which we can imagine nothing, and for this reason, too, we cannot imagine a cause. These arguments against the possibility of causation are found in a much more elaborate form elsewhere, but these will suffice for our purpose. You will see that we are here confronted with the same dilemma which in the opinion of Ainesidemos reduces all human knowledge to a state of suspense; we have here again the perennial conflict between the superficial deliverances of the senses and the profounder investigations of the reason and the imagination, between the relative and the absolute. Indeed Ainesidemos's polemic against causation might have been inferred from his warfare against all knowledge, for our inability

to comprehend the relation of cause and effect is but a corollary from our ignorance of external existence of every kind. Hence our knowledge of a causal relation must be like our knowledge of all other things, purely phenomenal, and all that we thereby know of cause and effect is that they are sequences or successive appearances—in the words of Hume, ‘they seem *conjoined* but never *connected*.’¹ No doubt we are at liberty to assume that cause and effect may have, irrespectively of any relation to us, and in countless diverse manners, an objective, inherent, and inseparable conjunction, but what such a relation is we are no more able to comprehend than we are any other knowledge which is absolutely independent of and aloof from our cognitive faculties.

We have no time to discuss the interesting question of the effect of this ratiocination on modern philosophers. ‘It is no small merit,’ says M. Saisset, ‘in Ainesidemos to have prepared the way for Hume and Kant; he did even more than that, for the basis of the argumentation of these great thinkers may be found by careful analysis in Ainesidemos.’² But even this second and fuller concession seems to me to understate the obligations of Hume and Kant to the writings of the later Greek Skeptics. Not only is it that we have the basis of Hume’s thought in the causation theory of Ainesidemos as recorded by Sextos, but we have the thought itself expressed as clearly and as fully as in Hume’s ‘Treatise on Human Nature’ or his Essays, and I have not the slightest doubt that, together with the reactionary impulse the Scotch thinker derived from the philosophies of Locke and Berkeley, his theory of causation was really derived from the Greek Skeptics. Nor is this by any means the only unacknowledged debt which a comparison of Hume’s works with those of Sextos enables us to pay back to the original owner.

But there is a noteworthy feature in Ainesidemos’s thought that remains to be considered, and that is his intimate relation to Herakleitos. There seems indeed in these later ages of Greek speculation to have been a ‘run,’ if I may use the term, upon its earlier representatives. Pythagoras comes again into the foreground. Eleatic metaphysics are studied, Pyrrhôn bases his free-thought in part on Demokritos. Ainesidemos is represented not only as a disciple, but an earnest propagator of the Herakleitean

¹ *Essays*, edition Green and Grose, vol. ii. p. 61. It may be here noted that M. Saisset, with every inclination to side with Dogmatists against Skeptics, is compelled to admit the inexplicability of causation as ultimate truth. Comp. his work above quoted, pp. 165 and 193.

² Page 135.

philosophy. At first sight the connexion between Pyrrhonic suspense and the perpetual flux of Herakleitos does not seem very obvious. Sextos regards the latter theory of the universe as dogmatic, and therefore inadmissible from a Skeptical point of view; and apart from his possible bias, it must be granted that they seem to be rather independent and parallel lines of Free-thought than to be identical with each other, or even to be related as cause and effect. But a little reflection will serve to show us that a transition from Pyrrhonism to Herakleiteanism is not so unreasonable as it appears. If we remember that continual search is as much a part of Pyrrhonic thought as actual suspense, we shall perceive that the latter is by no means a state of immobility: the antitheticals which constitute the conditions of suspense are perpetually changing their character and form, so that opposites tend to pass over each into the other, or else to converge in an identity which in its turn becomes divisible into further antinomies. Thus a course of perpetual but fluctuating Epoché, combined with a persistently forward movement of investigation, would produce a mental condition similar to the flux of the Tenebrous thinker, and of itself not unlikely to engender it. Assuming this to have been Ainesidemos's mode of transition from Pyrrhonism to Herakleiteanism, we may explain the frequent ascription to him of the more dogmatic opinions of Herakleitos. They may easily have been, as Sextos Empeirikos generally designates them, the utterances of his disciples, who may have misconceived the extent of their master's adhesion to the earlier thinker; they are clearly irreconcilable with our best accredited knowledge of his own Skeptical standpoint. But so far from his final reception of the flux of Herakleitos, and the consequently illusory nature of all material things, being improbable, Ainesidemos is only one out of many examples of a progress from Skepticism to Idealism. When we come to Hindu thinkers at our next meeting we shall find more than one school which, starting from the incertitude of all things, have ended in the belief that the world of phenomenon is only an elaborate but deceptive and unreal vision.

Closing our remarks on Ainesidemos, we must admit that he was a thinker of considerable power, though his influence as a leader of Skeptical thought has been exaggerated by modern philosophers.¹

He certainly is not what M. Saisset terms him, 'le premier skeptique de l'antiquité.' That high designation must in my opinion

¹ Especially by M. Saisset. See on this subject Dr. Haas's work above mentioned, p. 52.

be divided among Sokrates, Pyrrhôn, and Sextos Empeirikos. Nor does it appear that his influence as a Skeptical thinker was very widely diffused, for it is a noteworthy fact that Seneca does not once mention him, though it is true that this omission might be explained by what I consider a strong probability, that the school of Ainesidemos was regarded after his death as distinctly Herakleitean and dogmatic. He does not, therefore, deserve that position of typical Skeptic which he occupies in certain histories of philosophy and in other works (*e.g.* Schulze's well-known attack on the Kantian philosophy). His chief importance lies for us in his being the first organizer of Pyrrhonic speculation. His discourses brought together and systematized the ratiocination most in use in the Skeptical schools of his time. He is thus a precursor of a still greater thinker, who closes for us the illustrious roll of Greek Skeptics. I refer to Sextos Empeirikos.

Sextos Empeirikos.

All systems of thought have their periods of growth, maturity, and decay, or, as it might be better expressed, their stages of seed-time, summer growth, and harvest ripeness, and Greek Skepticism is no exception to the rule. Born in the profound speculations of the Eleatics, nourished by Herakleitos, Demokritos, and the Sophists, attaining its full growth in Sokrates, passing into further stages of ripeness among Pyrrhonists and Academics, its harvest is finally gathered by Sextos Empeirikos. Few systems of thought stretching over the space of seven centuries can boast an evolution so natural and so decisively marked in its varied stages; fewer still have a history so fully recorded, and a method so well systematized, as the Skepticism embodied in the works of Sextos.

This writer, who so worthily closes the roll of Greek Skeptics, seems to have flourished about the beginning of the third century of the Christian era. Nothing reliable is known of his native place. He is said to have been a disciple of a certain Herodotus of Tarsus, who was himself a pupil of Menodotus of Nicomedia. Both of these were medical empirics, in the then honourable meaning of the phrase, as preferring to be guided by experience and observation rather than by dogma and routine. Almost the only known facts concerning Sextos are that he was, as his name denotes, a medical empiric, and that he was the author of certain medical works. These have now shared the oblivion in which his personal history is buried. The only works remaining to us are those in which he treats of Greek Skepticism, viz. :

1. The Pyrrhonian Institutions (*Hypotoposes*).
2. His work against the Mathematicians.

These are the most remarkable products of the final stage of Hellenic Free-thought, to which they bear the same relation as the Platonic 'Dialogues of Search' to its early maturity, and the philosophical writings of Cicero to its middle or Academic period. From his point of vantage, at the close of Greek thought Sextos passes in review its whole magnificent progress, from its crude commencement with the physical theories of the Ionian philosophers until his own day. The whole panorama of the greatest and fullest thought of the world is unfolded before him. He watches the origin, growth, and decay of schools and systems of philosophy, destined, though he knew it not, to animate men of diverse cultures and far-off times and countries. Especially from his standpoint of an all-devouring Skepticism does he observe their decay. His progress resembles that of a man who examines the ruined palaces and temples of some gigantic city of antiquity. Here stood, he might have said, the rude but magnificent palace of Homer. Yonder shapeless mound represents all that is left of the earliest temple of the Ionian physicists. Hard by, built of lighter materials, is the ruin that marks the spot where the airy superstructure of the Eleatics stood. Those formless heaps were at one time the site of the world-famed labyrinth of the Sophists. Close by, a pile of great magnificence, still preserving the outlines of its ancient form on account of the massive materials of which it was built, was the temple of Sokrates. That well-preserved fane next adjoining—almost forming part—of the Sokratic edifice, is the Hellenic cathedral, planned and built by Plato, and distinguished by its bold outline and its lofty elevation, destined to become in after-times the abode of a philosophy and the shrine of a religion. Next in order comes the enormous fabric reared by the mighty intellect of Aristotle, not so compactly designed nor rising to such a sublime height as the temple of Plato, but nevertheless at one time a noble building and covering an immense extent of ground. While last in order come the remains of the gymnastic grounds of the Academics, the pleasure gardens of the Epikoureans, the grim and narrow porch of the Stoics. Nor would he have exempted his own chosen philosophy from the imaginary destruction in which he contemplated all schemes of Hellenic thought. It was in his view a cherished attribute of complete Skepticism that its destructive properties were equally manifested towards itself. He compared its operation to the effect of some drastic medicine, which, eliminating from the system

noxious matters, included itself in the process, or to a fire which devoured itself as well as the combustible matter it fed on. Thus all Greek thought-schemes were regarded by him as victims of the deadly prowess of Skepticism, which in turn committed intellectual suicide.

But the conception of Skepticism as fatal to all Greek philosophy implied a knowledge of its various systems, and that not merely as related to itself as objects of an unsparing polemic, but inherently as the diversiform results of a many-sided speculation. Intellectual candour is indeed a conspicuous quality of all the leading Skeptics of Greece. Opposed to all dogmatic systems as they necessarily were, they still tacitly acknowledged those systems as the products of human ratiocination, however in most cases misapplied. Hence they studied them with the assiduity of disciples determined to understand, and the zeal of controversialists minded if possible to overthrow, them. Sextos appears to have been an especial proficient in Greek philosophy, and his works contain in an irregular, desultory form a fair synopsis of its contents. Indeed, had every other work on Greek philosophy perished, we should still be able to reconstruct the thought-schemes of its foremost thinkers from the fragments, allusions, and ratiocinations contained in his works. As it is, not a few prominent Hellenic thinkers owe the place they occupy in histories of philosophy to the notice bestowed on them by Sextos.

For us, however, the significance of Sextos's works does not consist in their bearing on the whole of Greek philosophy, but only on its Free-thought. Of that they form an admirable conspectus. The first of them—the Pyrrhonian Institutions—co-ordinates and systematizes the most approved methods of Greek Skepticism; in the words of M. Saïsset, it is 'a precise and complete résumé of the whole of ancient Skepticism.'¹ The second—the treatise 'against the mathematicians,' or the *learners* of dogmatic systems—is more polemical than expository. It is an attack directed against all who profess to have positive knowledge or methods of knowledge. Thus it assails grammarians, rhetoricians, geometers, arithmeticians, astrologers, musicians, logicians, physicists, and ethical philosophers, and in every case proves, or professes to prove, that their methods and tenets are alike unreliable when tested by a thorough-going and imaginative Dialectic. For obvious reasons we must confine our attention to the former work, employing the latter only occasionally for purposes of confirmation or explication.

¹ Art. 'Sextus' in the *Diet. Sci. Phil.*

Sextos begins his 'Pyrrhonian principles' by a division of philosophers or searchers for truth into the three classes, Dogmatic, Academic, and Skeptic. Of these the first declare they have found truth, the second say they cannot find it, and the third, without any positive declaration on the point, continue their search. But how, it might be asked, is this indifference-point of the searchers or Sceptics to be attained? Sextos tells us, in the definition of Scepticism which we have agreed to accept as our own guide in considering the subject. It consists in placing in mental opposition, and in every conceivable mode, the contradictions of the senses and of the intellect. This opposition is based on and justified by the equal validity of such antitheses. It has a twofold operation: it induces first a suspense of judgment, and next Ataraxia or philosophic calm. But no sooner has Sextos thus defined his subject-matter in terms which seem to make all modes of knowledge to be states of equipoise or indifference than he is confronted by another necessity, viz. he must show that the existence of Scepticism itself as a distinctive creed is not imperilled by its own definition. He has thus to answer the question, Does a Sceptic choose a sect? His answer is as follows: ¹ 'If one understands by the choice of a sect the adhesion to certain dogmas connected among themselves and with phenomena, the Sceptic is of no sect, for every dogma is an assertion on a debatable subject, and this a Sceptic altogether refuses. But if one applies the term sect to a certain scheme in accordance with phenomena, such scheme teaching us how we may live rightly (*i.e.* in conformity with ordinary usage), and also inciting us to suspend our judgment, then we say that we have a sect, for we pursue a certain plan which, as appears to us, shows us how to live conformably with our country's customs, laws, and institutions, as well as with our own individual feelings. We hence perceive that Sceptics acknowledged themselves bound by social restraints of all kinds so far as these could plead the sanction of the community or country to which they belonged. But there was a further limitation. As an individual, the Sceptic admitted himself to be bound by phenomena. Sextos confesses this in answer to the objection most frequently urged against his principles, that Sceptics destroy phenomena. He says: ² 'We do not overturn those things which, being perceived by our senses, compel us to assent against our will, for these are phenomena. But when we inquire whether such a thing is in reality what it appears (the appearance we concede), our search is in truth not of the phenomenon but of that which is predicated of the phenomenon. And this is different from investi-

¹ *Hyp.* book i. chap. viii.

² *Ibid.* book i. chap. x.

gation concerning the phenomenon itself. For example, honey appears to us sweet. In that we are all agreed, for we are all affected by its sweetness. What we are doubtful about is whether it is sweet in reason (or absolutely), and this is not the phenomenon itself but what is reported concerning it. When, therefore, we openly attack arguments about phenomena, we do it not as wishing to destroy phenomena but in order to repress the temerity of dogmatists. For if the reason be so deceptive as to steal away the very deliverances of our eyesight, how much should we not suspect it in things less manifest, so as to avoid being led by it into error !' These statements of the end and method of Skepticism are of the highest importance. Sextos seems to have placed them in the forefront of his treatise for a twofold purpose—(1) to calm the fears of those who might suppose that a mode of thought so indifferent to all fixed principles must needs be subversive of morality and of all social well-being ; (2) to quiet the alarm of those who thought they saw in the Skeptical treatment of sense-deliverances—the basis of all human knowledge—the annihilation of all thought. Sextos assures his hearers that both these apprehensions are unfounded. The Skeptic receives the accepted facts of social and national life, the beliefs, laws, and customs of his fellow-citizens, with deference. They are social phenomena, and he accepts them with the same submissiveness as he does the intellectual phenomena of his sense-deliverances. As to the accusation of destroying phenomena, the Skeptic in his first formal acceptance of them has no quarrel with the dogmatist. It is about the transcendental realities conceivably underlying all objects of knowledge that his mind is exercised. He does not dispute the sweetness of honey as an affection of his own palate, but he wants to know how far the same sweetness is an absolute inherent quality of honey, how far it is necessarily sweet to all creatures gifted with the sense of taste, how far it is conditioned by the state of the palate itself (for the Greek Skeptics believed that in certain conditions of the palate honey was bitter), and how far by its own intrinsic qualities ; and, if the sweetness were to be divided between the subject and object, what were the conditions and proportions of this division—in a word, his effort is, as we shall see more largely further on, to penetrate below appearances, to get if possible at the unconditioned, the absolute, as an indispensable condition of infallible and universal truth, and in contradistinction to the mutabilities he discerns in ordinary phenomena.

Phenomena therefore constituted the Skeptic's criterion of ordinary life. They represented the point where his principles came

into conflict with the common prepossessions of mankind. The whole question of Dogmatism *v.* Skepticism turned on phenomena. Was it required to distinguish a Dogmatist from a Skeptic, one had only to ask, What does he think of phenomena? Do they represent to him complete and definitive realities? Does he believe that the objects of his senses, the conceptions of his reason, are final truths? or, conceding their unreality and transitoriness as mere concomitants of his personality, does he endeavour to search further? Knowing the fallible and evanescent character both of his sensuous and intellectual perceptions, does he employ his best efforts to attain to permanent, absolute truth, independent of himself and his faculties? If that be the object of his untiring quest, he is a Skeptic. On the other hand, if he acquiesces in phenomena, if he takes his knowledge and experience as infallible truth, if he exalts himself to the position of omniscience, and regards his limitations as equivalent to infinity, he is a Dogmatist.

But the consistent Skeptic thus defined will also acquire indirectly a very desirable issue of his search. For suppose he should never attain to absolute truth, to the existence in reason (to use Sextos's phrase) of those things he discerns as appearances, is his search therefore fruitless? No, answers Sextos, his inquiry incidentally induces Ataraxia or philosophic calm. Carefully equipoising the phenomenal and intellectual antitheses that come before him, he attains the condition of placid serenity, which, besides being favourable to further Skeptical effort, is also the highest altitude of human aspiration. Final attainment of truth was a condition not contemplated among the contingencies of Skepticism, nor indeed was it desiderated. It postulated the state against which Skeptical search was a perpetual protest, *viz.* dogmatic assertion. Besides which, in making absolute truth their goal, Sceptics had placed the ultimate outcome of their effort far beyond the limits of human ability. Like religionists of most creeds, their summit of excellence, however conceivable in imagination, was confessedly beyond their real power. They themselves regarded it rather as the motive and guide of their energy than its attainable consummation. With a somewhat modified rendering they might have applied to themselves the words of St. Paul—words indeed applicable to every pursuit of high ideals—'not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended. . . . Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but one thing I do, leaving the things behind, and straining forward to the things before, I press onward towards the mark,' &c.

Having thus laid down in his early chapters the main lines and scope of his subject, Sextos enters upon a critical examination of those prior systems of Greek thought which seem to have greatest affinity with Skepticism, and which we have already examined. In most of them Sextos recognises approximations to Skepticism, but finds them defective as adequate exponents of its principles. Either they have not grasped fully the position of suspense, or they have made some other aim than Ataraxia the object of their search, or notwithstanding their Skeptical leanings have contrived to intermingle with their teachings some positive dogmas; or for some other reason he rejects them all as claimants to pure Pyrrhonic Skepticism. The Herakleitean philosophy, *e.g.* is imperfectly Skeptical because it professes certain dogmas. Its eternal flux is dogmatic; so is its principle, that contrarieties inhere in the same thing, and its notion of a final conflagration of the world. The school of Demokritos, again, by its denial of the absolute existence of qualities, manifests Skeptical tendencies, and it borrows Skeptical formulæ; but inasmuch as it affirms certain things respecting atoms and the vacuum, it is only partly Skeptical. The Kyrenaics resemble the Pyrrhonists so far that they maintain that only sensations can be comprehended, but then they make pleasure the aim of their philosophy instead of Ataraxia. The maxim of Protagoras—‘Man is the measure of all things’—is admitted to be quite Pyrrhonic; but this concession to Skepticism is neutralized by the positive dogmas of that thinker; *e.g.* his belief in the flux of Herakleitos. The Academics from Plato downwards have clearly Skeptical sympathies, but these are adulterated by certain dogmatic teachings. The Probabilism of Karneades, to take an instance, was not purely Skeptical, for it was a predetermination to a certain standpoint of thought, and it admitted degrees of likelihood among phantasiæ or mental representations which to the Skeptic were all alike. It is amusing to watch the excessive jealousy of Sextos as regards the admission of other thinkers to the sacred inner circle of Skepticism. Not only must they adopt the same directions of thought, but they must arrive at the same conclusions expressed in the same formulæ. No dogmatic religionist could be more careful of the orthodox pronounciation of his shibboleth than Sextos is of the two main articles of the Skeptics’ creed. Indeed, he overshoots the mark, because a rigid application of his rule would exclude Pyrrhonism itself from the category of pure Skepticism. For it is clear that Suspense is as much a predetermination to a certain method of thought as any that could be named, while the perpetual appeal to Ataraxia and its accurate

definition are opposed to a philosophy that makes non-definition the chief principle in its method. Sceptics have too often forgotten, and Sextos is no exception to the rule, that the only adequate expression of Nescience and Suspense is profound silence.

The first book of the Principles closes with these definitions and general remarks on true and fictitious Scepticism. With the second book Sextos commences the methodical discussion of his subject. Taking as his guide the Stoical division of philosophy into logical, physical, and ethical, he investigates at length these three classes of truths, the discussion occupying the whole of his two remaining books.

He first of all deals with the logical criterion of truth. This is of three kinds, or literally—

‘The by whom’—the man who judges.

‘The by what’—the faculties by which he judges.

‘The according to what’—the standard of judgment.

All of these are, according to Sextos, insufficient criteria of truth. As to the first, man is ‘not only incomprehensible, but mentally inconceivable.’ To prove this, it is only necessary to remember that men of great introspective powers who are accustomed to watch vigilantly the changes and vacillations they discern within them have been inclined to doubt their humanity. Sokrates, *e.g.* was uncertain whether he were a man or some other strange animal. The same truth is shown by the diversity of definition applied to him, for Demokritos, Epikouros, Plato, and others disagree in their definition of man. Assuming hypothetically that man were comprehensible, this must be either with regard to his mind or his body; but neither of these is possible, for body cannot be comprehended, because accidents differ from the substances in which they inhere, and also because it has three dimensions (length, height, and breadth), all of which we ought to know independently and absolutely before we determine them as qualities of a given body. But if we are unable to comprehend body, we are not more able to comprehend mind. On this point, again, we have a perplexing conflict of definitions among dogmatic teachers, some going even to the length of denying its existence. Further, the criterion of man may be extended indefinitely; for assume that it is accepted, the question immediately arises, What man? or what number of men? The opinions, faculties, judgments of men, differ from each other to an infinite extent, so that Dogmatists themselves are compelled to select some as superior to others and as authorities, and among these authorities there is also a perpetual

conflict. Lastly, even were truth discoverable by men, it would only be by a minority, whose lead the majority would probably decline to follow. The highest verdict on the subject of truth would be that obtainable from the collective judgments of all men—a kind of plebiscite of humanity—but this, it is obvious, could not possibly be attained. We must then conclude that man affords no criterion of truth.

II. Coming to the second criterion, we see that it is really implied in the first; but this notwithstanding, Sextos considers it by itself. The human instruments of knowledge are the senses and the intellect. Sextos claims to demonstrate that knowledge is impossible—(1) by the senses alone; (2) by the intellect alone; (3) by the combination of senses and intellect. With regard to the senses, we are again met by the usual diversity of judgment. Some thinkers say that all sensuous phenomena are unreal, others are convinced of their reality, while others again affirm some to be real and some unreal. Even if all men were agreed on the point, and it were generally conceded that the senses have the power of perception, yet they are still unworthy of belief; for the senses are affected diversely by external objects—honey, *e.g.* tastes differently in different states of the palate. If it be objected that the senses in a natural and healthy state may be depended on, Sextos answers not so, for the eye fails to distinguish at a distance whether a tower is round or square, and a similar defective discrimination attaches to other senses, *e.g.* smell and feeling. Nor when we pass from the senses to the intellect do we find our chances of certitude improve. Independently of the fact that the senses supply the intellect with the means of judging, the exercise of its own functions is surrounded with mystery. Some have even doubted of its existence. As a matter of demonstration its existence or non-existence is incapable of proof, for it can only be decided by the intellect, which is the very matter in dispute. Besides, suppose the intellect may be comprehended, and therefore shown to exist; still it cannot judge, for if it does not know anything of its own substance, mode of generation, or the place which it occupies, how can it comprehend other and extraneous matters? We are here, too, met by the difficulty of the diversity of human intellects, and it is useless to recommend us to follow the best, for we are ignorant both where to find and how to know it.

We may pass over the combination of senses and intellect as a means of human knowledge, for the mutually conflicting character posited in the very definition of such a criterion forbids us to accept it as a judge of truth.

III. The third criterion, 'according to what,' or, as it might be called, 'the criterion of relativity,' turns upon the validity to be assigned to the *phantasiæ* or mental representations of the Stoics. This is a point, you will remember, that came before us in the polemic of Karneades against the Stoics, so that we need not again discuss it. Sextos's argument turns largely upon the definitions and formulæ so largely employed by the thinkers of the Porch. Thus he shows that *phantasiæ* cannot be understood because their definition is self-contradictory. Even if they could be understood, they would be incomprehensible for another reason. They are, according to Stoics, affections of the supreme mental principle (*τὸ ἡγεμονικόν*), which itself is incomprehensible. But Sextos's main argument is the perennial difficulty of making *phantasiæ* demonstrated proofs of external reality. The passive affections differ from the external objects, and, this difference conceded, a given *phantasia* will not be of the outward object, but of something else. Nor can it be said that the mind comprehends external objects by means of sensuous affections; for how can the intellect know whether those impressions are like the objects actually perceived? A man, *e.g.* looking at the image of Sokrates cannot tell whether it is like him or not without a previous and independent knowledge of his facial characteristics. Besides, granting that *phantasiæ* are capable of forming a judgment, a further difficulty arises—Must we place reliance on all *phantasiæ*, notwithstanding their mutual differences, or only on some? If the latter, on which?

No doubt the outcome of this argument is that every criterion of truth is impossible, or, in other words, Dogmatic Negation. But Sextos denies his intention of proceeding to this length; all he aims to effect is to oppose the probabilities of Dogmatists by other probabilities equally strong, so as to induce the normal state of Skeptical suspense. But it would have been well for Sextos's Skeptical consistency if he had thought of his true standpoint somewhat oftener, for it cannot be denied that in his zeal against positive Dogmatism he frequently crosses the narrow boundary line that divides them, and rushes into the opposite extreme of positive and arrogant Negation.

Somewhat unnecessarily considering the elaborate exposition of his thesis that a criterion of truth is impossible, Sextos adds to it an argument against the existence of truth itself. But here again it is the Stoics whom he is combating. They made a distinction between truth and a true thing, and Sextos shows that, even allowing this distinction, their claims to the possession of dogmatic truth are in no way forwarded.

Pursuing his investigation of logical methods—chiefly that of the Stoics—Sextos passes in review those definitions and processes which were regarded as demonstrating truth. Thus he treats of signs, of demonstration, of syllogisms, of induction, of definition, of divisions, of magnitudes, &c.; but as his method is the same in every case, we need not follow him at length. We will merely take as typical examples of his reasoning, exemplifying its strength and its weakness, his remarks on demonstration, and on magnitudes or number. To the question ‘whether demonstration be possible,’ Sextos replies, ‘No, not if each of its constituent parts be examined.’ The existence of all composite things depends on the coexistence in nature of the separate things of which they are composed. But the parts of an argument do not so coexist, for while we enounce the first premiss, neither the second nor the conclusion is yet in existence. Similarly, the second is separable both from the first and the conclusion. The Stoics themselves admitted a classified variety of imperfect arguments, and Sextos shows that the defects of these extend also to reasonings which they deemed conclusive. He takes, *e.g.* some specimens of syllogistic reasoning regarded by the Stoics as demonstrative, and points out that they are vitiated by excess or superfluity. Besides, demonstration concludes either what is manifest (phenomenal) or what is obscure; but as to the first, phenomena require no proof, for they are self-evident. The most useful form of syllogistic process would be the second—that which by means of the apparent arrived at and unveiled the obscure, or, in other words, that which penetrated the phenomenal to find the real underlying it; but this form of demonstration cannot be found. In no case, indeed, can the conclusion transcend or go beyond the contents of the premisses, and hence demonstration is impossible. Again, all demonstration must be either general or specific; that specific demonstration is impossible has already been proved, but the general is reducible to the specific, and accordingly shares its fate. There are also controversies about demonstration, about its methods and results, and for this reason there will always be room for diversity of opinion, and difficulty in final choice. Nor even, assuming the possibility of demonstration, are we nearer the object of our search; for demonstration will necessarily contain a dogma, and all dogmas are subjects of controversy. Besides, an ascertained demonstration must needs be based on another, and that again on a third, and so *ad infinitum*. A few chapters further on we arrive at Sextos’s disquisition on magnitudes and numbers—‘the whole and its parts,’ the impossibility of which as a logical demonstration

he thus tries to prove: 'When anyone says that a number, *e.g.* the number 10, is divisible into 1, 2, 3, and 4, it is not the number 10 that is so divisible, for directly one part, *viz.* the unit, is taken away, what is really left is not 10 but 9. Hence the subtraction and division are of other numbers, not of the ten, which differ according to each subtraction. Perhaps therefore the division of the whole into parts is impossible, for if the whole be divisible into parts, the parts should be comprehended in the whole before the division; but perhaps they are not so comprehended, for 10 is divisible into $9+1$, but also into $8+2$, $7+3$, $6+4$, and $5+5$, and adding these together we might say that 55 is contained in 10, which is absurd.'

I have adduced these arguments, not so much for their intrinsic merit, as being examples of extreme Skeptical Eristic, and in order to show how the whole of Greek Free-thought is permeated by the same spirit. Sextos Empeirikos does no more than carry on the methods of the Eleatics, of Protagoras, and of the Sophists. He applies to all subjects alike the elenchus of Sokrates, and offers incontrovertible proofs of the truth of Plato's dictum, that unscrupulous Dialectic is invincible. Nor is this all: Sextos also resembles his predecessors in combating phenomena as such, and endeavouring by penetrating beneath them to discover their hidden causes and meanings. But it is not only with Hellenic thinkers that Sextos in his attack on logical methods can claim kindred. Many of his proofs of the intrinsic imperfections of logic have been insisted on by modern teachers of the science, especially by John Stuart Mill. Thus he points out that the syllogism in most of its approved forms is merely a *petitio principii*, that definition only expresses and formulates knowledge already attained and in no sense adds to it, that induction can only be held to possess a completely conclusive character when it is exhaustive, and this in all large generalizations it obviously cannot be.

More interesting for us are the physical and ethical portions of his work, which are comprehended in the third book. The first chapter commences with an inquiry concerning God, whom 'the majority of men regard as the most effective cause of all things.' Sextos begins the subject by warning his readers that, following the ordinary opinions of men undogmatically, he not only admits the existence of the gods, but he worships them, and believes in their providence. But this admission of acquiescence in customary belief does not make him less resolute in dealing with Dogmatists on the subject. We have already noticed the usual Skeptical ratiocination on the point, so that the briefest summary of Sextos's

arguments must here suffice us. His first objection is based on our inability to conceive, except in accordance with the evidence of our senses, or knowledge otherwise acquired. Next he appeals to the diversity of opinions among renowned thinkers. He then points out that we cannot know enough of God to attribute to him qualities, *e.g.* immortality or blessedness, which are only reflections or contrasts of human properties. Even were we able to conceive God by the intellect, yet we should be content to remain in suspense concerning him in our inevitable incertitude as to the truth of our conception. He who demonstrates God's existence must do so by what is manifest or by what is obscure, but neither of these alternatives is possible. Again, God is manifest either by himself or by something else, but here too both processes are affirmed to be inconclusive. An additional element of doubt is added when we examine the attributes commonly assigned to God, *e.g.* his providence, for the question immediately arises, If he exercises foresight, is it over some beings, or over all? If the latter, what is the meaning of the evil in the world? Another difficulty arises from his omnipotence. If God possesses that attribute and does not bestow good on all, it must be because he is jealous of some of his creatures. Such are the arguments by which Sextos opposes not so much a customary undogmatic belief in deity as an elaborate certitude on the matter. He next treats of cause, but we need not take his reasoning on that point into consideration, as he only reproduces the argument of Ainesidemos, which we have already noticed. Other physical objects of attack are 'material principles,' the comprehensibility of bodies, their composition, &c. Against the possibility of motion he has an elaborate argument, in which, however, he avoids the negative pitfall of denying its possibility, as did the Eleatics, saying that Skeptics regarded motion 'as existent in phenomena, but as non-existent in the philosophic reason.' Similar arguments are employed to destroy the dogmas contained in 'natural change,' in 'generation and corruption,' in the persistency of material bodies. Against the last he employs the Herakleitean flux, which he elsewhere charges with being Dogmatic. He concludes the physical part of his work by an examination of space, time, and number, which, regarded as real entities and not as mere phenomena, he concludes to be indemonstrable.

Of the third or ethical portion of his thesis it will be enough to say that he disproves the existence of intrinsic universal good and evil by the same methods that he uses against other supposed truths or existences. He urges the diversity of definitions used by the

Dogmatists of the supreme good, of pleasure and pain, &c., ending with the usual conclusion, that in nature nothing is either good or evil; but he diminishes the force of his argument by proceeding, with his customary exuberant Dialectic, to show that in nature the indifferent also does not exist! His ratiocination on this subject is, however, purely speculative, and does not touch the ordinary obligations of men considered as social or patriotic duties.

At some risk of wearying you with Skeptical technicalities and puerilities, I have thought it right to place before you a fairly complete account of the greatest product of Greek Skepticism. The work is of importance, not only as a collection of Skeptical arguments, but as revealing the intellectual idiosyncrasy of its author. Sextos was clearly a Skeptical Eclectic; for, though his primary tenet was Pyrrhonic suspense, he appreciated and employed all the methods of preceding Sceptics, especially in attacking Dogmatists. Thus we find in his pages the Eristic of the Sophists, the Nescience of Sokrates, the Epoché of Pyrrhôn, the dogmatic Negation of his disciples, the Idealism of the Eleatics and of Plato, the Probabilism of Karneades, the doctrines of Ainesidemus—whatever method, in short, had ever been employed by his countrymen to encounter dogma. But though his energies are thus diffused over the whole field of Greek Free-thought, his arguments are often, perhaps unavoidably, monotonous. Bearing in mind his favourite processes, we might without much difficulty anticipate his treatment of any given subject-matter. The following seem to me his chief Skeptical weapons: 1. The disjunctive syllogism. 2. Extreme analysis, sometimes real, sometimes verbal, dividing the whole into parts, and each part into fractions, and placing these in mutual antagonism. 3. Nominalism. 4. Employing the plea *ad infinitum* in all continuous existences, e.g. in causation, space, time, number, God, &c. 5. Appeal to diversity of opinions, and exaggerating their discordances. Nor can it be denied that his ratiocination not unfrequently departs from the judicial equipoise that ought to mark the true Skeptic, the devotee of mental Ataraxia, and has the disagreeable characteristics of ordinary controversial pleading. Thus we find occasional self-contradictions, equivocations, evasions, and sophisms of all kinds. Nothing comes amiss as a refutation or contradiction of Dogmatism. He is clearly of opinion that, on the principle of any stick serving to beat a dog, any argument suffices to destroy a dogma. On the other hand, we must bear in mind, first, that this unscrupulous Eristic is an indissoluble part of Hellenic controversy—the Eleatics and Sokrates employ the same weapons as zealously and unscrupulously as Sextos himself;

the method approved itself to the inborn love of freedom which marked the Greek intellect, and which made them fond of intellectual gymnastics, verbal jugglery, &c. for their own sakes; and secondly, we must never lose sight of the real standpoint of Sextos and his fellow-Skeptics. The commentators on his works have liberally bespattered them with complaints of the mingled audacity and childishness of his arguments. That a man should set himself in earnest to overthrow such certitudes as time, space, number, the elementary rules of arithmetic, the axioms of Euclid, seems to them a strong argument for his defective sanity. They are eager to overthrow his reasoning, by methods like that of Diogenes, who refuted Zenon's proof of the non-existence of motion by getting up and walking. But these critics ought first of all to be certain that they thoroughly understand the position and aim of such reasoners as Sextos. It might occur to them that men like Sokrates, Pyrrhôn, and Sextos, and in our own day John Stuart Mill, who dispute conventional dogmas, are not altogether the idiots they are apt to suppose. They might at least credit such powerful thinkers with the supposition that they must have some occult method of reconciling their ratiocination with the facts of the world and the dictates of common-sense, of which they themselves are ignorant. In point of fact these Skeptics have just as little inclination to question phenomena as such, as Zenon had to doubt the walking power of Diogenes or any other man. They have not the slightest doubt as to the apparent reality of space or time. They do not dispute the fact of causation. For them the phenomenal world of their daily and hourly existence is as much an actuality, a *regula vivendi*, as it is for anyone else. But when they are told that they must perforce regard these external things and their relations as absolute truths; when they are commanded to accept the properties of numbers, or the axioms of geometry, or the customary ideas of space, time, and causation as not only true for them, but true for all reasoning beings, no matter where placed, or under what conditions their ratiocinative faculties are exercised; when they are assured that the veracity of such conventional opinions is unrelated to or dependent upon their own faculties; in other words—for this is the outcome of the argument—that their senses and experience are infallible tests of absolute truth, they instinctively demur. They are willing to consider their knowledge true *apparent* knowledge, but they feel a natural diffidence in pronouncing it infallible, or deeming it all possible or conceivable cognition. They are the less inclined to admit these high claims for the conclusions of their senses or their

reason from their own repeated experience of the fallibility of their deliverances. The sole quality that could justify pretensions to absolute knowledge would be omniscience, and that they are far from believing themselves to possess. Besides, a persistent attention to the bounds of their experience and the ordinary processes of knowledge-acquisition has taught them the limited nature of their faculties. What they see and know of external things are phenomenal—the appearances they present to them, but it is quite conceivable, nay, even probable, that those external things have relations and properties in and for themselves, and irrespectively of the way in which they are compelled to apprehend them. The sweetness of honey and the fragrance of the violet, for instance, are conditioned by our possession of the senses of taste and smell; but the thinker asks, Are they qualities inherent in their several objects as well as apparent to us? Are our senses absolute tests not only of phenomenal but of real existence? What, in other words, are 'things in themselves'? To take the case of number, which Sextos attacks vigorously in both of his works. We know the apparent properties of numbers and their combinations. But what are numbers in themselves? What are they in distant portions of the universe? What are they also to higher intelligences? We know that many of the combinations of arithmetic as well as the conclusions of geometry appear to be self-contradictory; in any case, we cannot offer a satisfactory reason-why of even the simplest of them. Accordingly thinkers like Sextos come to the conclusion that the verities of arithmetic are not necessarily absolute and unconditional. They can imagine numerical properties and combinations other than those we possess; and what they can easily imagine they must hold to be conceivable, and what is conceivable may, for aught they know, really exist. To such intellects truth is conceived as separable from their personal perceptions or experience. It has a scope infinitely greater than the range even of the whole aggregate of human knowledge. It is conceived as absolute, unconditional, unchangeable, and eternal.

Now this very conception of truth—hypothetical as it is—may easily have the effect of intensifying the transitory, vacillating, or doubtful aspects of phenomena. The more changeable things seen, the more unchangeable are things unseen. The very mutability of phenomena seems of itself an argument for the immutability of real existence; the contradictions in numbers, *e.g.* appear to imply the existence of absolute number, in which such contradictions are impossible. Our inability to define causation, or to apprehend space and time, reveals the fact that we know

nothing of those verities in themselves; and a more enlarged survey of the field of human (supposed) knowledge is found to disclose a corresponding extent of Nescience. If you succeed in catching this standpoint, you will have no difficulty in discerning the object of Sextos and similar writers when they appear to take pleasure in exaggerating the difficulties of human knowledge, and minimizing what it may be supposed to possess of validity or demonstration. Sextos, *e.g.* is perpetually guilty of pushing his position of Suspense into dogmatic Negation, and he sometimes forgets even his own admissions and denies the existence of phenomena—the main tenet of his Skeptical faith. We may compare this excessive zeal on the part of Skeptics to the efforts of the enthusiastic religionist when, in order to emphasize the reality of the unseen world, he employs all his energies to demonstrate the futility and uncertainty of all purely mundane objects. The doubt and transitoriness of the latter seem to impart a certitude to the former. Sextos might, indeed, have almost adopted as his motto the words of St. Paul, 'The things which are seen are temporal, the things which are unseen are eternal.' The chief difference between the standpoint of the Christian Apostle and Greek Skeptic referred to the final attainability of the unseen, and even this was rather latent than manifest, for Sextos dared not affirm in express terms the impossibility of attaining absolute truth, whatever might have been his opinion of the undesirability of such a definitive 'find.'

A further reason for the unmitigated polemic of Sextos and similar thinkers against conventional conclusions is found in their insuperable dislike to the limitation of their imagination, which comes from its restriction to purely phenomenal aspects of thought and existence. A man standing on a hill and surveying a wide horizon knows full well that there are countless horizons lying beyond his own view, and that this would be true even if he could comprehend the whole surface of the globe as in a kind of Mercator's projection; he will, therefore, refuse to make a map of the universe from his own experience and limited environment. Similarly, most Skeptics have a vivid sense of the infinite, and a corresponding imaginative energy in estimating its possible contents and characteristics. Dogma presents itself to them as an offensive obtrusion of the finite. As such they first attack it with the intellect; and if it proves impervious to that, then they bring the imagination to bear, and it is difficult to pronounce on the dogma or assumed truth which imagination, when adroitly and unscrupulously used, is powerless to undermine.

Such appears to me an equitable estimate of Sextos's chief work, and the standpoint whence it should in fairness be contemplated. Both the 'Pyrrhonian Principles' and the treatise 'Against Mathematicians' reveal their author as a man of immense erudition, of comprehensive sympathies, a keen and subtle thinker, and an unsparing controversialist. His method is remarkable for its order—the divisions of his work and the sequence of his arguments follow a natural arrangement, which it would be difficult to better. His style, though not modelled on the best products of Greek prose composition, yet possesses the virtues of clearness, directness, and perspicacity, and is sometimes enlivened by touches of vivacity and humour: his chief defects, both of style and method, being incidental to his subject, and the point of view whence he regarded it. Of the immediate influence of his writings we have no knowledge. Some few disciples seem to have followed in his wake, but none which are known to fame.¹ As I have already hinted, the line of thought of which Sextos's 'Pyrrhonian Principles' is the most noteworthy outcome in later Greek thought probably contributed to the Neo-Platonism of the Alexandrian Schools; but similar speculations had long been current in all the philosophical schools of Greece and other portions of the Roman Empire. That Sextos's works probably exercised a solvent effect on an age of which disintegration was the chief characteristic it would be needless to affirm. Nor in a more dogmatic age would the subversion of ordinary principles of practice have been the inevitable result of his teachings. For if the tendency of those teachings was to undermine some speculative conceptions, it was rather by assigning them to different sanctions and objects than by absolutely annihilating them. Their main purpose, as we have seen, was to relativize the absolute, if I may coin the phrase. Thus they did not destroy religious belief as having a national or social obligation, but as claiming to be absolutely true. They did not affect moral duties except in the sense of making them dependent on human conventions. They directed men's attention from speculation to practice by demonstrating the inherent infirmity of the former. At the same time, Sextos's method quickened men's inquisitive faculties, strengthened their dialectical powers, set them upon determining the inherent validity of their convictions; brought home inquiry to them as a personal obligation, helped to diminish the influence of various superstitions by proving their irrational basis, and on the whole exercised on a corrupt age a wholesome and enlightening

¹ On the succession of the Greek Skeptics see Appendix D.

influence. We must, however, look for a more demonstrable effect of Sextos's works in the centuries succeeding the Renaissance. Just as it followed in its own place the Platonism and Peripateticism of Greek philosophy, so in due course it succeeded to the manifestation of Platonism and Aristotelianism in the mediæval church. The two former represent the main dogmatic influences, partly ecclesiastical, partly secular, of the Middle Ages, while Sextos and similar thinkers became the recognised teachers of the Renaissance. His works, therefore, had not only the retrospective object of recording and systematizing all former schemes of Greek Skepticism which he deemed them to possess, they had besides a distinctly prospective utility, which their author could not have foreseen. They helped to furnish principles and methods by means of which men succeeded in freeing themselves from the chains of an oppressive ecclesiasticism. Few are the liberating processes and ratiocinations of the Renaissance that may not be found in Sextos Empeirikos, and for which he is not, next to Cicero, directly responsible. The nominalism of Ockam, the anti-dogmatism of Petrarca, Montaigne, Henry Stephen, and other leaders of Free-thought in France and Italy, the anti-Aristotelianism of Ramus and Picus Mirandula, may in part be attributed to his influence; while from the time that his works became known in the original he became the chosen teacher of the French Skeptics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; *e.g.* of Gassendi, La-Mothe-le-Vayer, and Bishop Huet. Even the attempt to make Sextos work in the car of ecclesiasticism, which will meet us as a prominent feature of modern Skepticism, continually resulted in a defeat of its own object, and in the recognition of his essential antagonism to ecclesiastical claims and interests. The Skepticism which ecclesiastics maintained to be the first stage of dogma proved too often the final termination of all inquiry. Men accepted it as a method and incentive to doubt—the true Skeptic position—without even desiring that it should end in definitive certitude.

Closing, as we do with Sextos, our survey of Greek Free-thought, it will be well to remember its general lessons, and the legacies it has bequeathed to the after-history of intellectual liberty. The first reflection suggested by the retrospect is the continuity of free-instincts throughout the whole course of Greek speculation. Sextos Empeirikos in the third century of the Christian era is guided by the same spirit, pursues the same methods, and adopts the same arguments as Parmenides and Zenon in the fifth century before Christ. This fact is too commonly overlooked in general estimates of Greek philosophy.

Historians mostly dwell on the varieties and diversities of Hellenic speculation. They have pointed out how its ramifications include, and are exhaustive of, all human methods of inquiry, and they are doubtless perfectly justified in so doing; but a characteristic just as striking though not so directly obvious is the similarity underlying so much apparent diversity. Thus we find in all the greatest of Greek thinkers a highly developed appreciation of freedom, an inborn dislike of dogma and of its usual accompaniments, narrowness and intolerance. Considered purely as speculation, no limits were in their estimation to be placed to the ratiocination and imaginative faculties of man. How this same instinct of freedom acted in other directions than that of philosophy I need not stop to point out, but it was clearly the source of their greatest achievements in arts and literature as well as in political science and progress. Nor were the objects of investigation which Greek thinkers set before them very different from each other. What the majority of them, especially the more intellectually affluent, from Pythagoras to Plotinos, sought for was the reality underlying phenomena, truth considered apart from human faculties and limitations. Hence it is that all the greatest thinkers of Greece are Idealists, and it is on account of their Idealism that they are Skeptics. Even the Nescience of Sokrates was largely engendered by the conviction that absolute truth was indiscoverable, and that every truth short of that was speculatively worthless. Animated by the same belief in the unreal nature of phenomena were the various Skeptical standpoints of Pyrrhón and his successors. All these thinkers were searching for the unseen and refusing to be content with the seen. They were endeavouring to find the absolutely true in science, the unconditionally right in morals, the supreme verity which could alone satisfy their passionate desires, and of which ordinary human veracities were tantalizing mockeries, mere apples of Sodom, fair to the eye but turning to ashes in the mouth. Most of these thinkers would have echoed the plaint of our great English Idealist—

Ye powers, why did you man create
 With such *insatiable* desire?
 If you'd endow him with no more *estate*,
 You should have made him *less aspire*;
 But now our appetites you *vex* and *cheat*,
 With *reall* hunger and *phantastic* meat.

One important outcome of this Idealism and the introspection which was its natural method was the distinct assertion of the supremacy of the individual consciousness. First set forth

in the well-known maxim of Protagoras, it underlies the whole of subsequent Greek thought. Few principles of philosophy and truth-investigation have rendered more direct services to the cause of Free-thought. We shall find it in our investigations as the animating spirit and guide of every cultural revival, of every reaction against narrow and oppressive dogma. It was the principle to which Christ appealed in opposition to Jewish dogmatism. It represents the spirit of Protestantism as against Romanism, of Cartesianism against the Scholastic philosophy. It has been the plea of numberless Free-thinkers, the single tenet of Skeptics who have disclaimed all other convictions; and though occasionally pushed, like other useful principles, to an excess refuting its own extravagance, its general action on human history and the progress of human liberty has been salutary. Especially has it contributed at sundry times and in divers manners to inculcate truth-investigation as a sacred personal duty, not to be delegated to institutions however ancient, nor to be inhibited by authorities however venerable. Greece is thus the mother-country of the most prolific of all principles of Free-thought, one which has not only been influential in the past, but which is calculated to make dogma-tyranny on a large scale and in an extreme form an impossibility for all future time. But with all these incentives and guides to Free-thought supplied by Hellenic speculation, it would be utterly wrong to suppose that morality was injuriously affected by its freedom. The general character of Greek Skeptics from Sokrates to Sextos is quite unexceptionable. Even obscurantists like Anytos and Meletos, who arraigned Sokrates for Free-teaching, dared not throw a doubt on his own rectitude and moral purity, and his successors as a class were equally free from reproach. These Free-thinkers were indeed men of too profound and penetrating intellect to make their speculation, with its confessed limitations and fallibility, the measure of their ordinary practice. Besides which their patriotism, their active social sympathies, made them keenly alive to the importance of those links which unite the different members of the community. Perhaps European speculation has still to learn from Greek philosophy that free speculation has no necessary or indissoluble connection with libertinism in morals. An impartial survey of history reveals the fact that the latter is just as often associated with extravagant and tyrannical dogma as with an extreme freedom of speculation. There was much more licence among the Romanist clergy in the Middle Ages than among the thinkers of ancient Greece at the period of its greatest social degradation.

Thus, confining ourselves to our subject, we have bequeathed by Hellenic philosophy to the after-history of human progress and enlightenment some of the noblest legacies that we could conceive or desire. Thence we derive the sanctity of human freedom, the justifiability of idealism, the responsibility in truth-search of the individual reason and consciousness; the sacredness of human laws, usages, and conventions; the importance of practice as compared with theory. Especially for us Greek philosophy is the ultimate source of all Skeptical speculation. Few are those of the many Skeptics mentioned in history who owe nothing to the elenchus of Sokrates, to the idealism of the Eleatics and Plato, to the subtle investigations of Pyrrhón, Karneades, and Sextos. Thus our survey of Greek Free-thought, in addition to its own inherent interest and its undeniable claim for consideration on every thinking man, possesses for us the additional importance that it is an indispensable introduction to the study of all other systems and methods of Free-thought.

ARUNDEL. In fairness, Doctor, we must compliment you on your excessive ingenuity. In your definition of it as a repression of self-assertion and a virtue related to self-denial, you have discovered a *rôle* for Skepticism which renders it not only unjust but impious to question its right to human recognition. I, however, own to some difficulty in detecting more than a superficial resemblance between the denial of an obvious truth and the repression of an evil besetting passion. The act of a man who should refuse to assert for supposed purposes of self-discipline his perception of some undoubted truth, I should consider not so much morally meritorious as qualifying him for an asylum.

TREVOR. I did not put forth that aspect of Skepticism as my own conception of it, but as a view that commended itself to many Greek thinkers. They undoubtedly regarded the repression of undue assertion as an act of self-mortification, and possessing an ethico-religious significance. Further reflection will also, I think, convince you that there is little difference at bottom between intellectual and moral self-denial. The latter implies the suppression of a desire for what I, *e.g.* hold to be good, or at least agreeable; the former signifies the suppression of a wish to affirm what I believe

to be true. That both one and the other may have a disciplinary value is, I think, indisputable, but the intellectual self-repression is not supposed to be pushed to the extent of repressing obvious and unmistakable convictions, though in effect it often is, especially by ecclesiastics.

ARUNDEL. But what conceivable benefit do I derive from suppressing some unmistakable truth? I possess, let us say, the fullest conviction that two straight lines cannot inclose a space. No amount of mental pressure exercised by myself or by others would serve to lessen or disturb the conviction. I want to know what spiritual benefit I should be likely to attain by avouching my belief in the contrary assumption.

TREVOR. Well, suppose that the proposition, 'Two straight lines cannot inclose a space,' is closely related to other propositions of which you do not feel so fully persuaded, but which you have some extrinsic reasons for believing to be true; or suppose some religion or institution to which, on independent grounds, you owe allegiance, and which claims to be supernaturally guided in its determinations, chooses to say to you, 'Whatever you may think on the subject, I bid you believe on my authority that two straight lines may inclose a space;' or, suppose that the self-assertory temper that prompted you to asseverate such a proposition and to admit no denial or modification of it, could be shown to you as likely to induce a dogmatic temper with regard to other matters, of which you could not possibly have the same assurance. In either of these cases the repression of an obvious fact might be assumed to be attended with salutary results. Hence it would be open to any ethical teacher or religious creed to say to you, 'It will be better for your general disposition, and for reasons connected with your spiritual welfare, that you should repress all inclination to self-assertion, should give up all dogma-making and affirmation into my hands, that you should sacrifice your reason to duty or religion—in a word, that you should decline to affirm except what I bid you affirm.' Now the last supposition is just the ground on which not only the Greeks but Hindus and Christians are agreed, as I have said, sub-

stantially as to the ethical or religious merit of intellectual self-renunciation. They all concur in the advice, 'Repress persistently all self-assertion and individual conviction, and you will then have no difficulty in accepting the dogmas we propound.' . . . To tell you the truth, Arundel, I am rather surprised that you should not have instinctively recognised a principle so entirely ecclesiastical.

MISS LEYCESTER. Instead of two straight lines inclosing a space, Mr. Arundel might have taken the theory of transubstantiation—the essence of the elements being changed while their qualities remain. Here, I take it, there is a distinct self-repression of conviction in its most difficult sphere—that of our sensations. One can easily understand that a man who had coerced himself into accepting such a theory would afterwards find no difficulty in admitting other beliefs based on the same authority. Indeed, theologians seem fully alive to the importance of putting their more startling tenets in the foreground. What are termed the *distinctive beliefs* of most churches comprise not their easiest but most difficult *credenda*.

MRS. HARRINGTON. I confess to sharing Mr. Arundel's reluctance to accept intellectual self-denial in the light of a religious duty, possibly for a similar reason—a defective appreciation of ecclesiasticism. One can understand how the principle of faith comes in to supplement imperfect knowledge, but one is staggered when told that it must also supersede assured knowledge. . . . Indeed, I should be glad of some authority for the open admission of a principle so capable of mischief, even by Romanists themselves.

TREVOR (reaching down from his bookshelves a commonplace book and opening it). I can readily undertake to satisfy you on that score. Indeed, the difficulty would be in selection. All the manuals of asceticism in use in the Romish church recommend Skepticism in some form or other. Here, *e.g.* are a few sentences from the *De Contemptu Mundi*,¹ a manual of great repute in the Middle Ages, and ascribed to Innocent III. 'The more labour a man expends in search, the less will he find . . . for he

¹ Cap. xi. *De Studio Sapientum*.

who understands most doubts most, and he seems to himself most wise who is most foolish. Hence the highest part of knowledge is to know that one is ignorant, for God made man upright, but he has entangled himself in infinite questions.' Here, again, are a few sentences from De Balzac's *Socrate Chrétien*: 'But, I pray you, what can be a nobler sacrifice than a mind conquered and subdued? What more acceptable offering to God than a man's own reason, that haughty and presumptuous faculty, that fierce and proud being, born for command and superiority, which will always mount upward and never descend; which, far from submitting to the yoke, to captivity, to death, never dreams but of victory, of triumph, and the conqueror's crown? . . .'¹ I might read to you many such excerpts from Augustine, from Pascal, from Bossuet, from Calvin and other Protestant reformers, but I will spare you on a subject which we shall again have to touch upon, and on which dogmatic religionists of all types are agreed.

ARUNDEL. Even granting your standpoint to be partially true, there is still an enormous difference between the religionist and the Skeptic. The injunction of the former is, 'Put off your prepossessions and convictions, that you may be ready to embrace the truth I submit to you;' the advice of the latter is, 'Get rid of your knowledge altogether, for the process is wholesome, and the condition of professed ignorance is the highest achievement of human wisdom.' Or put it thus—the first says: 'Put off your clothes and I will give you a better suit;' the latter: 'Do away with your clothing and go naked, for nakedness is healthful.'

TREVOR. In reality, you have conceded all that I cared to maintain. In both cases we have a Skeptical divesting of supposed knowledge and knowledge-faculties. I readily grant the dissimilarity of object, as well as the extent to which the process is carried. Happily Skepticism contains in itself a principle of freedom which is not likely to allow the place vacated by an uncertain belief to be occupied by another perhaps still more uncertain, while the religionist who has abrogated his reason is utterly at the mercy of the creed

¹ *Œuvres Comp.* vol. ii. pp. 49, 50.

which has exacted the sacrifice. As to your simile, you must agree that in some climates nakedness, or the nearest decent approach to it, is decidedly healthful.

HARRINGTON. By a curious coincidence of physical and mental affinity, you have intellectual nudity attaining its extreme point in those countries where physical nakedness is most justifiable—I mean in India. There you have intellectual self-suppression reaching its ultimate stage of self-extinction. Indeed, our present consideration of the later stages of Greek Skepticism seems a useful introduction to our survey of Hindu Mysticism and Nihilism. . . . As regards the point you have just been discussing, I agree with Trevor. Dogmatists of all creeds are careful to induce a state of Nescience, as the primary condition of receiving their science, and from their point of view justifiably. Newman's 'Grammar of Assent' and Mansel's 'Bampton Lectures' stand in this respect on just the same level with the 'Pyrrhonian Principles' of Sextos Empeirikos. From very different standpoints, and with very diverse aims, all these alike try to destroy, or at any rate weaken, customary criteria of truth. . . . But as I have now 'the lead' in our intellectual game of 'whist' (for is not Skepticism a forcible *hushing* of intellectual pronouncements?), I will take occasion to remark that in the Probabilism of the Academics we have, in my judgment, the most valuable product of Greek Skepticism. I confess I have not a high opinion of 'suspense' as a final product of thought, though there are many occasions where it is evidently required. As a rule, it postulates an exact equilibration of antagonistic truths, which in speculative and moral subjects is very rare. Indeed, I should doubt its possibility in a single instance in which all the grounds of assent and dissent were completely exhausted. Now, Probabilism meets all the real necessities of the case. It implies the existence of the proximate truth, which perhaps is all that our faculties are capable of apprehending or our environment capable of furnishing, and in its admission of varying degrees or stages of truth it acts as a direct incentive to search.

ARUNDEL. I cannot share your admiration for Proba-

bilism, nor do I think there is really the difference you allege between it and Suspense. Both are conditions of imperfect certitude, and one might always be stated in terms of the other, especially if, as you say, the balance of antitheticals in Epoché is always uneven. Now, I distinctly decline partial when I am in search of perfect truth; indeed, when the former puts itself forward as the only truth possible, it seems the counterfeit presentment of a reality. As Trevor said in his paper, it is a red herring drawn across the trail. Besides, I regard probability and certainty as differing, not only in degree, but in kind. The certainty, *e.g.* I feel of my own existence is a truth different altogether from that which I might have of the existence of a distant friend, or of any other matter not actually present to my consciousness. I am well aware that Probability must enter into the region of religious beliefs, and that it is all that can be urged for some of the more important tenets of Christianity, but I think its sphere, when it cannot be vivified and converted into certainty, should be limited. To take an example, I could not permit the existence of God to be based on mere likelihood. I could not worship a Probability. I could not feel reverence and affection for a being whose existence was the outcome of, say, twenty-one reasons for opposed to eighteen reasons against, and who might thus be said to be engendered by argumentative odds. I therefore share Augustine's repugnance to Probability as the sole goal of human truth-search, and believe with him that the human reason is destined to attain positive indubitable certainty.

TREVOR. For another reason, I also object to receiving Probability in lieu of truth. I do not agree with Arundel that it is quite tantamount to suspense. On the contrary, it is or may easily become dogmatic. It is the assertion, if not of an absolutely definitive truth, yet of one that claims all definitiveness possible. As such, it possesses the property and the vice of finality. It places an unwarrantable limit to possibility, and closes the door on speculation. Instead of always inciting to search, as Harrington hinted, it may take away all motive for search, for the same reason that Dogma does; because if probability in any given matter is all that humanity can attain,

why waste more time in laborious investigation? The end is already reached, and it is one which by its own confession is imperfect and uncertain. A still greater grievance, from the Skeptic's standpoint, is the arbitrary limitation of his imagination. Instead of luxuriating in a boundless expanse of indefiniteness and incertitude, which is his sole compensation for the absence of demonstrative truth, he must needs submit to a narrow and unworthy circumscription. But I have already urged this final plea of Skepticism more than once, so I will say no more on the subject.

MRS. HARRINGTON. My objection to Probability is of a more humble kind. I would urge its insufficiency as a standard of practical conduct and resolute human action.

HARRINGTON. I fear Probabilism is not likely to get a majority of votes in our philosophical parliament. That Trevor, from his extreme Skeptical standpoint of 'all truth or nothing,' should oppose it, I don't wonder at, but I should have expected more consideration from Arundel, who in this point also seems open to Trevor's charge of being imperfectly ecclesiastical. You have not only forgotten your Butler, Arundel, but you have been singularly unmindful of the basis of all theology, viz. faith or belief as the outcome of Probability, not certitude or knowledge, which are the fruits of science. On this point I could produce against you a host of ecclesiastical opponents, consisting of apostles, popes, bishops, and inferior clerics of all grades. Passing over the well-known utterances of the Bible on the point, I will only refer you to the *dictum* of Gregory the Great, viz. that the merit of religious faith would be vitiated by certainty. Nor do I think that your plea of the difference in kind between probability and certainty can be sustained. On the other hand, it is easy to conceive a convergence of probabilities that would amount to, and be undistinguishable from, the most absolute certitude. Indeed, the disposition you have casually manifested of asserting theological verities as demonstrable certainties seems to me the peculiar weakness of your profession. Your conclusions always cover more ground than your premisses. For my part I instinctively distrust the infallible tone of divines, even when they enunciate

truths in which I fully believe. There is a superfluous veracity about them which seems out of harmony both with the scope and nature of our faculties and the conditions of our environment. Hence, for my own part, I should rather have even the existence of God put forward as an overwhelming probability than asserted as an absolute certainty, and I am apt to think that more mischief arises on these important subjects from excessive than from defective proof. I may add that your position is precisely similar to Trevor's. You both agree in claiming an amount of certitude, which, for my part, I believe to be unattainable, and you both reject those inferior grounds of belief which alone are in our power. Not that theologians and extreme Skeptics only are guilty on this point. Men of science, whose methods, if they taught them nothing else, ought to teach them caution and modesty, are continually transgressing the limits of legitimate reasoning. From partial inductions and imperfectly verified experiments they are perpetually inferring the most universal and absolute conclusions. Now in my opinion all the generalizations of science are reducible to varying degrees of probability, and there is not a single law or general process transcending the limits of our own experience and our position in time and space of which it can be affirmed that it is absolutely true. Taking as a crucial instance the Copernican and Newtonian Astronomy, I agree with a recent German writer¹ that all those theories can claim is probability, and that we can in no case admit them to be absolute truths. The same remark applies with overwhelming force to such theories as 'evolution,' 'variation by selection,' and whatever other law or process is assumed to have been in existence centuries before the earth was inhabited by man. No doubt the usual plea of the necessity of hypothesis and imagination in science must be conceded, but we must nevertheless remember that men of science have a faculty of restricting their hypotheses to the precise conditions of things of which they desire to establish a basis, and of limiting their imagination to conceiving causes exclusively suitable to what they have already predetermined to be the actual order of events.

To Trevor's objection to Probability no reply is possible. If, as he has repeatedly admitted, he is indifferent to arguments based on the actual constitution of the world and of our faculties in relation to it, there is nothing further to be said. The efforts of himself and of similarly extreme Sceptics and Idealists are directed to prove that Kant was mistaken when he thought the dove could not transcend the atmosphere in which it soared. Whatever their own opinion may be as to the result of their efforts, they will always have a difficulty in persuading the cold and critical observer that they have been attended with success. As to their dream of escaping from the conditions of human existence and finding 'things in themselves,' I share the opinion of a humorous friend who observes that he will never believe in a 'Ding an sich' until he has an actual living specimen caught, and confined in a cage and amenable to sight, touch, and every other sense that can be brought to bear on an ordinary wild animal.

Your objection, Maria, that Probability is not a good rule of conduct is, I am bound to confess—at some sacrifice to my marital feelings—the weakest of all. In the Second Academy, as Trevor told us, Probability was first accepted as especially a rule of conduct where speculative certainty was not attainable, and all the great Doctors of Probabilism—Bishop Butler especially—have agreed that this is its chiefest and most valuable function. Like all decisive people—whose ratiocinations are so rapid that their conclusions seem instinctive—you forget that most of the actions of life, so far as they are not automatic, depend upon calculations of some kind or other, upon a comparison of risks and advantages, upon a balancing of continually shifting and varying odds, and so far upon Probability. The man of business, *e.g.* has no other guide in his monetary and other transactions than a likelihood of the course he chooses to adopt turning out preferable to the alternative courses he sees fit to reject; and the same procedures, though often latent and unconscious, are employed in all other departments of human activity. In short, Probability seems to me the best of all rules, whether for human speculation or human action.

MISS LEYCESTER. Notwithstanding your encomium on Probability, you stand in a minority of one in making it a substitute for Truth, for I am sure Miss Trevor and Mrs. Arundel will side with us in refusing partial Truth as the only goal of human effort. According to your theory, the universe is constructed with the intention of thwarting all our hopes and disappointing all our aspirations. The human intellect asks for bread and is offered a stone; it demands a fish and is awarded a serpent. It does not need much audacity or mental independence to demur to such a conclusion. Though not myself a Skeptic, I would share Dr. Trevor's alternative, and prefer to go consciously truthless, than try to satisfy the *sacra fames* for truth on such questionable and unsatisfying food. For my part I am inclined to think that the old argument of a felt want implying the possibility of its satisfaction has more to say for it than people generally allow; and I do not feel in me any intense passion for probability, while I do think I have an earnest yearning after truth. As to your joke about catching and caging an actual 'Ding an sich,' there is, as appears to me, something very pathetic in the fact that the highest intellects in all ages and countries have bent their energies to find an eternal immovable reality beneath the changeable phenomena of our terrestrial existence.

ARUNDEL. Very true, Miss Leycester, and that reminds me to take exception against Trevor's parallel between the efforts of the Skeptic to attain transcendental realities, or things in themselves, and the endeavours of Christians to attain immortality. The Skeptic, according to his own confession, has no desire to obtain the object of his quest, and is not even sure of its existence, while the Christian is both certain of what he strives for and believes that he may attain it.

TREVOR. I recognise the difference you speak of, but the parallel is complete for the main purpose for which I advanced it. I merely wished to show how in the two instances of Skeptic and Religionist the certitude of the unseen was assumed to derive confirmation from the fluctuations and uncertainties of the seen.

MISS LEYCESTER. Our *séance* has extended to an unconscionable time. We next discuss, it seems, Hebrew and Hindu Skepticism. Charles remarked just now that our present subject was a suitable introduction to Indian Skepticism. The Indian intellect, I suppose, carried the non-entity of knowledge a stage further than did the later Greek Skeptics, though I cannot readily conceive a denial of knowledge more complete than that put forth by some of the latter.

TREVOR. But the starting-point was different, and so also was the termination. Let me summarize them thus. Both Greek Skeptic and Hindu Mystic were occupied in the same search, both tried to find the eternal and invisible reality underlying our mundane existence. The suspense of the Greek was in part the expression of unavoidable disappointment that attended the attempt; in part it postulated its continuance. Hindu negation conceded the impossibility of the effort, but instead of wishing to prosecute it like the bolder and more energetic Greek, it endeavoured to get rid of the impulse by destroying consciousness. We may compare them to two men puzzling themselves with the reflections in a mirror. The first, affirming that those images must have a cause, proceeds to search for it; he accordingly turns the mirror in various directions, takes out the back, &c., confesses himself unable to solve the mystery, but still takes pleasure in its investigation. The second, after anxiously trying to explore the mystery, and similarly failing, simply destroys the mirror, and the puzzling images are thus annihilated. Thus Hindu Skepticism greatly transcends Greek. The latter destroys the thought, but the former annihilates the thinker. For the mysteries of human consciousness no solution could well be more thorough than its destruction.

HARRINGTON. 'Thorough,' no doubt, but scarcely satisfactory. It is like setting fire to a haunted house to clear it of ghosts. The extinction, moreover, is fictitious. Consciousness must still remain, if only to pronounce on its own annihilation—in which *post-mortem* function it acts the part of those who have perpetrated the grim joke of announcing to their friends by letter their own decease.

MISS LEYCESTER. That is not all. Thought and Thinker being really one, the annihilation of either involves that of the other. Hence I cannot see much difference between Hellenic and Hindu Skepticism. Indeed, the only legitimate outcome of the ten 'Tropoi' would be a condition of Neuroscience bordering on, if not entailing, self-extinction.

ARUNDEL. For my part, I am always glad to find the suicidal propensities of extreme Skepticism so distinctly admitted. When Skepticism is seen to involve such transparent absurdities there is a chance of recognition for poor dogmatists, who cannot, however much they try, divest themselves of consciousness, nor of cognition, nor of an external world.

TREVOR. We must, at any rate, credit Skeptics with candour. They have always been fully alive to the suicidal effect of their principles. The ten 'Tropoi,' *e.g.* were compared by Bishop Huet to Samson, who by the overthrow of the Philistines slew himself.

HARRINGTON. Those same 'Tropoi' seem to have considerably exercised the ingenuity of succeeding Skeptics in finding analogies adequate to their excellences.

TREVOR. True; besides the simile just mentioned they have been compared by Bartholmess to the Decalogue in the Jewish law, by Le-Vayer to Samson's foxes which carried fire and destruction into the standing corn of the Philistines, and by others to the ass's jaw-bone by which the same hero is said to have wrought havoc among his enemies. But I may remind you that the similes of the Greek Skeptics themselves were just as expressive in defining the suicidal tendency of extreme Skepticism. As I said in my paper, they compared it to a drastic medicine, and to fire which, consuming other things, burnt itself out.

MISS TREVOR. Curiously, Shakespeare has that very thought. Speaking in 'Love's Labour Lost' of study or truth-search, he says—

And when it hath the thing it hunteth most,
'Tis won, as towns with fire, so won, so lost.

. . . but if you will excuse me, it is getting late, and quite time that we broke up.

EVENING V.

HEBREW AND HINDU SKEPTICISM.

נִם אֶת־הָעֹלָם גָּתוּ בְּלִבָּם מִבְּלִי אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יִמְצֵא הָאָדָם
אֶת־הַמַּעֲשֵׂה אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה הָאֱלֹהִים מֵרֵאשִׁית וְעַד־סוֹף :

Ecclesiastes iii. 11.

‘Ich bin der Geist, der stets verneint !
Und das mit Recht ; denn Alles, was entsteht
Ist werth, dass es zu Grunde geht.’

GOETHE, *Faust*.

‘There is a certain grave acquiescence in Ignorance, a recognition of our impotence to solve momentous and urgent questions, which has a satisfaction of its own. After high aspirations, after renewed endeavours, after bootless toil, after long wanderings, after hope, effort, weariness, failure, painfully alternating and recurring, it is an immense relief to the exhausted mind to be able to say, “At length I know that I can know nothing about anything.”’

J. H. NEWMAN, *Grammar of Assent*, p. 201.

βλέπομεν γὰρ ἄρτι δι’ ἐσόπτρου ἐν αἰνίγματι, τότε δὲ πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον.

ST. PAUL.

‘Saltem scis te dubitare an sit aliquid veri, et hoc ipsum est veritas.’

AUGUSTINE, *lib. de Religione*.

EVENING V.

HEBREW AND HINDU SKEPTICISM.

THE fifth sitting of our Skeptical conclave fell due on the last week in September, and, like the four preceding ones, was appointed to be held at Hilderton Hall. Mr. Harrington and Miss Leycester had arranged, if the day was fine, to walk to Hilderton across the downs, and the Arundels were to meet them at some point of their route. There was a short cut over the down between Mr. Harrington's house and Hilderton village which reduced the five miles of road to the moderate compass of three and a half. On a fine autumnal day, when the sun's rays had lost somewhat of their summer fervency, and a wholesome crispness prescient of winter might be detected in the atmosphere, this was a very lovely walk. Passing from the smooth turf of the downs behind Mr. Harrington's house, it traversed the outskirts of a picturesque wood, the shady glades of which were now clothed in autumnal russet, while its straggling grassy paths bordered with bracken had also put off their summer vesture of primroses, and were beginning to don their winter coat of many colours—the bright gold, orange, and dark-brown leaves with which the overhanging hazels plentifully bestrewed them. Further on the path skirted here and there plantations of spruce and Scotch fir, whose dark-green tints lent colour to a landscape the variety of which consisted rather in diversity of form and contour than in a many-hued brilliancy of colouring. Mr. Harrington and his sister-in-law greatly enjoyed their walk, and wished that Mrs. Harrington, who was going in the carriage later on in the evening, had been with them. The afternoon was very pleasant on the downs. The sun shone out of a cloudless sky,

but its rays were tempered by a north-west breeze which at times swelled almost to a gale. On their arrival at that part of the grassy track that branched off to Hilderton, they encountered not only the Arundels, whom they partly expected, but also Dr. and Miss Trevor, who had been tempted by the fineness of the day to accompany them. The whole party resolved to extend their walk a little further before turning homewards, and the peculiar transparency of the atmosphere suggested the attempt of seeing the Isle of Wight and Southampton Water, which the shepherds on the downs and the long-sighted folk of the neighbourhood claimed often to have seen from spots adjacent. Our party were, however, unsuccessful with the naked eye, but with the aid of Mr. Arundel's field-glass they could discern different points of the south coast pretty clearly. Having exhausted the scenery, they turned their steps homewards, and proceeded by grassy tracks and chalky lanes to Hilderton. On their way through the village they stopped at the church to inspect some improvements which Mr. Arundel had recently done to his chancel, and availed themselves of the opportunity of resting after their walk.

When they met in Dr. Trevor's library after dinner, the host commenced the discussion:—

TREVOR. By a happy coincidence we have all, with the exception of Mrs. Harrington, enjoyed to-day the opportunity of realizing as a physical sensation the kind of feeling which our theme of to-night is calculated to impart.

MRS. HARRINGTON. What do you mean, Dr. Trevor?

TREVOR. I mean that we have within the last few hours experienced a sensation akin to the particular frame of mind with which we might be supposed to pass from our recent discussions to our subject of to-night.

MRS. ARUNDEL. Our subject is Hebrew and Hindu Skepticism, but I cannot conceive what this has to do with our afternoon walk. Certainly, I saw nothing on the downs which reminded me either of Hebrew or Hindu thought.

ARUNDEL. I am afraid we are not good hands at solving riddles; for my part, I give it up.

HARRINGTON. We have not sufficient data, I think, on which to found a decision. The point of your analogy, you say, is the transition from Greek to Hebrew Skepticism. (After a pause.) Do you mean that Greek thought is like the top of a Wiltshire down, and Oriental speculation like the more sheltered, hill-surrounded Wiltshire valleys?

MISS LEYCESTER. Please stop a moment. I think I know now what Dr. Trevor means. . . . The change from the sunny and shadeless down to the dim religious light of the church, which we appreciated so much this afternoon, is like the passing from Greek Skepticism to Oriental.

TREVOR. You have nearly hit it, Miss Leycester. I did not, however, mean to contrast them as degrees of lesser or more light, but as distinct atmospheres, so to speak, with different surroundings and suggestive of quite opposite ideas. The chief characteristics of Greek thought we have seen to be its passionate love for and enjoyment of freedom, its comprehensive outlook, the buoyancy, ease, and grace of its motion. . . . To breathe it has the same stirring, invigorating effect on one's mental faculties as our walk on the down this afternoon may be said to have had on our physical powers. We were all ready to admit how exhilarating we found the 'down' air, how much we enjoyed the distant and diversified scenery continually opening up before us, how delightfully the sunshine warmed the breeze, while the breeze in turn tempered the sun's heat, how thoroughly our whole environment was permeated by fresh, free, and healthful influences. . . . And yet when we descended the down and came by the sheltered lane into the village and to Arundel's church, we all agreed that the contrast was most pleasant. The dim religious light was a refreshing change after the shadeless down. The stillness of the church was equally grateful after the restless and occasionally boisterous gusts of the breeze, even the confinement of our prospect by four narrow walls imparted a feeling of relief to our eyesight wearied with long distances and dimly discerned objects. Precisely the same feeling—the remark has been made more than once—comes over the thinker when he leaves Indo-Germanic speculation and pays a visit to Semitic thought.

He will miss the breadth of speculation, the uncontrolled freedom, the healthy play of his faculties, the careless abandon, or else the sublime confidence which projects itself into the Infinite, reckless of received convictions and of possible results . . . but on the other hand he will gain a sense of self-absorption, a feeling of stillness and repose, a sensation of boundedness and limitation, which occasionally and to most persons are eminently grateful. Speaking professionally, I should deem such a change as healthful to the mind as a night's rest after a long day's exertion is to the body. A friend of mine, whose whole life is immersed in original research, once told me that before he goes to sleep every night he soothes his excited nerves by reading some portion of his Hebrew Psalter or his Greek Testament, and he finds this composing draught of Semiticism act like an opiate on his overwrought brain. The same thing is told also of Sir Robert Peel—after an exciting debate in the House of Commons he read some serious work before he retired as a mental sedative.

ARUNDEL. Thanks, Doctor, for your encomium of Dogma, and your admission of the advantage of distinct boundaries as against distant and hazy horizons. I was aware that with a happy inconsistency you occasionally evinced an appreciation of dogmatic standpoints, but I did not expect such a naïve admission of the fact.

HARRINGTON. It does not appear to me that the Doctor's admission goes far in the direction you suppose. At most, his appreciation of Dogma is only as a temporary resting-place or as a nap after exertion, useful to qualify him for further Skeptical activity.

TREVOR. Quite right, Harrington! You have correctly diagnosed my occasional Dogma-fits, to which I have no hesitation in pleading guilty. They are really no more than transient relaxations of a mental energy whose main activities and instincts are Skeptical. I am bound to admit that the occasional conception of fixities and boundaries, even though their existence be more or less assumed, or else are to be regarded as emotional rather than intellectual, is as grateful, I might say as imperious, as our unquestionable con-

viction of objects within our ken. I much doubt whether there ever was a Skeptic who did not sometimes relieve the tension of his intellect by the supposition of a state of things different from that disclosed by his Skepticism. . . . But the comparison of states of Dogma to periods of repose is surely a questionable compliment; and you could hardly class among Dogmatists the man whose faculties, so long as he was able to use them, were Skeptical, and who only acquiesced in fixed truths when from temporary exhaustion, perhaps, he could use them no longer.

ARUNDEL. But surely the end of labour, at least for most people, is rest, and the ultimate repose ought in fairness to determine the nature of the pure activity. According to your admission, there must be in such cases as yours a perpetual conflict between active and passive states. Skepticism cannot be very profound if it is liable at any moment to pass into a Dogma-fit, and on the other hand the Dogma-fit cannot be very severe if when it ceases there is an immediate relapse into Skepticism.

TREVOR. Excuse me, my dear Rector. Your reasoning is somewhat lax. You might as well say that there is an antagonism between night and day, whereas both are really parts of the same cycle; or that a particular psychological state cannot be succeeded in the same individual by another altogether different. So far from thinking my power of temporarily contemplating things from a Dogmatic standpoint inconsistent in a Skeptic, I am conscious of no intellectual incongruity of any kind. Indeed, I should be sorry to lack the mental versatility which enables me sometimes to see objects in a different aspect from that which is habitual to me. My occasional imaginative or emotional Dogma-states no more affect the normal Skepticism of my mind than your own chance uncertainties really detract from the fact that the bent of your intellect is dogmatic.

MISS LEYCESTER. I suspect we shall make the acquaintance of not a few Skeptics in whose intellectual formation a vein of Dogmatism is clearly discernible.

ARUNDEL. . . . like a rich lode of precious metal in a comparatively worthless stratum. But assuming that Semi-

ticism discharges in our restless Aryan Intellectualism the function of an anæsthetic or sedative, the present needs of Christendom are precisely the reverse of those stated by Bunsen. We want now to 'Semiticize the Japhetic,' to introduce more of religious composure, of devout trust, hope, and confidence, into the unquiet brain-fever of our time.

HARRINGTON. I do not agree with you. The tendencies of Indo-Germanic races are so thoroughly active, and the influence of religious anæsthetics are so baneful to the cause of human progress, that one would not wish to the latter more scope than merely to correct the excesses of the former, an office which, in my opinion, they discharge sufficiently. . . . Besides, to the Indo-Germanic intellect at its best, activity is itself repose, as our researches into Greek thought have fully demonstrated.

MRS. HARRINGTON. The transition from Greek to Hebrew, *i.e.* Bible, Skepticism has another more special import than any we have touched upon. We are now approaching those points in our survey where we might, if our discussions were public, expect to encounter 'odium theologicum.' Skepticism seems natural to heathen philosophers, but not to religious and Semitic thinkers. Accepting the ordinary theory of the purpose of the Bible, Doubt is as much out of place in its pages as some heathen idol would be in a Christian temple. I wonder, therefore, what the 'unco guid' readers of what is ironically called our 'religious press' would say to our assertion that Job and Ecclesiastes were really Skeptical books?

TREVOR. Say? They would say, doubtless, what all infallible oracles say when the least article of their creed is impugned. We should be branded with impiety, blasphemy, and a few more of those choice specimens of verbal coinage which the mint of Dogma has produced in such abundance for centuries past, but which in the present day are happily beginning to lose somewhat of their old value in human currency.

HARRINGTON. To my mind, the very fact that such doubts and speculations are mooted in the Bible gives it an additional interest, and a further claim on our consideration.

It seems to me that the Bible as a record of *human* thought would be incomplete without such traces of Skepticism. Theologians perpetually insist on the argument that the errors and shortcomings of the most eminent biblical characters, mentioned as they are without reserve, are incidental proofs of the truth of the book and its fitness for erring humanity. Similarly, I say that the doubts of Job or the Preacher, not to mention other writings of dubious belief, give the volume a direct human interest in my eyes, and prove its suitability for speculating humanity. Had the book contained no record of mental disquiet, no expression of partial unbelief, no craving after certainty, whatever its other excellences might be, I, knowing human nature as I do, could not but pronounce it in my judgment unreal. . . . Among the proofs of the superiority of the Bible to all other religious books, evidence-writers have generally overlooked the chiefest, *i.e.* the variety of its contents as resulting from the divergent standpoints and opinions of its authors.

MISS LEYCESTER. I quite agree with you, Charles. Skepticism, if it needed any other consecration than that furnished by the irrepressible instincts of humanity, might find it in the Bible. Nor is the doubt of the old Hebrew writings devoid of practical utility. In one case I happen to know of (doubtless there have been many), the expression of wavering faith in the ordinary conceptions of Providence which we find, *e.g.* in some of the Psalms was a considerable source of comfort to a benighted inquirer. He felt that he was treading in the footsteps of men who, with all their Semitic proclivities, sometimes doubted, but who nevertheless are the great models of trust and confidence for all succeeding time. The sensation was like finding well-marked human tracks in a strange country commonly reported to be untrodden by the foot of man.

TREVOR. The peculiar difficulty of what Coleridge called Bibliolatry is that it first lays down trenchantly and defiantly a theory, and then attempts to make all the facts of the case correspond with it. A theory of biblical inspiration which does not include and account for *all* the phenomena of the Bible is certainly imperfect and may become suicidal.

ARUNDEL. We must, however, remember that biblical Skepticism goes only a little way. It does not reach anything like the Pyrrhonism of the Greek or the mystic Negation of the Hindu.

TREVOR. No! For Hebrew speculation was far from possessing the daring and independence either of the Greek or the Hindu, and Skepticism is always in direct proportion to the general scope of inquiry, and the intellectual power of inquirers. But Hebrew doubters went as far as we could reasonably have expected them to go.

MRS. HARRINGTON. You compared just now the transition from Greek to Hebrew thought to passing from the open downs into the interior of a church. I want to know to what you liken the change from Greek to Hindu thought, both being examples of Indo-Germanic speculation.

TREVOR. You have asked a question on that precise point of our present theme which seems to me most interesting. Without anticipating my fuller treatment, I may say that the passing from Hellenic to Hindu thought is like the transition from our downs to the close, enervating atmosphere of a hothouse; or, reverting to the real state of the matter, it is like passing suddenly from the clear air and transparent skies of Greece to the low, hot, mist-covered plains of South India. . . . In both you have a supreme effort of subtle daring speculation, but with the Greek the extreme point reached is Pyrrhonism or suspense, with the Hindu it is mystic self-annihilation. Both are Skeptical extremes, one in the direction of activity, the other in that of passivity. The aims of the two classes of thinkers, as well as the characteristics of their thought, seem to me well marked in the contrast between the *ἀραξία* of the Greek and the self-absorption or Nirvana of the Hindu.

MISS LEYCESTER. We have now an opportunity of ascertaining how far philosophical thought is a product of certain races and of geographical conditions. . . . I can understand how the broad plains of India, with their dim horizons, should beget an idea of infinity and profundity, and how their sweltering sunshine and the depressed vitality it must produce should lead to pessimism.

ARUNDEL. I should rather ascribe the inscrutable nature of their philosophical systems to a mysterious connection with their jungles: both are equally wild and equally impenetrable.

TREVOR. You might have added 'overgrown,' so far as the productive power of Hindu thought is concerned. But your simile is inaccurate, for the obstructions you meet with in jungles are real, dense, and palpable, whereas nothing can exceed the extreme tenuity of Hindu metaphysical conceptions. Their thinkers will seize a purely transcendental idea or apperception, and will divide and subdivide it into yet more rarefied fragments, while each of these is submitted to a still more subtle discrimination, until we are landed in abstractions or supposed entities so ineffably impalpable, as to make us stand aghast at the subtlety that could conceive and classify them. The logical divisions and ideas of the Schoolmen are sufficiently immaterial and hard to grasp. The creations and definitions of German transcendentalists are still less easily apprehended, but the most attenuated of either of these is a gross material conception compared with the 'airy nothings' of Hindu thinkers.

HARRINGTON. All such sublimating exercitations remind me of an expressive Yankee phrase, 'Whittling the thin end of nothing.' Hindus are excellent jugglers, and I suspect they carry their sleight of hand, or rather of thought, into intellectual ideas, and feign rarefied conceptions which they are far from clearly grasping.

MISS LEYCESTER. I can't see why we should assume that, and I demur to the criticism that is based on the complete uniformity and coextensiveness of all mental faculties. Why should there not be the same difference in the reach by extension or profundity of metaphysical powers as we undoubtedly possess in our physical senses? I remember, when I went to Switzerland with some friends a few years since, I entirely failed to catch the shrill note of the grasshoppers in the pine forests, which nevertheless was perfectly audible to several of my fellow-travellers; and I suppose few people ever hear the scream of the bat.

Because we cannot grasp transcendental ideas after they have passed a certain limit of tenuity, that is surely no reason why other thinkers, as *e.g.* Hindus, may not be able to do so. In ascending very high mountains and contending with a gradual increase of atmospheric rarity, one explorer can get far beyond another by, I suppose, superior lung-power. Why may there not be a corresponding difference in spiritual apprehension?

ARUNDEL. I suspect, Miss Leycester, you have suggested the reason for the variety of opinions that exist among Western *savants* as to ideas which are familiar common-places in Hindu thought. To mention one instance: take the case of Nirvana, and the various interpretations of that sublime condition. Really to appreciate a mystic absorption which borders so closely on annihilation that we are unable to discriminate between them, requires a Hindu intellect and Hindu training.

TREVOR. The full implication of Miss Leycester's argument goes beyond that; in reality it is a plea for the complete individualism which is the logical outcome of all Skeptical inquiry, and which cuts at the root of all metaphysical and philosophical systems. Once grant that every man's intellectual reach, like other elements of his personality, is different from that of all his fellow-men, and the promulgation of a system of belief equally binding on all is the most transparent of absurdities.

ARUNDEL. Your deduction, Doctor, goes considerably beyond the ground covered by your premisses. Assuming the difference Miss Leycester contends for exists, and that the metaphysical insight differs in every case, just as *e.g.* the physical eyesight is held to vary, there would still be left ample material in the shape of common and indubitable truths for the formation of a system of belief binding on all reasonable men. For the differences between one man and another do not affect things clearly within the knowledge of each, but only distant objects and horizons.

TREVOR. True, but every man's intellectual tableau, like a landscape painting, must have its boundaries and

horizons, whether well defined or not. Similarly every system of faith or knowledge must have not merely rudimentary and acknowledged elements, but also remote conclusions and far-reaching implications. In harmonizing completely the man with the system there should be an entire agreement between these boundaries, which, even if it existed, could never be a matter of demonstration.

HARRINGTON. Pardon me, Doctor, but your theories, both of the individual's mental tableau and of the inherent completeness of any system, are purely ideal. A man's mind is not that complete picture you seem to assume, nor do the systems on which he brings it to bear possess that entirety needed to justify your Skeptical inference. A man generally accepts not the whole of a system, but merely a fractional part, 'be the same less or more,' as lawyers phrase it. An Eclectic, *e.g.* neatly pieces together a kind of intellectual mosaic from fragments of many, and these not always congruent, systems. Nor, again, are these systems themselves regarded as aggregates so firmly soldered together that you cannot accept a portion without swallowing the whole. Consequently, your plea for unlimited individualism fails in theory, as we know all attempts in a similar direction have failed in practice.

MISS LEYCESTER. But you do not dispute my position, that there may be differences in metaphysical powers between different races or individuals?

HARRINGTON. No, I do not. I regard the notion as extremely probable. Only we must not push it so far as to make every man's mind in all its parts and functions perfectly unique. That would be a misconception which, however useful to Skeptics, is absolutely disproved by human history, and by our every-day experience of social life.

TREVOR. You estimate truth from the point of view of human experience; I, having learnt the fallacy of experience as a test of absolute truth, am inclined to take an ideal or theoretic standpoint for its contemplation. Meanwhile we must not lose sight, in our unimportant divergences, of the more momentous theme we mean to discuss.

. . . I will therefore begin my paper on Hebrew and Hindu Skepticism.

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I. *Hebrew Skepticism.*

Skepticism being a method or, as some would call it, a degree or stage of speculation, it is obvious that it must be limited by the horizon of the ideas and mental characteristics of those who pursue it. Now the general idiosyncrasy or genius of the Hebrews, in common with the other branches of the Semitic race, is (as we have seen) religious, devout, and uninquiring.¹ We might therefore determine the nature of their Skepticism beforehand, and predict its limitation to theology. Accordingly we find that the unbelief of the Hebrews is only partial or occasional; that it is entirely unconnected with general knowledge, with philosophy, or science in the ordinary meaning of the words, and is applied exclusively to theological and kindred subjects. We with our Aryan tendencies find it difficult to conceive the mental condition which generally characterizes the Hebrews in the earlier stages of their development. The careless passivity which accepts theories and dogmas without an attempt to ascertain their value appears to savour of mental indolence. The serene incuriosity which takes little heed of secular knowledge as a subject of independent investigation seems akin to intellectual vacuity. The Greek loved to explore the wondrous material world in which he was placed, to evolve existing phenomena from physical or partially physical antecedents. The Hebrew, with a childlike sense of impotence and dependence, was content to ascribe to Jahve or Elohim the whole sum and order of the universe, and to ask no further. While the Greek investigated the laws of language, and by his inquiries contributed to the wondrous fulness and plasticity of the Hellenic tongue, the Hebrew indicated by his vocabulary the few diversities of speech of which in his limited scope he had need, and confined himself to terms required by his religion or his ordinary wants. While the Greek loved to trace in the methods of Dialectic or systems of philosophy the processes of his reason, the Hebrew contented himself with intuitional affirmations of truth. While the Hellene manifested an insatiable curiosity as to the manners and beliefs of foreign peoples, the thought of the Hebrew, like his country, was bounded by Dan and Beersheba. While the Greek

¹ Comp. on this point Renan's *Langues Sémitiques*, 2nd ed. p. 3, and *passim*.

pushed his daring Skepticism to an excess which occasionally refuted its own extravagance, the Hebrew betrayed only an occasional doubt or mistrust of a portion of his creed, his general reliance on the evidence of his senses or the operation of his intellect being as complete and undoubting as that of a child. What in the Greek, therefore, was a subjective consciousness, the source of his mental independence, the criterion of all truth, was in the Hebrew a purely religious faculty, a conscience that confined its verdicts to the devotional or ethical aspects of his faith. In short, with the Greek man's reason was in immediate contact with the problems of the universe, and the chief point at issue was his own knowledge. With the Jew, on the other hand, man was in direct connection with God, and the main question related to his spiritual welfare. Thus Hebrew thought as an instrument of culture suffered, as was indeed inevitable, from its excellence as a guide to religion. For whatever other attributes it possesses, it lacks the spirit of curiosity and inquiry which are the primary impulses to knowledge, and as a collateral defect it is also devoid of the largeness of view which results from the broadening of the field of intelligence. How far this apathy on philosophical subjects may be attributed, as M. Renan thinks,¹ to Jewish monotheism, may well be a matter of doubt, inasmuch as the exclusive devotion of the Jews to monotheism during their earlier history has itself become questionable. I should rather ascribe it to the general characteristics of their creed, education, and religious history, and in a minor degree perhaps to inherent mental tendencies peculiar to Semitic races. But whatever the cause, the effect is indubitable. The old Jews cherished a sublime indifference to human knowledge and inquiry of every kind, so that if ignorance and incuriosity be, as some Skeptical writers affirm, the highest mental excellence, they may be found in their pristine purity in the earlier records of the Old Testament.

There are perhaps four stages or phases into which Hebrew Skepticism may be divided.

I. The first is marked by the occasional expressions of discontent and inquiry which we find in the Psalms and historical books of the Old Testament. These we may collectively denominate the tentative stage of Hebrew Skepticism. It occupies the greater portion of Jewish history, and prepares the way for the formal dissent from national beliefs which we find in the books of Job and Ecclesiastes. The incidental marks of unbelief and dissatisfaction which pertain to this stage take their rise from ruling ideas of the Jewish theocracy. They refer (1) to the relation of Jahve with

¹ *Les Langues Sémitiques*, p. 5. Comp. Lassen, *Ind. Alterthums*, I. p. 494.

the gods of neighbouring nations, (2) to the doctrines of providence and retribution, (3) to the non-existence of a future state.

(1) The relation in which the national Jahve of the Jews was conceived to stand to the universe as its sole Maker and Ruler, of itself imported difficulties into their theology, for there immediately arose the question as to His dealings with other than the chosen people. 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' was a conviction necessarily springing from this conception of the universal sway of Jahve, and the moral rectitude and purity ascribed to Him, but was not easily reconciled with the favouritism which was the real basis of the national theocracy. The attempts made to harmonize what are in truth incompatible ideas constitute the first stage in Jewish Skeptical thought. No amount of astute reasoning could bring the limits of the universe within the boundaries of Palestine, nor make the position of so many populous nations and countries outside the pale of their common Creator's beneficence reconcilable with ordinary notions of justice. The common mode of harmonizing these divergent ideas was this: the ground of the Divine favour was transferred from national to moral qualities, but even then the assumption remained that the pure worship of Jahve and the complete observance of His laws were confined to the true Israel. Indeed the employment of some such conception on the part of Jewish legislators and prophets was necessitated by the various forms of idol-worship practised by surrounding nations, and with which the Jews themselves evinced no small sympathy. The attempts of Moses and the succession of prophets from Samuel onwards to confine their fealty to their own unseen Jahve were not always attended by success. After the settlement in Canaan, large portions of the nation, especially the northern tribes, were in a chronic state of hesitation as to the object of their worship. It is noteworthy that the only examples furnished by the Hebrew records of actual suspense and of something like national doubt is the halting between rival deities with which Joshua and Elijah reproach them.¹ The motives for this easy transference of their allegiance from one deity to another are not to be sought in any intellectual research into the being and attributes of the different gods, and a comparative estimate of the superiority of one above the rest. As a nation the Jews were largely influenced in their worship by the material consideration of good and evil, of profit and loss, which lay at the basis of all their ethics and religion. The deity who conferred upon them the greatest amount of temporal and national blessings they regarded as having the highest claim on their worship, and it

¹ Joshua xxiv. 15; 1 Kings xviii. 21.

is observable that every state of adversity or privation immediately incited them to idolatry. The national Skepticism or suspense which thus vacillated between Jahve on the one side and Baal on the other, was therefore a kind of commercial feeling determined primarily by temporal advantage, though doubtless the prophets and spiritual leaders of the nation were dominated by far other motives and aspirations.

(2) But besides this wholesale distrust of their national religion and Deity which occupies such a large portion of Jewish history, we find traces of another kind of Skepticism more insidious and profound as well as more dependent on the exercise of their intellectual powers—I mean the reasoned uncertainty of some of their thinkers as to current theories of providence and retribution. The theocratic notion of Providence implied a peculiar guardianship over the interests of His own chosen people, accompanied by a corresponding disregard of the concerns of all other nations and races. In the ethical universalizing of this idea it became tantamount to a conviction that God would reward the righteous and punish the wicked. Hence the usual marks of prosperity were accepted as evidence of the goodwill and pleasure of God, while on the contrary adversity in every form was an unequivocal sign of His displeasure. Now to the reflective Jew the reconciliation of such a theory with the general laws of the universe, or with the workings of Providence within the narrower sphere of his personal experience, must have been a task of considerable difficulty; nor can we be surprised at occasional admissions of inability to accomplish it. He could not shut his eyes to the fact that his ideal Providence, who made a distinction between Jew and Gentile, who theoretically awarded blessings to the just and adversity to the unjust, was sometimes guilty of painful and embarrassing impartiality. He might have employed Clough's words—

Seeing He visits still
With equalest apportionment of ill
Both good and bad alike, and brings to one same dust
Both unjust and the just.

Certainly there was not that distinction in the physical conditions of existence nor in the ordinary elements of human happiness between Jews and Gentiles which would have warranted a belief in the theory that each was governed by a different code of providential dealing. Nor among Jews themselves was the happiness of the righteous and the misery of the wicked a rule without exception. But if these eccentricities in the Divine dealings were

admitted, what became of the primary idea of the theocracy? Not only Judaism but morality itself seemed imperilled by the assumption of a Deity who 'made His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sent rain on the just and the unjust.'

This is the stage of Jewish Skepticism which meets us in the thirty-seventh and seventy-third Psalms, and still more fully in the Book of Job. The intellect of the nation, its extended observation and enlarged experience, come in conflict with its devotional spirit and its religious acquiescence. The Jew begins, in short, to think for himself. True, the effort is at first not very persistent, nor its outcome very great. Still it is an undoubted attempt to compare the facts of the universe with his own traditional orthodoxy, and every such effort has in it the germs of mental progress. As a result of this investigation, he finds many an instance of that anomaly—the prosperous wicked man. It appears to him that so far from being under the ban of Providence, as his creed and his own moral instincts would suggest, these ungodly men enjoy an exceptional immunity from the troubles of life. Notwithstanding their practical Atheism, they prosper in the world and increase in riches. The Psalmist is even tempted to ask what is the use of his purer life: 'Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain and washed my hands in innocency.'

We may observe that the form which this Skepticism takes is irritation or spleen, partly against the ungodly who falsifies the fundamental conception of Judaism, partly against the Providence which permits such a flagrant violation of His general law. But the sentiment is emotional, not intellectual. Where a Greek, *e.g.* would have distrusted a theory so irreconcilable with patent facts, the Hebrew distrusts the correctness in that particular instance of his own impressions. The final solution of the difficulty is also intensely Hebraic. There is no dallying, as an Hellenic thinker might have attempted, with the opposing horns of a dilemma, no endeavour, as by a modern philosopher, to find an indifference-point in which the antagonisms might be merged. The Hebrew goes into the sanctuary of God, and then he understands—in other words, by religious exercises, by an imperious demand on that profound faith which forms the distinguishing mark of his race, he overcomes and tramples down his doubts. As a result, he acquires the pious conviction that the prosperity of the wicked is only a temporary phenomenon. God does not forsake His own. Notwithstanding all appearances to the contrary, virtue is finally triumphant, and vice punished. The Psalmist has been young and now is old, yet never did he see the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging

their bread. Thus the momentary unbelief of these Semitic Free-thinkers is remedied by a return to the traditional faith. Finally and definitively the old truth still remains—probably in the glow of religious feeling invested with new force and significance on account of the very Skepticism that threatened its existence—that Providence looks with an especial eye of favour upon His people, and with a no less distinctly marked glance of disfavour on those who are not of Abraham's seed nor of his religious faith.

(3) The bearing of the Jewish doctrine of temporal rewards and punishments upon their conceptions of a future life is obvious. It induced if not an active disbelief yet a very pronounced doubt in the existence of any world beyond the grave. Death, in fact, with its ruthless impartiality furnished to the Jew another source of unbelief in the providential government of the world. He saw that wise men also died as well as the ignorant and brutish, and left their riches for others. As to any state of retribution after the present life, that was clearly superfluous when life itself was in his opinion so distinctly retributive, and when every human act was immediately awarded the Divine favour or disfavour. Hence, though in subsequent Jewish history the express denial of a future state was associated with the Skeptical sect of the Sadducees, yet throughout the whole of the Old Testament there is a preponderance of evidence to show that a similar though less distinctly avouched disbelief characterized the Jews generally. But its precise nature and limits is a question which we need not, for our present purpose, investigate.

II.

The second stage of Hebrew Skepticism is presented to us by the Book of Job. Here we have disbelief in current theories of providence, retribution, &c., asserted in a manner at once forcible and extreme. The problem on which the national intellect had expended its energies for centuries is stated for the first time in its fullest and most circumstantial manner, and no longer in vague generalities or incidental expressions. To add to its interest, it is conceived in a lively dramatic form, the action of the Hebrew Jahve in a supposed case of human oppression being canvassed like the operation of Fate in the 'Oidipous' of Sophokles, or the conduct of Zeus in the 'Prometheus' of Aischylos. It is true the plot is not elaborate. The characters are few in number. The evolution of the drama is of the simplest possible kind, and its *dénouement* only re-establishes the belief which its *motif* seems to assail. Nevertheless, during its progress there is manifested a considerable

amount of acute reasoning on the moral problems of the universe. The popular conceptions of Hebrew theology are submitted to a free examination, its centre dogma of the ideal union of piety and prosperity being investigated with fearlessness and unreserve. For the time being the typical Hebrew, so far as represented by Job, throws off his customary religious reverence and submission. He enters with his Maker into an Eristic equally bold and candid; he contends with Jahve as Moses spake with God—face to face.

The argument of the book is too well known to need detailed exposition. Job is the Hebrew Prometheus, the victim of the Satanic malignity which has persuaded the Supreme Being to consent to his temporal ruin. No doubt the declared object of this permission is the trial of Job's faith, in which Jahve places a more unbounded confidence than the result would seem to justify. This cause of his trouble, so honourable to himself, at once secures him the sympathies of the reader, who perceives that Job in his innocence and perfect rectitude of character is the victim of an unhallowed confederation between God and Satan. It is necessary to remember this in order to allow for the boldness of Job's exposition with Jahve. He accordingly suffers one by one all the calamities which diabolical malevolence can hurl against him, the saving of his life under such circumstances being really an addition to his misery. A more absolute contradiction to the ideal union of moral rectitude and worldly prosperity it would be quite impossible to imagine, and the test to which the Jewish dogma is exposed is thus one of the severest kind. Job feels his miseries acutely, he bemoans his fate, curses the day of his birth, resents the cruel and arbitrary conduct of Jahve, protests vehemently his own innocence. Reasoning from the eccentricity in the dealings of Providence which he has experienced, as well as from similar facts in other cases, the moral problems of the universe present to him the aspect of inscrutable enigmas. Good and bad, innocent and guilty, seem to suffer the same troubles, and to be awarded the same fate. The will of the Eternal is not that mobile, vacillating thing which the Hebrews suppose. The old theocratic hypothesis for the time appears a myth. Nevertheless, Job does not wholly renounce it. His mind is a centre of conflicting hopes and fears. In some of his lucid intervals he still looks forward to a solution of the enigma which puzzles and oppresses him. A well-known passage expresses not only his hope of a vindication of his innocence, but a confident expectation that he will live to see it. He knows that his avenger liveth, and that ultimately he will stand up for him on the earth. But the general tone of his thought is one of mingled bitterness

and desperation. In these moods his language is marked by extreme vehemence. With a sublime self-assertion he does not scruple to defy Jahve and even to dare the utmost exercise of His power.¹ This, *e.g.* is one of his outbursts. Addressing his friends, he says (chap. xiii. 13-15):

Be silent! let me alone that I may speak,
 And let happen to me what will;
 Why do I take my flesh in my teeth
 And put my life in my hand?
 Though He slay me I care not,²
 But I will maintain my ways before Him.

And in another place, addressing Jahve Himself, he thus expostulates:

If I have sinned against Thee, O spy of mankind,
 Why hast Thou made me the butt of Thy shafts?
 Why am I become a burden to myself?

Why hast Thou not blotted out my sins,
 And caused to disappear my transgression?

For soon I shall lie down in the dust—
 Thou wilt seek me, but I shall be no more.

Although not quite equalling, this language of Job's closely approximates to the magnificent defiance which Prometheus hurls

¹ Ewald's remarks on this relation of Job to Jahve are worth quotation: 'Zwar bewährt sich nun gerade hier am glänzendsten und überraschendsten die unermessliche Macht des guten Bewusstseyns und die unbeugbare Kraft der Unschuld: ist alles auf Erden verloren und alles gegenwärtige vernichtet, scheint sogar der alte äussere Gott zu fehlen und aufgegeben werden zu müssen: so kann die Unschuld mit ihrem klaren Bewusstseyn doch nie weder sich selbst noch den ewigen nothwendigen innern Gott aufgeben, sondern erhebt sich alle Zukunft überschauend desto kühner mit nie geahnter Gewalt jemeher man ihr die wahren Güter, ihr Bewusstseyn mit dem ewigen göttlichen selbst zusammenzuhängen und ihr darauf gestütztes unendliches Vertrauen, gewaltsam rauben will,' &c.—*Das Buch. Job*, p. 163.

² This is the most idiomatic rendering of the Hebrew words, which literally imply the surrender of all hope in Jahve. Ewald translates, 'Ich hoffe nicht,' and Renan, 'J'ai perdu tout espoir.' The language is that of desperation passing into indifference.

against Zeus.¹ Both the Titan and the Hebrew are alike in challenging the extremest hostility of their oppressors, but there is this difference between them, that Job still retains a reserve of trust in Jahve, or rather in the eternal truth and rectitude which he identifies with Him, whereas Prometheus altogether distrusts and abhors Zeus as an unjust and immoral tyrant. Hence Job's defiance, notwithstanding its bitter and reckless language, is in the highest sense of the term religious. It is an example of what has been called the 'ethical sublime.' Job's standpoint is expressed in the following passage :—

Were it Jahve's will at last to crush me,
 Were he to stretch forth His hand and cut me off,
 Even from hence would spring forth my trust,
 On which I lean in all my deepest sorrow :
 Ne'er have I transgressed the word of the Holy.

In connection with this indomitable sense of rectitude, which sustains Job in all his troubles and makes him half indifferent to the goodwill even of Jahve himself, is his sturdy refusal to confess sins of which he does not feel himself guilty. The doctrine that physical calamity infers moral turpitude he rejects with contempt, while the endeavour of his friends to force on him a sense of guilt in order, *more Hebraico*,

To justify the ways of God to man,

he characterizes as lying for God.

God forbid that I should justify you,
 Till death I will not renounce my integrity,
 My righteousness I cling to and will not let it go,
 My conscience shall not prick me as long as I live.

¹ *Prom. Vincit.* 1013, ed. Paley. Comp. also vv. 1023–1027.

πρὸς ταῦτα βιππέσθω μὲν αἰθαλοῦσσα φλόξ,
 λευκοπτέρῳ δὲ νιφάδι καὶ βροντήμασι
 χθονίοις κυκᾶτω πάντα καὶ ταρασσέτω
 γνάψει γὰρ οὐδὲν τῶνδ' ἐμ' . . .

A similar defiance of an Olympian deity in the interests of morality is also contained in the *Hippolytos* of Euripides. The most illustrious example which modern history contains of a like self-assertion in opposition to the tenets of an immoral creed is John Stuart Mill's well-known determination to refuse, under the extremest penalties, to worship any Being who did not represent to him the highest human morality.

He confesses that if he were conscious of wickedness the case would be different.

If I be wicked, woe unto me ;
If I be righteous, shall I not lift up my head ?¹

That Jahve has boundless power Job is quite ready to admit, but that does not seem to him to sanction a wayward and capricious, still less a mischievous, use of it. On the contrary, the possession of great power ought to produce a considerate employment of it as against human weakness, and it is because this principle of justice has been violated in his own case that he feels compelled to use such freedom of language to Jahve. We hence see how thoroughly Job asserted the instincts of humanity as against the requirements of theology, how determined he was to vindicate the rights of himself and his fellow-men against any wanton infringement even at the hands of God. So far, therefore, as an invincible sense of independence is a characteristic of a Skeptic, Job possessed no inconsiderable share of Skepticism. Nor does he evince any defective sense of individualism and self-assertion as regards his fellow-men. Here also he manifests a Skeptical disposition. His main position in the drama is that he is an isolated defender against some odds of a heterodox position. But the consensus of general opinion which his friends urge against him has no other effect than to provoke ridicule of their arguments and the dogmatic temper in which they are urged. Thus he addresses them :—

No doubt ye are the men,
And wisdom shall die with you ;

But I have understanding as well as you,
I am not inferior to yourselves ;
Yea, who knoweth not such things as these ?²

What ye know, that know I also,
I am not inferior unto you.³

Thus Job represents Hebrew Skepticism generated by reflection and by the free play of ordinary human instincts, clashing with Dogma on the very point where the Jewish conviction was strongest. His three friends may be regarded as the advocates for the commonly accepted creed. As Job is the typical Hebrew Skeptic, so Eliphaz,

¹ Chap. x. 15. Here, as often elsewhere, the language of our Authorized Version completely inverts the terms in which Job gives vent to his ethical exasperation.

² Chap. xii. 1, 2.

³ Chap. xiii. 2.

Bildad, and Zophar are Dogmatists. They represent the prevalent beliefs of the nation. The extreme readiness with which they infer moral culpability from adverse circumstances would be almost ludicrous if it did not testify to the strength of Hebrew prejudice on the point. For the greater portion of the poem Job remains in complete suspense. He still feels a lingering affection for the old theory which connected temporal prosperity with religious and moral rectitude; at the same time, he will not renounce his faith in his own innocence. There is therefore a conflict between conscience and human instincts on the one hand, and dogma and religious tradition on the other, which sometimes passes into desperation and absolute pessimism.

At last the Eternal Himself interposes to solve what is an undoubted *dignus vindice nodus*. But the solution is in point of fact only a reaffirmation of the problem. In two chapters of sublime poetry Jahve proclaims His infinite power: He vindicates His laws by asserting their wisdom and necessity, and deprecates human research by declaring its incompetence. However, Job's suspense between conscience and dogma is defended, and the conduct of his friends in inferring his guilt from his misfortunes is reproved. Skepticism is thus not only triumphant in the person of its great representative, but receives a direct sanction from the words attributed to the Eternal. Knowledge is thus affirmed not to be that easy possession which Job's dogmatic friends had deemed it, and the highest attitude a man can adopt in presence of the inscrutable enigmas of the world is pronounced to be confessed ignorance.

But the drama, notwithstanding Job's recalcitrant Skepticism, ends by reaffirming the doctrine questioned. Job is reinstated in all his original possessions. He has restored to him his children, his flocks, and herds, his men and maid servants, all the various kinds of material prosperity which were the accepted guarantees of the Divine favour. Thus his trials become only an episode in his life. His legitimate condition as a wealthy righteous man terminates as it began his existence; and whatever the effect of Job's sturdy independence, his arraignment of Jahve, his vehement declaration of the rights of conscience and humanity, the end of the story could only have tended to confirm the Jews in their ancient beliefs. We may observe also that Job arrives exactly at the same conclusion as the Skeptical Psalms, the thirty-seventh and seventy-third, in both of which occasional aberrations from the usual course of Providence, with regard to the conditions of the righteous and the wicked, are declared to be possible, though they are not permanent. Sooner or later the prosperous

wicked are duly punished, and the suffering righteous are made happy.

The Book of Job, therefore, so far as it was intended as a protest against a theory of Divine Providence difficult to harmonize with human experience, must be pronounced ineffective. Yet the spirit of the book and its very striking qualities were not likely to be lost. Undoubtedly it was an enormous advance on any prior stage of Jewish thought. The date of the book is a moot question, on which I do not feel competent to enter, but it was evidently written after a period during which there had been a large influx of foreign elements into Judaism, and the free tone and mental independence of the work are not less conspicuous indications of its origin than the numerous Aramaic words and forms of expression which it contains. Indeed, both the basis and method of its speculation are altogether alien to theocratic modes of thought. Its conception of Deity, of the universe, of providence, of history, exhibit a stage of Hebrew theology when the sacred privileges of nationality, descent from Abraham, exclusive enjoyment of Divine guidance and protection, the temple worship at Jerusalem, &c. are all lost sight of. A still more striking divergence from Judaism is indicated by the self-assertion of Job. In his reasoning, though it be intuitive rather than deductive, and spasmodic than continuous, we have the spectacle of a single individual conscience arraigned against the creed of his nation and his friends. Personal experience is accepted as being to every man the final test of the workings of God's laws. Job thus manifests a well-marked individualism which elevates him above the level of his nation, and brings him into juxtaposition with such men as Sokrates and Descartes. Certainly the former in his pleadings before the Dikastery at Athens does not evince a fuller, albeit perhaps a more tranquil and serene, consciousness of his own integrity than does Job in his arguments with his friends; and Descartes discovering the solution of his philosophic doubt in the verdict of consciousness finds a parallel in the man of Uz, and his immovable stand on the moral assurance of his conscience, from which impregnable fortress he is prepared to defy his friends, his religion, and even his God. The Skeptical tenor of much of Job's utterances cannot be said to be affected by the *dénouement* of the drama, and by his reinstatement in his former wealth. Like the extreme shifts we occasionally find in fiction, this was too violent and unnatural, too distinctly a sacrifice to a foregone conclusion, to impress any but those who were already wedded to the Jewish theory of Providence. Hence, in relation to Hebrew

Dogma, the book must be pronounced Skeptical. Given as data, the Jewish conception of the rule of Providence, and the experience of every man of the actual operation of that rule, and we cannot say that either the Dogmatism of the three friends or the Skepticism of Job has succeeded in harmonizing the divergent ideas. The words of the Eternal only affirm human impotence and ignorance in presence of the great questions of the universe, and so far justify a suspensive attitude in relation to all dogmas which claim to determine them.

III.

Proceeding in order of thought, possibly also of time, we reach a third stage of Hebrew Skepticism, that which affirms consciously and deliberately that all knowledge is hurtful, and that the highest ideal of human blessedness is to be found in complete and unqualified ignorance. No doubt this conviction pervades more or less unwittingly all early Hebrew thought, but the peculiarity of the stage of which I am now speaking is that the bliss of ignorance becomes openly and freely admitted, and receives the fullest possible imprimatur at the hands of God Himself. Now such a conclusion, avouched with all possible solemnity and regarded as a Divine revelation, seems to me to presuppose some preliminary examination into the nature and grounds of knowledge, as well as into its general effect on investigators. 'He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow' is a proposition which, whether true or untrue, could have only been adopted after some experience of the effects of increasing knowledge. This phase of Hebrew thought comes before us in the beautiful legend of the Fall contained in the third chapter of Genesis. In this well-known story, which I may incidentally observe I here consider exclusively from the point of view of a philosopher, there are certain features which seem to make its position in sequence of thought to the phase we have just examined in the Book of Job. Here it is not one or more alleged facts in the government of the universe that is called in question, but the validity or usefulness of all human knowledge whatever. The condition deprecated by Job, of complete insensibility, as the only one which could justify Jahve's severe trials,¹ is declared in the story of Genesis to be man's original state. Paradise is represented as a condition of complete ignorance, a garden in which the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is expressly forbidden; and when Adam, the representative of the race, is tempted by the delights

¹ Comp. Job vi. 12; xiii. 25.

of knowledge to transgress the command, he is declared to have brought disaster and ruin both on himself and his posterity. So far then as we may regard this narrative as revealing a phase of Jewish thought, it clearly manifests a profound distrust of knowledge in its bearing on human happiness.¹ That death should be the threatened penalty of investigation into good and evil certainly denotes an hostility to knowledge far transcending ordinary forms of Skepticism.

On this point the contrast between Hebrew thought on the one hand, and Hindu and Greek philosophy on the other, is very striking. With all his passive tendencies the Hindu cherishes knowledge, delights in the unimpeded exercise of his intellectual faculties. His culminating perfection of Nirvana is only attained through and by means of knowledge. No doubt he is quite aware of the disadvantages, restrictions, and disappointments that beset the path of the truth-seeker, and his consciousness of those drawbacks assumes occasionally the form of pessimism, but he is seldom tempted to proclaim knowledge itself as a curse. The contrast between Hebrew and Greek ideas is still more striking. It will be best estimated by a brief comparison of the narrative of the fall with the fable of Prometheus, the latter being taken in the mature form presented by the sublime drama of Aischylos. The close relation existing between these two legends has been often noted,² but not perhaps from the point of view belonging to our subject. A comparison of their similarities and dissimilarities will throw considerable light on the phase of Hebrew Skepticism we are now examining. We shall thereby learn the diverse idiosyncrasies of the two races, and we shall discover how early in the general history of humanity the painful experience was acquired that increase of knowledge means increase of sorrow. In the Bible narrative, man's primary condition is that of innocence and

¹ It seems that this idea was common also to other Chaldæan narratives of the creation, &c. of man. Thus we read in the newly discovered tablets of cuneiform inscriptions —

v. 16. He like me also, Hea may he punish him.

v. 22. Wisdom and knowledge hostilely may they injure him.

Smith, *Chaldæan Account of Genesis*, p. 84; cf. p. 88. See also the same author's account of the effects of the Fall, pp. 91, 92.

² Comp. e.g. Welcker's *Prometheus*, p. 73, &c. Prof. Blackie remarks, in his paper *On the Prometheus Bound of Æschylus* (*Classical Museum*, vol. v. p. 41, note), 'that the sin of Adam in Gen. iii. and the sin of Prometheus in Hesiod and Æschylus, however they may differ in form and in effect, are in conception and principle substantially the same.'

ignorance—indeed, the former is made to depend entirely on the latter. As another result of his ignorance, he is supremely happy. In the Aischylean drama, man, before the Promethean enlightenment, is also ignorant, but on account of that ignorance his condition is intensely miserable. Instead of being under the direct guardianship of God and in the enjoyment of a paradise where all his material wants are cared for, he is represented as hardly above the level of the brutes. Hence the first contact with knowledge as an independent possession was conceived by the Jew in the form of a temptation and a fall—a sudden and irrevocable deterioration, while to the Greek it was a starting-point in the path of progress. Both the Hebrew and Greek writers agree that the agency which produced this stupendous change in the lot of humanity was supernatural. The serpent in Genesis was probably in early Jewish legend, as undoubtedly in later, identified with the fallen archangel; and the Titan Prometheus was confessedly related to the ruling dynasty of Olympus. Both narratives too are alike in their motive: Prometheus steals heavenly fire in order to assimilate men to God, and the serpent promises that after eating the forbidden fruit man should become ‘as God, knowing good and evil.’ It may be added that the serpent’s prophecy is verified by the express admission of God Himself, whereas the Divine threat of death as the direct consequence of eating the fruit remains unaccomplished. Thus both the serpent in Genesis and Prometheus in Greek legend are supposed to be endued with powers of foresight greater than those of the Hebrew God on the one hand or Olympian Zeus on the other. Both stories agree that the enlightenment of humanity was accomplished against the will and intention of the Supreme Being, though in the Hebrew narrative the intention was supposed to be beneficent, whereas in the Greek mythos it was clearly hostile. Both further agree that the event which in either case resulted in the enlightenment of humanity imparted a new impulse and direction to man’s activity; but the former makes the new energy consist in a warfare with nature, which assumes in consequence of man’s fall an attitude of direct hostility towards him, whereas the quickened energy that ensued on the Promethean theft consists in the subjugation of natural forces, which henceforward become obedient vassals of human needs.¹ Lastly, there is on both sides a ‘set-off’ to the evil and good respectively that resulted to humanity from the thefts of Prometheus and Adam. For if in the Greek legend man

¹ This idea has been extended and modernized by Shelley in a passage of matchless beauty—*Prometheus Unbound*, act ii. scene iv. Cf. also the ‘Chorus of Spirits’ in the same drama, act iv.

by the possession of celestial fire was able to contemplate his fate undismayed, as well as to advance in the arts of social life, there was the drawback that he was perpetually swayed by unrealized hopes.¹ On the other hand, if after the theft of the apple man was expelled from paradise, there remained the compensation that he had attained, by the admission of God Himself, the Divine capacity of discriminating between good and evil. I will only suggest as another *possible* correspondence between the two, that the passage in Genesis which speaks of the mutual relation of the seed of the serpent and that of the woman, with a stress upon the *head* of the former and the *heel* of the latter, may perhaps refer to the prospective and retrospective aspects of human knowledge as they are represented in Greek legend under the form of Prometheus and Epimetheus.

We are now able with the aid of the illustration supplied by the Promethean fable to determine the nature of Hebrew opinion in one part of its history on the subject of knowledge. We perceive that it evinces a decided suspicion of the value of human knowledge even of an elementary kind. The golden age of humanity is portrayed as a condition of childishness in which it is hard to say whether ignorance, innocence, or helplessness is most predominant. The supreme excellence of human attainment is declared to be Nescience, and the maturity of the world is to be sought for in its cradle. Under the circumstances, reason becomes a superfluous faculty, having no field in which to exercise its energies, and no motive for their exercise. The single feature which assimilates the ideal state of man in Paradise with his actual condition in the world is that some portion of free volition is still left him.

As a dream of poetry or picturesque legend the narrative may hold a high place; as an accurate representation of man's highest state in nature or among his fellows, it must be pronounced grotesquely unreal. It evinces too strong a leaning to the prejudice that human excellence depends on imbecility. From the aggregate of human virtues it thus abstracts the ideas of courage, independ-

¹ *Prom. Vinc.* line 256, ed. Paley.

ΠΡ. θνητούς γ' ἔπαυσα μὴ προδέρεσθαι μῦρον.

ΧΟ. τὸ ποῖον εὐρών τῆσδε φάρμακον νόσου.

ΠΡ. τυφλὰς ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐλπίδας κατῴκισα.

It was of this passage that Shelley was thinking when he wrote the reproach of the Furies to Prometheus:

'Dost thou boast the clear knowledge thou waken'dst for man,' &c

Prom. Unbound, act i.

ence, rationality, steadfastness, and manliness. Nor is the parable of the Fall uninstrucive in the exposition it offers of the relation of the Supreme Being to man and his knowledge. God is represented in the light of a weak parent, who, in order to prevent contamination to his child, refuses to send it to school, and allows it to grow up in ignorance under the paternal roof. Such a conception harmonizes fairly with that which had already become dominant in the Jewish theocracy. The garden of Eden, as the land of Canaan, is the especial spot out of the whole universe which enjoys the favour and protection of God. The government of the world must be arranged with a single view to the welfare of its chosen denizens. But, on the other hand, man in Paradise is to be held in the primitive leading-strings for which his motions were designed. No original impulse, no wayward craving for knowledge, must disturb his infantile condition. Least of all must he seek to learn the distinction between good and evil, and so to elevate himself—because this incongruous fact is fully admitted—to the rank of his Creator. The fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden must neither be eaten nor touched. Humanity, like its traditional progenitor, has transgressed the command, and to that transgression must be ascribed whatever of progress, utility, or glory it has achieved. But as an ultimate fact, it still remains true, and the truth is loudly avouched by Skepticism, that the forbidden fruit, though not unpleasant to the taste, and a fruit to be desired to make one wise, leaves behind it an after-flavour of flatness and vapidty, and, what is still worse, produces a feeling of emptiness, disappointment, and unappeasable hunger.

IV.

What the legend of the Fall affirms of human knowledge as a theory and presents in an ideal form is in the *Kohleth* (*Ecclesiastes*) reduced to practice and founded upon the actual experience of a genuine life. The fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is here reduced to the comprehensive aphorism, 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.' This book therefore represents the extreme point which Hebrew Skepticism, aided probably by foreign influences, succeeded in reaching, and we shall find by a brief examination how complete and unqualified that Skepticism really is.

As to the form of the book, it consists of a series of autobiographical sketches of the author's experience. He represents himself as an ardent searcher after happiness—the definitive certitude of the appetitive life as truth is that of the intellectual life. To find it he starts on a voyage of exploration through the physical and moral

universe, and in order to make his resources in the ideal quest unlimited, he conceives and speaks of himself under the personality of Solomon, the favourite type in later Jewish history of the combination of material power with intellectual greatness. The book begins with a bold avowal of its conclusion. Indeed, its first and last sentences,¹ as well as the mournful refrain of its intermediate portions, are 'vanity of vanities, all is vanity.' Starting with the course of nature, he finds all physical phenomena subject to a Heraclidean flux or perpetually revolving cycles, and 'there is nothing new under the sun.' Passing into the personal narrative, he relates in a tone of mingled distrust and despondency his various experiences. He has endeavoured to find wisdom and knowledge, *i.e.* happiness, in intellectual pursuits, but he finds the quest bitter and its result unsatisfactory. He accordingly arrives at the Skeptical conclusion, 'In much wisdom is much pain, and he who adds to his knowledge adds to his sorrow.' He next engages in mirth and frivolity, but with no better result. He applies himself to active pursuits, and by the success he achieves manifests the superiority of wisdom over folly; but in a retrospect he finds these employments also vanity. He inclines therefore to a pessimistic estimate of life. 'And I hated life, for grievous unto me was the work done under the sun; all was vanity and a chase after wind.' In short Koheleth investigates the whole domain of the natural world, the relation of man to the laws of the universe under which he exists, and in every direction he sees reason for dissatisfaction and uncertainty. He cannot discern any congruous definite plan in the government of the world. What seems good, and is by men prized as such, is only apparently so. What appears evil may have natural impulses or predisposing causes to justify its selection. The satisfaction which pertains to riches, wisdom, knowledge, sensual delights, is not unalloyed, still less durable. What especially contributed to the disappointment and bitter mockery which characterized all terrestrial pursuits was the intervention of death. The gain of a prudent and prosperous life may perchance become the property of the fool. In any case every man must leave the world as he entered it, naked. Besides which, man in respect of his end is not a whit superior to the brutes. The same fate befalls all alike. Wisdom

¹ The first verse of chap. i. is the superscription, while vv. 9-14 of chap. xii. form an epilogue probably written after the rest of the book. In a collection of glosses on Psalms, Job, the Megilloth, published (1878) by Mr. H. J. Matthews, at the end of the notes on Ecclesiastes occurs the statement that 'from xii. 9 to the end of the book was written by Hezekiah and his company, and that Hezekiah was the compiler of the book.'

and intellect have on this point no advantage over ignorance and folly, nor riches over poverty, nor reason over brutishness. Koheleth also discovers that under the laws of the world moderation, not to say indifference, is a cardinal virtue. He deprecates as equally hurtful to human interests over-much righteousness as well as over-much wickedness. So also excess of caution and circumspection is pronounced to be detrimental. Some danger attends all human operations, however innocent or laudable, but man should conform himself to the manifest dictates of nature, remembering that there is a season for everything under heaven.

Nor is Koheleth's investigation of social discrepancies and incongruities more satisfactory. Man in relation to his kind, as well as in relation to nature, supplies him with numberless texts and occasions for the pointing of his Skeptical moral, 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.' He discerns, *e.g.* wickedness in the seat of judgment, and folly arrogating the place and authority of wisdom. He beholds the tear of the oppressed who have no comforter, and he sees the cruelty and unrelenting power of the oppressor. He discerns the numberless disadvantages that wait on wealth and prosperity. Oftentimes riches bring injury to their possessors, in the form, *e.g.* of additional care, sleeplessness, and ill-health. He sees that in the capricious march of events fools are exalted, while great men remain in poverty and obscurity, servants riding on horseback and princes going on foot. Human intercourse he discovers to be replete with occasions of vexation, trouble, and anger, though the wise man will endeavour to repress these passions. He is fully aware of the hollow conventionalities and false friendships that are current among men, and recommends a stoical apathy to popular rumours. He even seems to think that the social restrictions of laws, customary usages, also contribute their quota to the sum of human misery, though in the interests of peace he counsels submission rather than resistance to constituted authority. In a word, the social universe of humanity appears to Koheleth as devoid of any distinct plan or methodical arrangement as the universe of nature. Whether virtue or vice becomes dominant seems all a matter of chance; whether intellect or ignorance emerges from the crowd and asserts a superiority over men is altogether uncertain. The rule of providence is in actual operation a rule of thumb, and the government of the world and humanity resolves itself on critical investigation to a subtle, profound, but indisputable anarchy. On the doings of men, as on the works of nature, is inscribed in legible characters, 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.'

In Koheleth, therefore, we find a marked advance on all prior

stages, both of Hebrew speculation and Hebrew Skepticism. Here the doubter is no longer perplexed by the difficulties especially pertaining to theology—the problem of the existence of evil, the theory of Divine retribution, the denial of a future state. There is no arraignment as in Job of one particular phase of the Divine government of the world. It is the general order of the universe, the wisdom revealed by the collective sum of all its phenomena, that is here called in question. A universe where all things are in perpetual mutation—in which times and seasons, physical and human, are continually changing—in which wise men and fools, the illustrious and despised, reasoning beings and brutes, meet with the same fate—in which all enjoyment begets satiety or disappointment—in which men prey on and tyrannize over each other—in which death intervenes and thwarts the wisest of human projects, is not, according to Koheleth, a desirable universe to live in. It is true he starts with a bias against the reasonable, beneficent, inevitable features of the universe. He traverses nature and humanity with a kind of Diogenes lantern and a cynical profession of looking for non-existing excellences. He collects together whatever seems purposeless, ineffective, evanescent, or in any respect imperfect, and over each instance he pronounces the pessimistic wail, 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.' A diagnosis of the manner in which men of the peculiar type of mind of Koheleth are affected by aspects of nature and humanity most in harmony with their variable moods, might suggest whether the true reason of his dissatisfaction with the world is not to be found in a too great similarity of some of its operations to his own wayward and capricious temper. Perhaps the Skeptics on our list who most resemble him are Cornelius Agrippa and Montaigne, the former for his bitterness, the latter for his versatile humour. It would certainly be difficult to conceive a universe in which Koheleth and Montaigne would be unable to find some imperfection or cause of dissatisfaction. Indeed, the resemblance between the Preacher and the great French essayist goes beyond moods of temper. In thought and style the Hebrew is almost as *ondoyant* as Montaigne himself. Mutability and incertitude are his themes, mutable and uncertain is the mode in which he treats them. The fluxes and cycles he discerns in nature, the vacillations and changes he finds in man, the fickleness he perceives in himself—all are mirrored in the method of his book. To follow his reasoning in any consecutive manner is almost tantamount to his favourite synonym for vain pursuit—a chase after the wind. Here a sententious severe maxim inculcating self-discipline is followed by a libertine precept recom-

mending self-indulgence. Here, earnest and profound reasoning follows upon frivolous and superficial moralizing. In one place we have a devout Jew speaking with reverence of the temple worship, while in close juxtaposition we find an argument which might almost have emanated from an Atheist. In some places he lauds wisdom, prudence, and virtue, in others he vilifies or at least speaks slightly of them; in short, like Montaigne, though without confessing the proclivity, still less taking a humorous pleasure in exaggerating it, he revels in the fluctuations and inconsistencies he discerns in all things. One might even be pardoned for supposing that the disparaging terms which he applies to the vanities of the world are only half earnest, and that a universe which absolutely forbade his favourite conclusion would be of all vanities the greatest.

From this standpoint of the author's it is not surprising that *Koheleth* should contain contradictions of the most palpable kind. Herder and Eichhorn thought the book was intended to contrast the opposite ratiocinations of two controversialists,¹ and many commentators since their time have shown that the greater portion of the book may be arranged in antithetical propositions, of which half deny what the other half affirm.² Some have even gone to the extent of supposing a dual authorship. For my part, I see no adequate reason for such violent expedients. The phenomenon disclosed by *Ecclesiastes* is, as we shall find, common among Skeptical thinkers. It is one example of the method of thought which we shall have to discuss under the name of 'Twofold Truth.' The supposed contradictions are, in other words, only the fitful, variable moods of a genuine Skeptic.

There can be little doubt, in my opinion, that the thoughts and reasonings of *Koheleth* are derived to a considerable extent from Gentile sources, though the exact amount of such obligations cannot easily be ascertained. Oftentimes the foreign elements consist rather of a peculiar colouring or tendency than of direct propositions, though of the latter also there is no lack. There are

¹ On more recent controversy respecting the unity or duality of the Book of *Ecclesiastes*, compare Kuenen, *De Godsdienst van Israel*, Tweede Deel. p. 376. For an exhaustive review of the various opinions of commentators on the book, see Dr. Ginsburg's introduction to his *Koheleth*.

² A collection of these antithetical propositions may be found in Mr. Tyler's *Ecclesiastes* (London, Williams and Norgate, 1874), p. 47. Compare also Kuenen's *Godsdienst*, ut supra, p. 379. As bearing upon the question of single or plural authorship, the recently discovered gloss above alluded to, which attributes the compilation of the book to *Hezekiah and his school*, is at least very noteworthy.

traces, *e.g.* of Stoic and Epikourean philosophy in the book,¹ but these do not appear to me so pronounced and unquestionable as to exclude their derivation from other and more native sources. As a whole, the book must be pronounced utterly unjewish; its conceptions of God, nature, providence, humanity, are alien to the genius of a theocracy. Saving a few clauses, it might have been written by a Pagan and an Atheist. And yet we discover among its manifold inconsistencies an undoubted reminiscence of the old Jewish theory of Providence which is discussed in Job,² and against which Koheleth in its general tenor and spirit is a powerful polemic. Jewish too are the allusions to the temple service, the payment of vows, offering of sacrifices, &c. But when all these elements of Jewish faith are collected together, they do not amount to much, not enough to affect in any appreciable degree its Gentile spirit and motive. As might be anticipated from its complex character, commentators are far from agreeing as to its chief conclusion. For my part, I am unable to perceive that a single uniform conclusion can with any certainty be ascribed to the book. Its final determinations appear to me just as multiform and many-sided as its reasonings. Thus we have repeated inculcations of extreme Epikoureanism, not to use a more forcible term. We have no less explicit enunciations of Stoical austerity. We have decided intimations of a very deeply seated 'Weltschmerz,' occasionally verging on pessimistic despair; and these various tendencies are so commingled and interfused that it is impossible to say which of the incompatible conclusions is that preferred by the author. Perhaps in interpreting Koheleth we ought to adopt Montaigne's rule in estimating his own diversified conclusions, *viz.* that each is to be taken merely as the expression of the writer's mood at the time of inditing it. Assuming, however, that a single determination must be arrived at, I do not know that we can select a better than that which has been adopted by so many interpreters of the book, I mean that which affirms as the final guide and principle of all human action, the fear of God. In this case Koheleth would rank with the many Skeptical thinkers from Sokrates to Kant who, in despair of finding a solution for the puzzles of the universe, and therefore a satisfactory outcome for their speculative faculties, take as a pure categorical imperative the eternal existence of God and duty, and ask no further. Certainly, the brusque, peremptory manner in

¹ Comp. on this subject Mr. Tyler's work above quoted, and see Munk's *Mélanges de Philosophie Juive*, p. 463.

² Chap. viii. 12, 13, with which comp. ix. 2, 3, 4.

which the fear of God is enjoined here and there throughout the book points in this direction. As the last nine verses appear to me an epilogue subsequently added, I do not lay stress on the 'Hear the conclusion of the whole matter,' &c., though this shows that a similar view of the main intent of the book was held at a very early period.

To me the most striking features of Koheleth are what I regard his occasional glimpses of the truth in relation to the anomalies in the universe and humanity which so sorely perplexed him. He evinces, *e.g.* some inclination to evolve them from inevitable necessities in the original structure and mutual relations of the worlds of nature and man. Few remarks on the insufficiency of knowledge to satisfy man's insatiable desires seem to me truer, and few justifications of Skepticism more profound, than that contained in the following words: 'He hath also put Infinity into their heart, so that man understandeth not from beginning to ending the work which God hath made,'¹ where the measureless extent of man's intellectual energies, and the unlimited scope provided for them in the universe, seem to be clearly asserted. The same truth of the impossibility of satisfying the soul he asserts in another place, and in a manner which proves to me that Koheleth had explored the depths of Skeptical thought. Elsewhere he seems to hint² that the anomalies of the universe are not inherent in the nature of things, but are due to the arbitrary will of the Deity, and were introduced to teach men reverence and submission; though it is quite possible that he did not intend to make any distinction between the two theories. Another example of his far-reaching thought is found in his remark that prosperity and adversity are by Divine law placed opposite to each other, so that either seems to entail the existence of its antithetical. Among other instances of Koheleth's Skeptical wisdom, I must also class his protest against religious dogma or over-confidence before God, 'Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart hasten to utter a word before God; for God is in heaven and thou upon earth; therefore, let thy words be few.'³ Few admonitions were better merited by prominent teachers among the Jews, indeed it strikes at the root of every

¹ Chap. iii. 11. The Hebrew word here rendered infinity (*Haolam*) has been interpreted in various ways. But its signification in later Hebrew of 'the world' seems inadequate. Ginsburg, after Rosenmüller and others, renders it by 'eternity.' See Rosenmüller's *Scholæ*, *ad loc.*, and compare Gesenius, *Thesaurus*, *ad vocem*.

² Comp. chap. vii. 14, and iii. 14.

³ Chap. v. 2.

form of extreme religionism. No more prolific source of error has existed in the world than the rashness of fallible men in speaking in the presence and in the stead of God. If we may take it for granted that the motive of the book was a polemic against the formal dogmatic sacerdotal tendencies which culminated in the sect of the Pharisees, the rashness here deprecated would receive a still more pointed application. All these utterances of Koheleth's wisdom are put in the form of aphorisms, and are rather simple intuitions than results of logical processes and elaborate ratiocinations, but this is in harmony with the strongly emotional sensitive nature of the Hebrews, to whom methodical reasoning was a thing almost unknown.

V.

All the tendencies of Hebrew Free-thought already considered attain a somewhat advanced stage in subsequent books of the Old Testament and the Apocrypha. The belief, *e.g.* in a theocratic protector of the chosen people was irreparably injured in the minds of advanced Jewish thinkers by the national calamities that set in with the Babylonish captivity. To assert in the face of such overwhelming disasters a peculiar and exclusive regard of Providence for the Jewish nation and worship seemed from the religious standpoint of the people a denial of the most patent and indisputable facts. This is the Skeptical phase which meets us, *e.g.* in the prophecy of Malachi :

Every one that doeth evil
Is good in the sight of Jahve, and He delighteth in them.
Where then is the God of Justice ?¹

Vain is it to serve God,
And what profit is it that we keep his ordinance,
And that we walk mournfully before Jahve of Hosts ?
For now we call the proud happy ;
They also that work wickedness are built up ;
They even tempt God, yet are they delivered.²

About this time too we first find distinct intimations of a doctrine of future life among the Jews as a state in which the perversities and anomalies in human affairs might be readjusted and rectified. It was indeed only upon this newer basis that their traditional dogma of a theocratic providence could possibly be re-established. The Epikoureanism of Koheleth moreover received not

¹ Mal. ii. 17.² Mal. iii. 17, 18.

only ratification but a portentous and extreme extension in the Book of Wisdom. Here Jewish Free-thought assumes the virulent form of deliberate apostasy, avowed Atheism, and unbridled licentiousness.¹ Here the older traditions of Mosaism and the prophets are not only ignored, as by Job and Koheleth, but are ridiculed and scouted with bitterness and contempt.² The national faith is not only dead and buried, but its adherents, or rather their descendants, unite in performing a triumphal dance on its grave. No other result could have been anticipated from the profane alliance of worldly prosperity with spiritual excellence. Indeed, if any proof were wanting of the danger of basing religious and moral verities upon temporary and terrestrial sanctions, or upon a conception of Providence which subordinates the laws of the universe to the capricious needs of man, it is abundantly supplied by this portion of Jewish history. At the same time we must not regard this flood of immoral recklessness as exclusively national. There were too many foreign elements, especially Greek and Macedonian, involved to allow us to pronounce it a purely spontaneous outcome of Jewish thought. Besides which, the political, religious, and social disturbance contemporaneous with it must also be taken into account as a powerful coefficient. A somewhat similar instance of the combined influence of political demoralization and an influx of foreign thought in inducing libertine morals we find in the later days of the Roman Republic, and we shall have to investigate a still more remarkable example when we come to the Italian Renaissance. In the case of the Jews the old dogma was not long in re-asserting its vitality, and the intensely vigorous nature of that vitality in extremely adverse circumstances forms one of the most remarkable phenomena in the history of religious thought.

VI.

That all these various Skeptical impulses should have issued in the formation of a sect or school of Jewish Skeptics is only what we might have anticipated, though the tenets of such a sect do not indicate an advance in Hebrew Free-thought beyond the stages we have already examined. The origin of the Sadducees, nay,

¹ Comp. Grimm, *Das Buch der Weisheit*: Kurzgefasstes Exegetisches Handbuch zu den Apocryphen, Einleitung, pp. 27-30. De Wette, *Einleitung in das Alte Test.*, § 314. Ewald, *Geschichte des Volks Israel*, iv. p. 554. Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, iii. pp. 315-493.

² The distinction between the Skepticism of Koheleth and the Book of Wisdom is well pointed out by Grimm in his introduction to the latter book. See preceding note.

the very meaning of the name, is uncertain. Its possible connection with the Hebrew word signifying righteousness may refer to the stress which some leading thinkers of the school placed upon the Stoical dogma of absolute morality.¹ This theory harmonizes both with the Hellenic affinities which characterized the Sadducees, and with their polemical attitude to the Pharisees, who undoubtedly made 'righteousness' to consist of, and depend on, an elaborate ecclesiasticism. It is mainly as opponents to the extreme dogma and ritualism of the latter sect that the Sadducees emerge in Hebrew history. They represent the free-culture which, in opposition to the theocratic instincts of the nation, was foremost in embracing and assimilating those foreign elements of thought and life that resulted from the contact of the Jews with Assyrians, Persians, and Greeks. Their intellectual impulses were chiefly derived from the last-named. To the Greeks they were indebted for the love of discussion, a novel feature in Jewish minds—the mooted questions as themes for controversy and conducting the discussions in the *pro* and *con.* manner which betokens a regard for logical ratiocination. In the latter respect they have been compared to Greek Sophists, but their starting point and religious environment supplied a limit to these dialectical exercises which must have greatly impeded their free scope. But in contrast to the Pharisees and their dogmatic leanings, the Sadducees were undeniably rationalistic and free-thinking. Their tendencies were secularly political as opposed to theocratic. They represent culture as against Ecclesiasticism, and Gentilism in contradistinction to a narrow and exclusive Judaism. But while their leanings and sympathies were generally in the direction of freedom intellectual and spiritual, there is some difficulty in determining exactly how far their actual tenets followed in the wake of these generous impulses. In their conception of deity their views were undeniably broader and more tolerant than those which distinguished the older theocracy. Their traditional stress on Mosaism was probably adopted not as a belief in the exclusive superiority of that legislation as the only existing revelation of divine truth, but as an obvious mode of confining the dogmatic tendencies of the Pharisees within some reasonable limits, and preventing that stress on oral tradition by means of which the Pharisees, like other religious hierophants, sought to obscure the simplicity of the old law. The direction of Christ's own teaching was, in this particular,

¹ Comp. articles on Sadducees in Herzog, *Real-Encyclopädie* and Smith's *Bible Dictionary*; Wellhausen, *Pharisäer und Sadducäer*; Keim's *Jesus von Nazara*, i. 273, &c.

altogether in harmony with Sadducean tendencies, nor is this the only instance of a resemblance between the doctrine of the Sadducees and the first form of Christianity. Their relation to the Pharisees is not unlike that of Protestants who, in the interests of spiritual freedom as well as dogmatic simplicity, oppose the religious bondage of Romanism, while their political position is well illustrated by Wellhausen's remark,¹ that they adopted the secular principles of Jewish kings as against the theocratic hopes and aims of the prophets. The motive which suggested the curtailment of the dogmatic sources of Pharisaism may also have prompted their denial of the existence of angels, spirits, and generally of a future state. Thereby they cut at the root of the various theophanies, supernatural appearances, &c. which occupy such a conspicuous place in the early history of the Jews, and were so often employed to the detriment of the national welfare by unscrupulous pretenders. They also affirmed the entire freedom of the human will as opposed to the fatalism which necessarily forms a part of every theocratic system of thought. They set themselves too against the elaborate ritual, the fastings and endless purifications, on which the Pharisees so loudly insisted. In their social habits they appear also to have been less formal and ascetic than their opponents, who were scandalized, *e.g.* at their use of gold and silver vessels in their feasts. In a similar spirit they advocated the free enjoyment of such pleasures as earth has to offer, and deprecated all religious restraints in the direction of needless austerity. In a word, the Sadducees represent the wealth, culture, intelligence, social dignity, and refinement of the highest class of Jewish society, and may be compared both in these respects and in the common possession of Free-thinking aptitudes to the highest ranks of Athenian society in the time of Perikles. Some have thought that the standpoint of Koheleth represents that of the Sadducees. For my part, I think there is much to be said for such a theory. Independently of the fact that the author of Koheleth belonged to the Jewish aristocracy, not a few of the arguments employed and opinions enunciated in that book are known to have distinguished the Sadducees; and as they are put forward by a confessed sympathizer, it is no violent hypothesis to assume that the author was in all probability a Sadducee. If this supposition were provable, we should then have what we now lack, some authentic record of the tenets of the Sadducees represented from a friendly point of view instead of being, as we are now, compelled to learn their opinions from hostile sources.

¹ *Die Pharisäer und die Sadducäer*, p. 87.

The Sadducees were not, like the Pharisees, a popular sect. They stood too far aloof from the theocratic sympathies, the austere asceticism, the religious pretentiousness, which were the readiest avenues to Jewish popularity. Besides which, there was a difference in social status and intelligence which contributed to sever them still further from the populace. As a result of this separation, few sects of Free-thinkers have been more vilified and traduced by their dogmatic opponents than the Sadducees. The Talmud brands them as heretics, no doubt on account of their indifference to the theocratic beliefs of their race. They were stigmatized as Epikoureans, probably for no better reason than their objection to the religious austerity of the Pharisees. They were saluted as 'profane,' 'worldly,' 'men-pleasers,' &c. because of their secular tendencies in politics.¹ There was no phase of their Free-thought and religious moderation on which their adversaries did not affix some depreciatory or contemptuous epithet. Ultimately they may be said to have paid the penalty of cherishing ideas and opinions out of sympathy with their race and religion, the penalty that has so often overtaken liberal views and aspirations in a community of religious zealots. As a school with a distinctive name and more or less definite tenets they ceased to exist. But in the subsequent history of Judaism, the freer tendencies which gave birth to the Sadducees have been productive of no inconsiderable effects. Every Jewish Free-thinker of the Middle Ages may claim to be an intellectual descendant of those who first introduced breadth, tolerance, and Gentile culture into the narrow confines of their own faith. Maimonides, Levi ben Gerson, and other Skeptical philosophers, only carry on the tradition of the Sadducees. These later Jewish Free-thinkers rival in extent of knowledge, in boldness of speculation, in intellectual versatility, and, in a word, in philosophical competence, the leading names in the history of modern thought; and prove that the inferiority so often charged against Hebrew speculation is mainly due to creed, education, and religious and political surroundings, rather than to the single cause of inherent or racial peculiarity.

Our survey, necessarily brief, of Hebrew Skepticism has brought before us enough of its salient qualities to enable us to place it among the Skepticisms of history. Until we come to those later developments which Jewish thought received at the hands of such teachers as Maimonides, until, in other words, it had ceased

¹ The Sadducees are undoubtedly the Free-thinkers on whom so much invective and abuse are expended in the Psalter of the Pseudo-Solomon. See chap. iv. and comp. Wellhausen's notes on it, *Phar. und Sadd.* p. 146.

to be distinctively Jewish, there is no pretence for accusing it of any great excess of philosophic freedom, nothing, in short, which approximates to the Pyrrhonism of the Greeks or the Nihilism of the Hindus. As represented by the Old and New Testaments and other writings within the same literary cycle, it revolves round its central facts of the existence of Deity, and a supernatural revelation, as a planet does round its central sun. It has little of the breadth, the versatility, the insatiable inquisitiveness, the dialectical audacity, the intellectual vigour, the serene and passionless temperament of Greek Skepticism; nor, again, has it the daring freedom, the measureless profundity, the metaphysical acumen, the transcendental apperception, the dreamy mysticism of Hindu Free-thought. It ends as it begins, with theology, and with theology, moreover, of a peculiarly harsh, narrow, and dogmatic type. While acknowledging the blessings which Judaism has conferred on the religious life of humanity, we must still ascribe to its exclusiveness no small portion of that anti-human feeling which has made the Jewish nation amenable to the charge of '*odium humani generis.*' But notwithstanding the circumscribed character of its operations, inevitable from the limited range of the convictions on which it acted, Jewish Skepticism denotes a clear advance in the mental history of the people. It was the rejection for at least some time of the theocratic swaddling-bands which kept the nation in political infancy. The contact of the Jews with the outer world, like Adam eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, if it lost them their terrestrial paradise of the land of Canaan, certainly gave them a higher intellectual status as well as a fuller insight—had they chosen to avail themselves of it—into the actual conditions of political and social existence. The downfall of the national aspirations, the failure of the long-cherished expectation of the advent of a terrestrial Messiah, were compensated in their case, as indeed the destruction of illusions and untruths must in any case be beneficial, by imparting wider conceptions of the nature of Deity, the scheme of Providence, and the government of the world, and by suggesting a truer because more spiritual standard of human felicity considered as a mark of divine favour.

Nor for Christians who are so largely dieted on Hebrew history and theology are the manifestations of Free-thought contained in Job and Koheleth useless. They represent a vigorous and wholesome reaction against beliefs which, whatever their religious merits, inhibited the teachings of experience and falsified the true method and order of the universe. They evince an

inclination to make the reason the supreme arbiter of all truth, and thereby to assert the mental independence of humanity. They proclaim, therefore, a warfare against sacerdotalism and all other repressive and dogmatic systems. In any age and under any circumstances the spirit that inspired Job and Koheleth must have tended to secure freedom both of thought and its expression, even if that freedom did not attain to the unlimited range and scope which is implied in the full meaning of Skepticism.

II. *Skepticism in Hindu Philosophy.*

In treating of the Skeptical negation contained in Hindu philosophy, I need hardly say that the phase of thought which it represents is different on most points from those we have already discussed. While possessing distinctive peculiarities to which neither Greek nor Hebrew thought can lay claim, it includes in its wide-reaching scope, its multitudinous forms, its versatile many-sided energies, all that is most striking and valuable in both. With the Hebrew it shares the meditative, pietistic, acquiescent religious feeling which forms the distinguishing attribute of the Semitic races, while it possesses affinities with all the principal Hellenic types of thought, especially the ideal, negative, and free-thinking, from the Eleatics to the Neo-Platonists. Indeed, there are few forms of modern European speculation which cannot find adumbrations and resemblances in some of the numberless outgrowths of ancient Hindu thought. Still the Skepticism of India has in its fundamental principles quite a unique and *sui generis* character. Not only is it negative as compared with the suspensory character of Greek Skepticism, but it has a curiously metaphysical and introspective tendency. Nowhere has the genius of abstraction ruled with such absolute sway as in Hindu speculation. Nowhere has the human mind made such persistent and determined efforts to surmount the material limits of its environment. As a result of these metaphysical flights it is also marked by an unscrupulous audacity which disdains all appeal to human experience or the actual conditions of terrestrial existence considered as limits of knowledge and as indispensable factors in every process of demonstration. Thus the Hindu thinker moves in a world of his own, a supersensual universe he has himself created. By the plastic power of his intellect and the force of his imagination he is able to transmute what is material to spiritual, and, on the other hand, to conceive in the form of refined matter what is essentially spiritual. Hindu philosophy teems with intellectual creations in which it is not easy to say whether idealistic

abstraction or super-subtle materialization preponderates most. The advantages which Skepticism or negation are enabled to derive from idealism will frequently be shown in the course of our researches. That a race of thinkers like the Hindus, who are almost equally adepts at idealizing the real and realizing the ideal, to whom neither matter nor spirit, when required for purposes of intellection or philosophical systematization, presents any difficulties, possesses peculiar qualifications for negative speculation, must therefore be obvious. Accordingly negation carried to its utmost limits may be called the main characteristic of Hindu thought. Whatever presents itself as a subject or object of thought is *ipso facto* regarded as an object of non-thought or at least non-affirmation. But with all its negative propensities Hindu speculation is based upon a few rudimentary dogmas common to all its schools of thought, and these are of so rare and peculiar a character as to be almost restricted to Hindu thinkers. Thus all alike maintain that existence is an evil from which humanity has to seek deliverance. That the world and its deities perish and renew themselves in recurrent cycles. That the human soul undergoes metempsychosis from which the wise will endeavour to obtain emancipation by means of gradual self-extinction. That the present existence of every man is affected by the good or ill he may have done in prior states, and his future will be similarly determined by his actions in the present life. That the highest knowledge makes all religious rites and sacrificial observances quite needless. These propositions comprehend what may be called the national creed of the Hindus. They comprise a standpoint of human thought and effort partly theological, partly philosophical, partly positive, partly negative, to which no other system of thought, ancient or modern, bears resemblance. But upon this general soil of ultimate national conviction we find a luxuriant outgrowth of many various systems, differing widely from each other in origin, method, and object, and resembling each other only in the negative tendencies common more or less to all. Of these I have selected for our purpose the principal systems known as the Sankhya, the Nyaya, the Vedanta, and the Buddha. In all of them we shall discover, in varying proportions, sometimes Skeptical, sometimes negative thought; but all bearing some impress of peculiarity on account both of their dogmatic source and their manner of evolution.

I.

‘The ancient Hindus,’ says Max Müller, ‘were a nation of philosophers such as could nowhere have existed except in India.’¹

¹ *Chips from a German Workshop*, vol. i, p. 66.

But philosophy in India, as in Greece and in every other country where it has existed, received its first impulse from Skepticism. Its advent seems marked by the insurrection of Kapila—the traditional founder of the Sankhya philosophy—against the Brahmanic dogmatism and sacerdotalism previously existing. This event, itself the precursor of a yet broader and fuller system of mental freedom, *i.e.* Buddhism, probably happened about 600 B.C., and was therefore nearly contemporaneous with the first awakening of Hellenic philosophy in the school of Elea. The main tendency of Kapila's thought was the assertion of a devout and mystic rationalism (the word Sankhya means ratiocination or deliberation), as against the doctrine and ritual of the Brahmans. It announced perfection by knowledge as opposed to perfection by sacrificial acts. As the latter were based upon the Veda, Kapila must to a certain extent have declared war against the ancient scriptures of the Hindus; indeed, he pronounces the sacred writings to be incapable of assuring to men liberation and final beatitude. From the same standpoint of reason, he protested against the personified powers of nature by means of which vulgar minds assigned a direct volitional purpose to all its phenomena. Instead of these divinities of the Indian Olympus, Kapila imagined an unconscious, non-willing principle of nature, not unlike in character and attributes to the forces or laws which modern science has substituted for the divine volition of theologians. In other words, Kapila was a materialist, though not in the gross sense we attach to that designation. The Primordial matter which he regarded as the cause of the universe was a certain rarified essence of matter, possibly not unlike the *materia prima* of the schoolmen, or the nebulous matrix out of which was evolved, according to some astronomers, the existing planetary systems. It should, however, be added that Kapila did not formally deny volition to this ultimate and semi-material first cause; he rather refused to predicate it. He seems to have adopted, in short, the suspensive attitude of a Greek Skeptic in relation to it. This, however, did not save him from the imputation of atheism any more than a similar Skeptical caution, with regard to the gods of Greece, saved Sokrates from being indicted as an atheist. But Kapila's greatest service to Hindu thought was his vindication of the human conscience and reason. The chief object of his teachings was to concentrate all truth, and the blessedness which comes of possessing truth, in the personal consciousness of the inquirer. This was the Skeptical leaven which transformed the whole subsequent course of Hindu speculation. As a

rationalist, Kapila was a despiser of all mere dogma, except so far as it might be authenticated by the investigation and deliberate conviction of the individual thinker. He has accordingly been compared to Sokrates and Descartes, and there can be little doubt that he resembles in many respects those great defenders of intellectual freedom. Like Sokrates, he substituted inquiry for authoritative teaching, and studiously ignored the deities of his country. Like Descartes, he directed men's attention to consciousness as the only reliable basis of truth. He has also affinities with other and more modern Free-thinkers in his opposition to Brahmanic dogma and the exclusive authority of the Veda, for in his classification of methods of certitude, he gave the highest place to reason and the lowest to revelation, *i.e.* it is to be presumed, in the sense of unverified dogma. He thus broke the chains of Brahmanic tyranny and sacerdotalism in the only way in which chains of a similar kind can be broken.

But Kapila is thoroughly Hindu in his conception of the aims of philosophy and truth-quest. What Sokrates set before him as a disinterested search after truth unalloyed by any calculations of pleasure or pain, profit or loss, being utterly indifferent to what fate might have in store for him, Kapila and his school conceived as a method of deliverance from pain. The first aphorism of the Sankhya Karika begins thus :

'The inquiry is into the means of precluding the three sorts of pain, for pain is embarrassment.'¹ This human evil he subdivides into three classes—1. Internal or personal. 2. What springs from external sources (Human). 3. What has a superhuman origin. The general cause of these evils is the alliance of soul with matter, and its remedy consists in the liberation of the soul from material shackles which can only be accomplished by the perfection of knowledge. In the complete scheme or conspectus of his system he divides existence, together with the human faculties related to it, into twenty-five categories, starting from the principle of nature and descending by successive stages of transcendentalism, like the divisions in some of the Gnostic systems, until he arrives at the grosser forms of terrene elements. His twenty-fifth category consists of the individual soul as the single subject in which all these objective elements inhere. His summary of these categories, which we need not follow, bear a very remarkable resemblance to the teaching of Scotus Erigena.² More noteworthy for our purpose is Kapila's

¹ Colebrooke's *Essays*, vol. i. p. 272.

² Colebrooke *ut supra*, i. p. 256. Comp. J. Scoti Erigenæ *de Div. Nat.*

elaborate account of the hindrances to human knowledge. These he seems to have investigated far more profoundly, or at least with much greater amplitude of classification, than did Pyrrhôn or Sextos Empeirikos. In contrast to the 10 tropoi of Greek Skeptics, Kapila assigns five primary obstructions to the true working of the human faculties—(1) obscurity or error; (2) illusion or conceit; (3) extreme illusion or passion; (4) gloom or hatred; (5) utter darkness or fear; but these he afterwards subdivides into no less than sixty-two different kinds. Making allowance for the fanciful character and numerical extravagance which attaches to all Hindu classification, we must admit that his conception of the difficulties besetting the path of the truth-seeker is based upon a larger view of the complicated structure of the human mind, and the diverse agencies by which it is acted upon, than we find in the case of any other free-thinker. And the fact of such a minute exploration of all conceivable sources of error must be accepted as a proof of the Skeptical animus of the Hindu Sokrates. I have already noted Kapila's Skeptical attitude with respect to the being of a God, and his similarity in this particular to Sokrates, but the resemblance between the Hellenic and the Hindu stage of speculation is further marked by the high moral purity of the Sankhya philosophy, and by the fact that there is a second or theological phase of the Sankhya of which the founder was Patanjali, just as the Sokratic dialectic was succeeded by the idealism and theosophy of Plato and his successors.¹ The extreme negation of the Sankhya is expressed in the sixty-fourth aphorism of the Sankhya Karika as follows: 'So through study of principles the conclusive incontrovertible one only knowledge is attained, that neither I am, nor is aught mine, nor do I exist.'² This at first sight would seem to be an affirmation of the complete extinction of the individual soul such as we have in the Nyaya philosophy and in the Nirvana of the Buddhists, but in reality it is an affirmation of the unbodied soul's supreme existence. The Sankhya indeed expressly repudiates the charge of craving annihilation. In the forty-seventh aphorism we are told that 'in neither way, whether as a means or as an end, is this, viz.

lib. v., and see chapter on the 'Semi-Skepticism of the Schoolmen,' vol. ii. Evening ix.

¹ Colebrooke, i. p. 265. Comp. Thompson, *Bhagavad-Gita*, p. xlii. Other writers, as, e.g. Dr. R. Williams, *Christianity and Hinduism*, p. 279, make the religious successor of Kapila to be Sakya Muni, the founder of Buddhism.

² Colebrooke, i. p. 287.

annihilation, the soul's aim.¹ The final beatitude of the soul, according to this philosophy, consists in the discrimination of itself from nature (or matter). No doubt practically the separation of the individual soul from all terrestrial and corporeal association, from all functions and means of knowledge, is an idea almost as metaphysically abstruse and negative as its total annihilation; yet, theoretically, there is a wide difference between self-discrimination and self-extinction. In the former case the condition is conceived as intellectual rather than mystical, an active instead of a passive state. The soul in the Sankhya only gains knowledge by being invested with the 'subtle person'—a kind of half spiritual individuality, consisting apparently of disposition, temperament, &c. before being 'clothed upon' with a gross material body. It is in this state that the soul is properly the Ego, and while thus situated she stands in the same relation to her various agencies and modes of acquiring knowledge as the mechanic does to his tools. Nevertheless the state itself is an imprisonment, and her final deliverance is effected by discarding the senses, perceptions, reason, and other material agencies by which she has been informed and rendered capable of liberation.² Without stopping to point out the pregnant nature of this principle, or the manifold forms it has received both within and without Christianity, we can perceive its negative tendency. The pathway to Sankhya perfection is that of Skepticism. Ordinary sources of knowledge are distrusted. The conclusions of the senses, the convictions of the reason, are, as far as possible, discarded. The sole mark of truth left is an accidental, unregulated, unverifiable intuition, for the Sankhya perfection, like the Buddhist Nirvana, may be attained in this life. Nature or matter having contributed its quota to the liberation of the soul, disappears. The Ego, the man with his terrene investitures, his faculties and personality, is no more. Nothing is left but the soul in the full enjoyment of her eternal self-discrimination and self-contemplation.³

Nor is it unimportant to note that the Sankhya, in common with other Hindu schemes of thought, has discovered means of attaining a goal of negation, besides a Skeptical analysis or vivisection of the opposing position. Instead of confining human energy to a piecemeal abstraction from methods of knowledge of one mode after the other—first, *e.g.* taking away the senses, then the reasoning powers, &c.—it has found a shorter course by insisting on a direct contemplation of the ultimate object sought. The

¹ Ballantyne, *Christianity contrasted with Hindu Philosophy*, Intro. p. xxx.

² *Sankhya Karika*, Aph. lvii. Colebrooke, *Essays*, i. p. 278.

³ *Sankhya Karika*, Aph. lxvii. Colebrooke, i. p. 279. Comp. also *Aph.* lxviii.

greater part of Hindu philosophical teaching is taken up with plans to accomplish this result. The learner is directed to shut out the visible world and persistently to contemplate—nothing, or some abstraction equally impalpable. The power of this intense concentration of all the faculties on mere vacuity in a race so physically inert as Hindus is undeniable; indeed, its effect in shutting out forcibly all avenues to knowledge and inducing a state of idealistic Skepticism was more powerful in their case than any mere rationalizing Skepticism could have been. While the other chief Indian systems laid peculiar stress on this idealistic method, the Sankhya, as we have seen, combined it with ratiocination, its standpoint of pure consciousness being as available for one as the other.

A similar point of absolute excellence is also finally gained by the soul in respect of morality. 'By attainment of perfect knowledge,' says the Sankhya,¹ 'virtue and the rest become causeless,' *i.e.* as I suppose, unconditioned, absolute in spontaneity, in vigour, and in effect—the ethical counterpart, in short, of the intellectual perfection, a state in which soul remains in the eternal contemplation and enjoyment not only of supreme wisdom, but also of supreme and unsurpassed goodness.

Thus, notwithstanding primary dogmas of a metaphysical and fanciful kind, the thought of Kapila, or the system which claims him for a founder, is, on the whole, negative and anti-dogmatic. It opposes Reason to Scripture, the individual conscience to sacerdotal observance, and philosophical investigation to authoritative dogma. The mode in which he divests himself of ordinary knowledge is like that employed by Skeptics and Idealists everywhere. Nor is his final bourne more within the reach of the philosophic traveller than the ideal truth of which Greek Skepticism was in search, for it is as easy to apprehend soul in its ultimate stage of self-discrimination and supreme isolation, as to conceive a truth so definitive and infallible that no doubt or question should touch it. The extreme heights of idealism and mysticism may be warmer than the mazy altitudes of irreconcilable Skepticism, but the air breathed is just as rarefied, and ordinary life is sustained with just as much difficulty in the former as in the latter.

II.

If the Sankhya of Kapila gives us an example of Hindu rationalism, the Nyaya of Gotama may be described as a system of Hindu logic. Of the founder of this system nothing is known.

¹ *Aph.* lxvii. Colebrooke, i. p. 278.

Like Kapila, he may be said to hover uncertainly between myth and history, but the scheme of thought ascribed to him has obtained greater currency in India than any system of dialectic has among European nations. But in point of fact the Nyaya is not altogether what we should call a system of logic; it is rather a compound of philosophy, psychology, dialectics, and religion.

Gotama commences, *e.g.* the description of his system by the promise of eternal beatitude for all its learners. This promise, as M. St. Hilaire remarks, is the customary preliminary to all Hindu schemes of thought, 'the human mind being much more occupied with this subject in India than among ourselves.'¹

The system itself Gotama divides into sixteen parts, which Colebrooke termed categories, but which M. St. Hilaire has better denominated topics. The first of these, and the object of all dialectic, is proof or certitude. This he subdivides into four kinds, perception, inference or induction, comparison or analogy, and testimony, whether human or divine. If these classes are to be taken in order of their validity, as seems likely, they evince an apprehension of the real nature of logical certainty which it would not be easy to surpass. Authoritative assertion, *i.e.* dogma, whether human or divine, occupies, it may be observed, the last place in the Nyaya as it does in the Sankhya philosophy. The *divine* testimony of Gotama's fourth class alludes to the text of the Veda, and it is observable that the free critics of the Hindu philosophies, while professing to treat the Vedic text with reverence, do not scruple to modify, contradict, or ignore it whenever it suits their purpose to do so. Gotama's second topic is called the objects of proof. Its twelve subdivisions include the human faculties, their constitution and object, as well as certain abstractions supposed to be related to them. The eighth is noteworthy, as describing the practical suspense, the physical inaction, which, with the Hindu, is the counterpart of the intellectual suspense of the Greek. 'From acts,' says Gotama, 'proceed faults, including, under this designation, passion, or extreme desire, aversion or loathing, and error or delusion. Thus the wise man is he who avoids the three mistakes of having a liking for a thing and acting accordingly; or of having a dislike for a thing and acting accordingly; or of being stupidly indifferent and thereupon acting; instead of being *intelligently indifferent* and not acting at all.'² The state of perfect passivity here described is also the subject of the twelfth of matters to be

¹ *Dict. Sci. Phil.* art. 'Nyaya.'

² Colebrooke, i. p. 311, note. Comp. Ballantyne *ut supra*, Introduction, p. xxvi.

proven. It is thus explained: 'Deliverance from pain is beatitude; it is absolute prevention of every sort of ill—reckoned in this system to comprehend twenty-one varieties of evil, primary or secondary, viz.: (1) Body; (2-7) the six organs of sense; (8-13) six objects of sensation; (14-19) six sorts of apprehension and intelligence; (20) pain or anguish; (21) pleasure. For even this being tainted with evil is pain, as honey may be drugged with poison. This liberation from ill is attained by soul acquainted with the truth by means of holy science, divested of passion through knowledge of the evil incident to objects; meditating on itself; and by the maturity of self-knowledge making its own essence present; relieved from impediments; not earning fresh merit or demerit by deeds done with desire; discerning the previous burden of merit or demerit by devout contemplation; and acquitting it through compressed endurance of its fruit, and thus (previous acts being annulled, and present body departed, and no future body accruing) there is no further connection with the various sorts of ill, since there is no cause for them. This then is prevention of pain of every sort, it is deliverance and beatitude.'¹ I have given this passage at length because it represents the combination of Negation and Pessimism grafted on a system of dialectic which is the distinguishing mark of the Nyaya. Next in order to matters to be proven, Gotama comes to methods of proof, and in the foremost rank of these he places doubt. In reading his description of this 'topic' we almost seem to have alighted by accident on a chapter of Sextos Empeirikos. 'Doubt,' we are told, 'is the consideration of divers contrary matters in regard to one and the same thing, and is of three sorts, arising from common or from peculiar qualities, or merely from contradiction. . . .' Thus an object is observed concerning which it becomes a question whether it be a man or a post; the limbs which would betoken the man, or the crooked trunk which would distinguish the post, being equally unperceived. Again, odour is a peculiar quality of earth: it belongs not to eternal substances, as the ætherial element, nor to transient elements as water; is then earth eternal or uneternal? So one affirms that sound is eternal, another denies that position; and a third person doubts (remains in suspense). The sixth topic, 'demonstrated truth,' gives Gotama an opportunity of noting the contending theories of the different schools of thought in India, and the rarity of any belief which can claim the full consensus of humanity, and he ends his scheme by five or six topics, all of which relate to the value of dissentient opinions and controversial

¹ Colebrooke, i. pp. 311, 312.

arguments in establishing a truth or convincing a gainsayer. Each of these is subdivided into an almost endless number of classes, the distinctions between which are excessively minute and, I may add, unimportant. What this portion of Gotama's scheme proves more than anything else is the negative tendency of his mind.

Summarizing the general features of Nyaya dialectic so far as they have been determined and described by Western writers, and comparing it with Aristotle's 'Organon,' and the numberless systems to which that work has given birth, we cannot help being struck by its emphasis upon the analytical and disjunctive operations of logic. Instead of maintaining an equilibrium between proof and disproof, the affirmation of truth as well as the denial of falsehood, it seems to imply that the latter is the chief function of dialectic, that its object when carried out fully and unreservedly is more destructive than constructive. But this is only what we might have anticipated. A stress upon negative rather than upon positive processes of ratiocination assimilates the dialectic of Gotama to the other principal systems of Hindu thought, and is quite in harmony with the mystic passivity which constitutes the *summum bonum* of his system. A definitive determination theoretically, or a practical conclusion as to which there could be no hesitation, would be an embarrassment to a man whose highest attainment in life were either a passionless mysticism or else intellectual vacuity, and who regarded annihilation as the final consummation of all things. It might be added that Gotama's conception of the negative function of logic is quite in agreement with the views of some prominent logicians of modern times.

But in assessing the negative attributes of the Nyaya dialectic, we must remember that the part of it on which Western inquirers alone can form their judgments purports to be constructive; there remains a much more lengthy and elaborate portion which is professedly dedicated to polemical and destructive processes, and could this be thoroughly investigated, I have little doubt that the negation of the Nyaya would appear in a still more striking light. For our purpose, however, it is enough to bear in mind that the Nyaya logic, like the Sankhya rationalism, ends in negation. Gotama's 'Ataraxia' is supreme and utter immobility, the mystic quietism which determines nothing, denies nothing, and chooses nothing—a condition distinguishable only in words from the final absorption which, as the liberation from all pain, action, and successive transmigrations, he proclaims to be the destiny of the blessed.

III.

The Vedanta may be called, as it has been by one of its best recent expositors,¹ 'the orthodox dogma of the Hindus.' It is more theological than either the Sankhya or the Nyaya; indeed, the term which most clearly designates its chief feature is Pantheism. It also professes more fully than other Hindu modes of thought (with the exception of Buddhism) the attribute of making philosophy the ground of a religious cult, while another distinguishing feature of the same kind is found in the stress which it places on the text of the Veda, whence it obtains its name of Vedanta.

The principal and essential tenets of the Vedanta, to quote Colebrooke,² are: 'That God is the omniscient and omnipotent cause of the existence, continuance, and dissolution of the universe. Creation is an act of His will. He is both efficient and material cause of the world: Creator and nature, Framer and frame, Doer and deed. At the consummation of all things, all are resolved into Him: as the spider spins his thread from his own substance and gathers it in again; as vegetables sprout from the soil and return to it, earth to earth; as hair and nails grow from a living body and continue with it. The Supreme Being (Brahma) is one, sole-existent, secondless, entire, without parts, sempiternal, infinite, ineffable, invariable ruler of all, universal soul, truth, wisdom, intelligence, happiness.'

Brahma is thus the sum of all existence, material no less than spiritual. Both Being and Intelligence are included in his essence—indeed it is under the aspect of all-pervading, all-including intelligence that his Being is most generally conceived by the Vedantist. He is the Eternal impersonation of all conceivable knowledge. As such he is both object and subject of all human science and attainment. In all cases it is Brahma that knows, and Brahma that is known. Among metaphysical and theological conceptions, few seem to me sublimer than this. Indeed, I know none that represents with such absolute completeness the divine sacredness of knowledge, and which therefore places it before humanity from such a high ideal standpoint. No doubt our grosser Western intellects find some difficulty in comprehending knowledge which has no other object than itself,³ but this presented no difficulty to a race of thinkers whose religion and

¹ A. Bruining, *Bijdrage tot de Kennis van den Vedanta*, p. 19.

² *Essays*, i. p. 394.

³ In his summary of the Vedanta system (*Christianity contrasted with Hindu Philosophy*, p. xxxi.) Prof. Ballantyne remarks: 'This conception

philosophy accustomed them to self-concentration, and whose highest intellectual attainment consisted of an abstraction so severe or a mysticism so exalted that consciousness, the distinguishing subject, might be said to have been utterly lost. A similar jealousy of the prerogative of Brahma as the unconditioned makes the Vedantist extremely cautious in ascribing to him attributes in the sense of qualities inhering in a substratum. They saw that a quality regarded as an essential characteristic was itself a determination, and therefore had in it a defining or limiting tendency. Accordingly they held that while all attributes of a first cause exist in Brahma, he is nevertheless 'devoid of qualities.'¹ It need scarcely be added that He is absolute in space and infinite in time; indeed these attributes imply each other, for the illimitable must of itself be eternal, while what is bounded may be temporary.²

Considered in relation to the phenomenal world, Brahma is the alone source and cause of all the varied energies that exist in the universe. Many are the analogies, similitudes, &c. by means of which the different powers and products of nature, as emanating from a single indivisible substance, are exemplified in illustration of Brahma's multifarious energies; the same soil, *e.g.* producing countless varieties of vegetation, the same clay moulded by the potter's manipulation into numberless diversities of forms. Not that Brahma can be influenced by material phenomena or by the qualities of matter, for in truth matter is an error, an anomaly, and the material world is an illusion, the unreal semblance of a vision which cannot deceive the man who is awake.³

of the possible nature of knowledge, *i.e.* its existence apart from any object known, is quite at variance with the European view, which regards knowledge as the synthesis of subject and object.' But he seems to have overlooked the fact that the synthesis may and often has in German transcendentalism assumed a form in which subject and object are completely merged in an indifference or identity, so that each becomes indistinguishable from the other. Nor in popular religious metaphysics, so far as they are represented by Hymnologists, is the Vedantist conception of a subject which is its own object unknown. Compare, *e.g.* the following lines from a well-known hymn in *Hymns Ancient and Modern* :

'When heaven and earth were yet unmade,
When Time was yet unknown,
Thou in Thy bliss of majesty
Didst live and love alone.'

¹ Bruining, *Bijdrage*, &c. p. 42. Colebrooke, *Essays*, i. p. 376.

² Bruining, *ibid.* Colebrooke, *Essays*, i. p. 385.

³ 'De voorstelling der wereld is eene dwaling, een droombeeld; zij is

As the supreme source of all the phenomena and all the energies existing in the universe, Brahma is necessarily the cause of evil as well as of good. He must, therefore, be conceived as involuntarily controlled by some power superior to himself, as the Olympian Zeus was by fate; while another result of his diverse energizing, regarded from the standpoint of the contemplative observer, is his incomprehensibility. Hence it is said 'to him who knows him Brahma is unknown, he is known only to him who knows him not.'¹ Devout and conscious ignorance is thus the only suitable attitude for the Vedantist worshipper.

What is a noteworthy characteristic of the Vedanta, and one on which it differs from most of the chief schools of Hindu thought, is its doctrine as to human souls. These are regarded as parts of Brahma—to quote Colebrooke:² 'Individual souls, emanating from the supreme one, are likened to innumerable sparks issuing from a blazing fire. From him they proceed and to him they return, being of the same essence, the soul which governs the body together with its organs; neither is it born, nor does it die. It is a portion of the divine substance; and as such infinite, immortal, intelligent, sentient, true.

'It is governed by the supreme. Its activity is not of its essence, but inductive through its organs: as an artizan taking his tools labours and undergoes evil and pain, but laying them aside reposes, so is the soul active and a sufferer by means of its organs, but divested of them and returning to the supreme one, is at rest and is happy. It is not a free and independent agent, but made to act by the supreme one, who causes it to do in one state as it had purposed in a former condition. According to its predisposition for good or evil, for enjoined or forbidden deeds, it is made to do good or evil, and thus it has retribution for previous works. Yet Brahma is not the author of evil; for so it has been from eternity, the series of preceding forms, and of dispositions manifested in them, has been infinite.'

The soul is encased in body as in a succession of sheaths. The first or inner case is the intellectual, the next is the mental. The third is the organic or vital case; these three sheaths constitute the subtle frame—the Vedantist analogue of the 'subtle person' of the Sankhya philosophy—which attends the soul in its transmigrations. The gross body which it animates from birth to death in any step of its transmigrations is composed of the coarse elements, een subjectief begrip van den geest, waaraan niets objectiefs beantwoordt.' Bruining, *Bijdrage*, p. 45.

¹ Bruining, &c. p. 43.

² *Essays*, i. p. 395.

&c. The general tenor of Vedantist speculation may be inferred from these remarks. As a rule it is marked by extreme subtlety, by excessive subdivision, and by a predisposition to subordinate matter to spirit. Turning now to these freer features of the Vedanta which bring it within the scope of our subject, we find that it has a peculiar and elaborate theory of ignorance. Ignorance is the subjective form and collateral of matter. Brahma being intelligence and abstract existence, ignorance and matter are necessarily antagonistic entities. No doubt they are also inevitable on the hypothesis of a creation, for it is through ignorance that the creative energy of the Supreme Being is rendered possible.¹ 'Nor is it less inevitable for man, for without this ignorance the soul would know itself to be God, there would be nothing but God. There would be no world.'² It is, therefore, this ignorance that makes the world. 'Hence, it is defined as the *potentia* (in the Aristotelian sense) of the phenomenal world.'³ The bearing of this conception on human knowledge is readily seen. Man, originally a portion of Brahma or infinite intelligence, finds in the actual world that his powers are circumscribed, his native proclivities thwarted by phenomena, and by the physical faculties which enable him to apprehend them. He becomes conscious that his soul is in bondage, and that the only mode of deliverance—his sole means of reunion with the primal source of Brahma—is its liberation from the trammels of matter.

The Vedantist starts therefore with the assumption that matter—the visible world—all his sensuous perceptions—are so many sources of error, fraud, and deceit. He must procure deliverance by a course of Skeptical repression and religious asceticism. His senses, all the elaborate physiological machinery which connects him with the outer world as an object of knowledge, he must learn to distrust. His appetites and emotions, everything that conjoins him with phenomena as objects of feeling, he must systematically repress. To his enlightened consciousness the world must present the appearance of an elaborate illusion, against whose glamour and deceptiveness he is required persistently to struggle. He must regard himself as a spectator watching the shifting scenes of a

¹ Bruining, &c. p. 49.

² Ballantyne, *ut supra*, p. xxxiii.

³ 'De onwetendheid wordt vervolgens gedefiniëerd als de *Potentia der phenomenale wereld* en is daardoor als het ware weder iets materiëels geworden. Door die onwetendheid wordt de scheppende werkzaamheid van het Opperwezen mogelijk gemaakt, want daardoor zijn in het hoogste wezen vereenigd de volmaakte rust, die zijn eigenlijk wezen vormt, en de werkende kracht, die onafscheidelijk met de illusie is verbonden.'—Bruining, p. 49 (who remarks on the similarity of Spinoza's doctrines), note 2.

theatre and in perpetual danger of mistaking them for actual events, or like a man who in sleep takes the illusions of dream-land for solid substantial realities.

The distinction between the Vedantist and the Greek Skeptic as to the distrust of ordinary knowledge, and the means of acquiring it common to each, is not far to find. The Hellenic thinker regarded it as a matter of philosophical caution. To the Hindu it appeared a solemn religious duty. With all his native aptitude for Skepticism, his keenness in discerning errors of sensuous perception or ratiocination, the Greek Skeptic, if we except Herakleitos as doubtful, never attained the sublime heights of disbelief in objective existence implied in the Maya of the Vedantists. Although the outer world might occasion mistakes in the observer, yet to the Greek it was real enough, indeed it constituted his only realm of reality. It was the world beyond the grave that he regarded as shadowy and unsubstantial; whereas to the Vedantist, as to the Christian mystic, the very opposite was the case. To him the march of terrestrial phenomena, the progress of events in his own personal experience, were all as unreal as the scenes of a phantasmagoria. He delighted to probe below the surface of phenomena and to reach the immanent spirit and reality underlying them—to get beneath the changes of time to the durable realm of eternity—as if they were really separable; to dive below the material universe into the fathomless depths of infinite space. Matter, his experience, quickened by religious fervour and transcendental aptitudes, assured him was subject to change, fluctuation, growth, and decay; he posited a spiritual entity liable to none of those vicissitudes. His own mental being was also the object of change, sensational, intellectual, and emotional, the plaything of an environment alien to its birth, constitution, and destiny; and he therefore endeavoured to merge it in the infinite being of reality. This, the attainment of Brahma, was the common haven of his intellectual search for immutable truth, of his ethical desire for supreme perfection, of his devotional aspiration for final union with the Supreme. He conceived it to be gained when the personal consciousness became indistinct, when the soul recognized herself as Brahma, when the boundary line between subject and object became lost in a hazy semi-consciousness capable of distinguishing nothing.¹ To effect this, the potent agencies of religious devotion, mental concentration, physical asceticism, were employed. Doubtless the result of these efforts was the submerging of the Hindu's physical environment in a diffused and misty indistinctness, resembling probably the waning

¹ Comp. Bruining, p. 85.

consciousness which a man feels when going to sleep. This condition, which was really due to impaired physical powers as well as to intense reflection within a very circumscribed area, presented itself to the Vedantist as a partaking of Brahma—the resolving of the individual soul into the All-spirit of the universe. It is the same stage which the Buddhist, with perhaps a truer perception of its real nature, characterized as Nirvana, in other words, annihilation.

Estimated from the intellectual standpoint of our own day, we cannot say that the Vedantist mysticism contains so many elements of mental freedom as some other types of thought we have investigated. It is greatly inferior, for instance, to the philosophical suspense of the Greek. Uncertainty, distrust of the phenomenal world, induced in the Greek an addition of mental energy. The perpetual equipoise of antagonisms kept his intellect in a state of healthy tension. The continued oscillation between affirmation and denial implied movement, and so far exercise, whereas doubt in the outer world was the Vedantist's mode of attaining mental passivity and somnolency. Still there remained the important fact that man's thought was constituted the supreme tribunal of truth and knowledge; that existence only existed—if the tautology be allowed—by means of its actual perception; that thought and being were conditional and commensurate each with the other. The starting-point was therefore individualistic and independent, whatever might be said of the mystical goal wherein it terminated.

The result of this rationalistic foundation may be further traced in other Vedantist conceptions. A peculiar stress on the text of the Veda was a distinguishing mark of this school of thought. Its utterances were regarded as the verbal cause of creation. It was an authoritative emanation from Brahma. But yet the independent standpoint of the Vedantists, their conception of the human soul as a part of Brahma, saved them from what might be termed Vedalatry. Hence they were not inclined to silence reason in the interests of Scripture, nor to take each single text as an authoritative *ipse dixit*, above question or criticism. Such a position would indeed have cut the ground from beneath the chief article of their creed—the identity of the human soul with Brahma. They therefore discriminated between spirit and letter, and refused to be bound by verbal fetters or to have their spiritual freedom nullified by textual restraints.¹

Another result of a similar kind was the spiritualization of their

¹ Colebrooke, *Essays*, i. 375. Comp. Bruining, p. 28.

worship, its freedom from dogmatic and merely didactic propositions. To the highly cultivated, transcendental apperceptions of the Vedantist, the limitations of written language must have been as embarrassing as those derived from a material universe, and their worship seems to have been singularly free from tenets of a harsh and arbitrary character. It was also subjective in its nature, making its object, not interested interferences with the laws of the universe, but the religious edification of the worshipper. Even the denial of the free-will of the individual soul, and the ascription of all its acts to the Supreme Being, helped, together with the doctrine of its identity with Brahma, to confirm and intensify rather than repress its spiritual freedom.¹

Nor, in enumerating the free aspects of Vedantism, must we leave out of consideration the effect of its belief in the soul's final perfection as a deliverance from all material restraints, and from the knowledge of matter which in reality was ignorance. It was something to have affirmed that redemption consisted in spiritual knowledge, and that by the cultivation of the mental faculties alone could men gain freedom and Brahma. No doubt the knowledge of the Vedantist was different from that which we understand by the term. Its tendencies were negative rather than positive, destructive rather than constructive, and its aim was a mystic passivity in which the individual appeared to be lost. But whatever disadvantages pertain to such a belief by reason of inordinate introspection, of intellectual numbness in its later stages, of defective physical energy, it possesses the advantages of maintaining the dignity of knowledge and humanity, and of counteracting dogmatism regarded as an *ab-extra* importation. These advantages, indeed, Vedantism shares with every system of idealism and introspective independence. In common with other Hindu modes of thought, it affords an illustration of the important part played by virtual Skepticism in every scheme of transcendental thought. Its ultimate issue, the complete interfusion of subject and object, of the human soul and Brahma, was a standpoint which, though dissimilar from other goals of Skepticism, *e.g.* the *Ataraxia* of the Greek Skeptic, was just as impatient of arbitrary and authoritative dictation from without. It was a dogma so far Skeptical that it was absolutely destructive of all dogmas excepting itself.

¹ We have the same causes productive of the same effects in the religious philosophy of Malebranche.

IV.

Although Buddhism is not generally classed among Hindu modes of thought, no sketch of Oriental Skepticism would be complete that took no account of what may claim to be its most striking manifestation. In Buddhism we are confronted with a scheme of dogmatic negation which is not only a system of philosophy, but one of the most widely extended of the religions of humanity. To me the phenomena seems the most remarkable in all the records of philosophical unfaith. In ancient Greece and in modern Europe we have unbelievers and Atheists as individuals, and occasionally in schools, but here is an elaborate scheme of the blankest negation which reckons as its adherents no less a number than four hundred and fifty-five million human beings. Nor is its extent as a principle of Negation less remarkable than its wide diffusion. The total suspense of the Greek Skeptic, the Free-thought of the Renaissance, the most negative among modern schemes of thought, all pale into utter insignificance compared with Buddhist Nihilism. All the schools of Hindu thought represent varying phases of doubt. We find in them denial of creation, of the Supreme Being, of ordinary modes of knowledge, of material existence; but in each case there is a reserve of belief in something, if in nothing else at least in infinite spirit and in human consciousness. But in Buddhism there is absolutely nothing left, or I should say absolute nothing alone is left. The universe is swept clean of all conceivable objects of faith, and a clearance no less complete is effected of all subjects of faith. The Buddhist has one deity, one sole object of contemplation, one sole article of belief, one motive of his energies, one single object of his aspiration, and that is—Nothingness. Whatever might be said of the unfitness of negative modes of thought for certain nations or epochs or under given circumstances, it can hardly be asserted in the face of Buddhism that negation even of an extreme kind cannot claim a prominent place among the convictions of humanity. Nor is our wonderment at such a phenomenon lessened when we come to investigate it further, for we find that so far from an utter denial of beliefs almost universally held among men operating detrimentally to Buddhists, it is indisputable that the religion of negation has contributed to the civilization and enlightenment of not a few of the Eastern races among whom it has been disseminated; while as to its effect on ethical practice, no religion, with the single exception of Christianity, has a purer code of morals than Buddhism. We may therefore regard it as the protest of history and of indisputable fact against the allegation so often made that morality is

under all circumstances and among all peoples so inseparably joined to definite theological beliefs that it cannot exist without their authentication and support.

The mythical but in many respects beautiful legend of Sakya Muni is too well known in modern literature to need recapitulation at our hands. A prince, inspired by the physical evils of humanity, especially by its liability to sickness, old age, and death, conceives the purpose of liberating his fellow-men from these various ills. Finding, however, that these are necessary incidents of existence, his project assumes the audacious but indisputably thorough form of minimizing their source, in other words, of suppressing those feelings, impulses, and energies which constitute the prominent features of vitality. He thus endeavours, and this is the main object of his teaching, to induce an emotional and intellectual passivity, a condition of self-negation hardly distinguishable from death. This is the more necessary because in common with other Hindu thinkers Sakya Muni also believes in the indefinite prolongation of existence by means of transmigrations. His conception of entire freedom is therefore a state of absolute extinction, which he calls Nirvana. We thus perceive that the Buddha's search was not so much for intellectual as for what he esteemed practical truth, the deliverance of men from the miseries of life and repeated births. No doubt existence presented itself to him as in a sense erroneous, not as being, like the Maya of the Vedantist, an illusion, but, in Schopenhauer's meaning, 'a uselessly interrupting episode in the blissful repose of nothingness.' Truth in Sakya Muni's conception was the synonym of absolute negation; for this alone was permanent and unchangeable. Every mode of existence being a departure from this truth was of necessity a falsehood. Hence the pursuits of mankind, their ideas, opinions, passions, and wishes, were proved to be false. They emphasized and rendered obtrusive the existence which was itself a lie, besides adding to its inevitable unhappiness. To a certain extent Sakya Muni endeavoured to divert all these human passions and desires by concentrating them on the nothingness which was the sole deity and heaven of his faith, but the concentration was in point of fact only another mode of repression. The disciple's culminating point of excellence was gained when the aspiration was lost in the nothingness it desired. The attempt, though impossible, was characterized by such inimitable daring, such a superb contempt for the ordinary convictions of mankind, that one cannot help admiring it. Undoubtedly there could be no error or pain or any other evil without existence. No expedient can be so effective in preventing visual error as destroying one's eyesight, and it is quite impossible for a man totally deaf to hear

falsely. All the misleading perceptions and inferences on which Greek and other Skeptics laid such stress had the ground cut from beneath them by such an unconditional negation as that of Sakya Muni's. If the negation propounded as a dogma really included itself, just as Greek Skepticism was held to involve its own self-destruction, that was a comparatively small matter. If it involved a palpable contradiction of sensation and consciousness, the consequence was still less. The aspirant after absolute nothingness might have grimly retorted that he had no wish to save from ultimate annihilation even his own dialectical weapons. Besides which, all philosophers, even those whose designs are not nihilistic but dogmatic, show an admirable capacity for ignoring both material and mental objections to their conclusions, and from their very standpoint Buddhist thinkers are peculiarly liable to charges of gross self-contradiction.

In the accomplishment of his mission—the preaching of the gospel of extinction—the great Indian Liberator had to oppose the influence of the Brahmans, and especially to break the yoke of the dogmatic and ritual chains by which they had so long held the minds of the people in slavery. From the Brahmanical point of view, he is, therefore, a Skeptic and a Free-thinker, one who opposed himself to the religious usages and traditions of his ancestors, while he in return characterized his foes as hypocrites, charlatans, the interested protectors of error, fraud, and ignorance. Not that Buddhism differed from Brahmanism as to their common possession of the starting-points of all Hindu speculation. Both agreed, *e.g.* as to existence being an evil, as to the supreme necessity of deliverance from it, not only in the present but in the future. They differed only as to the best means of accomplishing this object. The Brahmans inculcated sacrifices, ritual observances, implicit submission to the text of the Vedas, a deferential regard to their own priestly traditions, and a profound reverence for their sacred persons—in a word, they enjoined those ideas, principles, and tendencies which are usually comprised in the term sacerdotalism. Sakya Muni, on the other hand, starting from the standpoint of a moralist and philosopher, demanded self-discipline, the forcible suppression of all passions and desires, whatever disturbed the even current of existence. To attain this he devised a routine of singular efficacy for his purposes, derived from his own experience and indicating a profound acquaintance with the motives which mostly govern human conduct. He suggested to his disciples self-imposed austerities and incessant contemplation. There was thus a radical difference between the dependence on

the external means, offices, and persons which the Brahmans taught and the self-reliant individualism which formed a main principle of Buddhist thought. Another important distinction between them belongs to their modes of promulgating their respective creeds. The Brahmans, like all ancient sacerdotal castes, adopted the high authoritative tone becoming their profession of being the exclusive possessors of divine revelation, whereas Sakya Muni propagated his doctrine by preaching,¹ or in other words by reasoned persuasion. This is one among several points of similarity in which he has been likened to the Protestant Reformers in their attitude against Roman Catholicism. Nor was it only against the dominant priesthood that Sakya Muni waged his war of liberation. To a very large extent the movement he initiated was more social than religious. His repudiation of the caste system, both directly and indirectly, was perhaps the most important declaration of human equality that India had ever received.² Nor was his doctrine of human liberty less effective against the tyranny of Indian princes.³ Even his main position of the evil of existence and the desirability of its termination, however benumbing to the energies of the individual believer, was clearly a manifestation of hostility to 'the powers *that be,*' and hence indirectly subserved the cause of human freedom. There was also in Buddhism the distinction of superior disinterestedness (another point of resemblance to the Protestant Reformation). Instead of being indebted for spiritual guidance and final emancipation to the interested and well-paid labours of the priesthood, his followers had to achieve their deliverance by their own unaided efforts. His apostles were all like himself mendicants, but even in the pursuit of their calling were rigidly forbidden to ask for alms or food. Quite in harmony with the entire mental independence fostered by Buddhism is its rejection of the Vedas.⁴ I do not mean that, like the Sankhya and even the Vedanta, it made free with the sacred text, for it went further and denied unreservedly its authoritative character. Instead of this, Buddhists took the personal teaching of their founder as their standard of faith. It may be granted that the personal authority of Sakya Muni assumed after a time an unduly dogmatic aspect, but no one who knows the influence of the Vedas on orthodox Hindu thought

¹ Burnouf, in his *Introduction à l'Histoire du Bouddhisme*, p. 194, points out that Sakya Muni was the first Indian teacher who made disciples by preaching.

² Burnouf, *Introd.* pp. 149-51.

³ Comp. Burnouf, *Introd.* p. 199.

⁴ Burnouf, *Introd.* p. 547.

will dispute that the rejection of its divine authority in the narrow sense in which it was affirmed by the Brahmans was essentially a contribution to mental and religious freedom.

Thus, whatever its defects as an instrument of culture and civilization as we understand the terms, we must allow that most of the elementary principles of Buddhism operated in the direction of liberty and in opposition to Dogma. Like Kapila, from whom he perhaps derived his Free-thinking and Skeptical inspiration, Sakya Muni occupies in Hindu speculation an analogous position to that of Sokrates in Hellenic philosophy. He is a protester against the religious creed and the social system and traditions of his country. He conceives and promulgates his teaching in the interests of his fellow-men, for Sakya Muni is moved by the pain as Sokrates is by the false knowledge of mankind. Both agree also in making the individual his own self-centre of knowledge, distrusting and dissolving as much as possible the connecting links of sensation which join him to the outer world, concentrating his thought on his inner being, and thus preparing the way for the self-absorption of extreme idealism in the case of the Greek, and for Nirvana in that of the Buddha. Buddhism thus made the emancipation of humanity the supreme aim of its efforts; and if it carried this notion of freedom far beyond the limits of Greek and Hindu thought, even to the extent of making it synonymous with extinction, this was an error necessitated by the Hindu standpoint, and the Pessimism which lay at the root of all their thought. Buddhism is indeed only the logical outcome of Indian speculation, and Nirvana itself only a stage or two beyond the termini of most other lines of Hindu philosophy. Nor is it unimportant to notice the similarity of methods by which Sokrates arrived at his suspense, and Sakya Muni attained Nirvana. In both cases the progress was through knowledge. Sokrates taught that the advance of healthy knowledge involved a growing conviction of ignorance, and in this conviction when complete he found the highest wisdom. Such a condition he described in his own case as knowledge of nothing. Similarly, by concentrated thought and devout contemplation, Sakya Muni attained a mental vacuity still more profound, one in which not merely conscious knowledge but life itself appeared extinguished. So that the nothing in which the research of the Greek thinker ended became intensified and, if the paradox be allowed, embodied in the entity or non-entity—nothingness, as it was conceived by Sakya Muni.

But though the final scope of Buddhism be thus a negation so

blank as to be almost beyond the limits of conceivability, like so many other systems of a negative kind, it is based upon dogmatism. The four primary tenets which may be said to form the creed of the Buddhist are : 1. Existence of pain ; 2. The passions and desires partake of pain ; 3. Pain ceases by Nirvana ; while the 4th sets forth the road or means of arriving at Nirvana. These are the bases of the Buddhist faith, and this is its mode of affirming the indecomposable facts of consciousness. Pain, with its concomitants of intense feeling and perception, was to Sakya Muni the equivalent of sensation, and therefore of life. Indeed, the Pessimistic views of existence which he shared with most other Hindu thinkers served to make the painful aspect of life more familiar than any other. He would perhaps have slightly modified the Cartesian axiom, and instead of saying, 'Cogito, ergo sum,' would have said, 'I feel pain, therefore I exist.' Of course consciousness is in either case the elementary principle, which is assumed for the time being to be proof to analysis, though the Ego beyond which Descartes thought it impossible to go was only a transition stage in the Buddha's subtle and daring progress to self-extinction.

But as a starting-point existence was the problem which the Buddha set himself to solve, and the solution of which he found in annihilation. Not that he regarded the problem from the physicist point of view, whence the most eminent thinkers of Greece attacked it. To Sakya Muni as to other Indian philosophers all existence was merged in humanity. All life was only human life in a variety of forms, and the individual life of man was but a unit in an infinite numerical series. This fact made the study of human existence of paramount importance. One of the earliest forms of Buddhist faith describes the different categories or stages of being which are supposed to stand to each other in relation of cause to effect. They are as follows : 1. Ignorance or Nothingness ; 2. Concepts or Ideas ; 3. Consciousness ; 4. Name and Form ; 5. Six seats of sensible qualities and manas (heart) ; 6. Contact ; 7. Sensation ; 8. Desire ; 9. Attachment ; 10. Birth ; 11. Existence ; 12. Old Age and Death. The series is remarkable, not only as manifesting the psychological acuteness which distinguishes all Hindu thought, but because the first nine, which represent progressive stages in human knowledge, are regarded as conditions of existence, and hence made to precede birth. This is in harmony with the Buddhist theory, that a man's actual life, even when terminated by Nirvana, is only the last of an infinite number of existences which he has already passed

through. These twelve categories, with the four primary truths already mentioned, make up the whole of the dogmatic system of early Buddhism. In reality, however, Buddhism is a creed of one article. Categories of existence by the very nature of the case can have only a subordinate interest for persons whose main belief as well as chief aspiration is non-existence. At most such articles of faith are only like the basis of many another doubting and negative belief, intended to be provisional, and to give way before the destructive issues it eventually raises. Indeed, few creeds contain more contradictions and divergent principles than Buddhism.

There seems a curious parallel in the circumstance that a free inquiring anti-dogmatic movement opposed to the popular creed should in India, as in Greece, be associated with a reformed code of morals, and that in both instances Ethics should assert its authority independently of religious sanctions. Just as Sokrates taught that virtue was itself supreme and needed no adventitious sanction from any external or supernatural authority, so Kapila and Sakya Muni both insisted on the strict performance of all human duties without the acknowledgment of a deity. It is no doubt true that the Hindu thinkers did not rise to those heights of unconditional morality to which other philosophers, *e.g.* Sokrates and Kant, attained. Kapila inculcated virtue as a means of emancipating the soul from the shackles of matter, and Barthélemy St. Hilaire well sums up the scope of Buddhism in the words: 'It guides men to eternal salvation, or rather to the nothingness which it confounds with it, by the road of virtue, knowledge, and austerities.'¹ No doubt to our minds the cultivation of virtue as a means and path to nothingness does not present itself as an incentive of a very forcible kind; but to the Hindu, with impatience of existence so deeply engrained in his character, it was clearly a highly efficient persuasive. For this reason Buddhism must be admitted to have a deficient sense of virtue and goodness *considered as their own ends*.² With this abatement we must allow the substantive excellence of Buddhist Ethics. Of its founder St. Hilaire remarks: 'Je n'hésite pas à ajouter que, sauf le Christ tout seul, il n'est point, parmi les fondateurs de religion, de figure plus pure ni plus touchante que celle du Bouddha. Sa vie n'a point de tache. Son constant héroïsme égale sa conviction; et si la théorie qu'il préconise est fausse, les exemples personnels qu'il donne sont irréprochables. Il est le modèle achevé de toutes les vertus qu'il

¹ *Le Bouddha et sa Religion*, p. 142.

² Comp. B. St. Hilaire, *ut supra*, p. 154.

prêche ; son abnégation, sa charité, son inaltérable douceur, ne se dementent point un seul instant,'¹ &c.; and of the system which Sakya Muni founded a still more eminent authority² informs us that 'its moral code taken by itself is one of the most perfect which the world has ever known.' 'It is difficult to comprehend,' says a distinguished French writer, 'how men not assisted by revelation could have soared so high and approached so near to the truth.' 'Besides the five commandments,' to quote Max Müller, 'not to kill, not to steal, not to commit adultery, not to lie, not to get drunk, every shade of vice, hypocrisy, anger, pride, suspicion, greediness, gossiping, cruelty to animals, is guarded against by special precepts. Among the virtues recommended, we find not only reverence of parents, care for children, submission to authority, gratitude, moderation in time of prosperity, submission in time of trial, equanimity at all times, but virtues unknown in any heathen system of morality, such as the duty of forgiving insults and not rewarding evil with evil. All virtues, we are told, spring from Maitri, and this Maitri can only be translated by charity or love.'³ A peculiarity of this charity in Buddhist teaching is its free extension to the whole of humanity. This was the motive-principle by which it was enabled to subvert for a time the iniquitous and tyrannical caste-system,⁴ and therewith to effect the greatest social revolution ever experienced in India. Nor among Buddhist virtues must we forget to enumerate the detestation of lying in all its phases which it inculcates.

But it is not with its moral excellences so much as its philosophical conclusions that we are at present concerned. Buddhism has given rise to many types of Negation, as we might indeed have anticipated from its apotheosis of annihilation, for we reach in the Nirvana of the Buddhist the culminating point of negative doubt, just as in the Greek suspense we attain the extreme point of pure Skepticism. The contrast between the two, as I have already remarked, is instructive, especially in its bearing on the characteristics of the race to which they severally belong. To the Greek every aspect of nature and life was replete with activity and enjoyment. In the free exercise of his mental faculties he found as great delight as in the physical contests of the palæstra. His Ataraxia or philosophic serenity consisted in the equiposing

¹ *Le Bouddha et sa Religion*, Introd. p. v.

² Max Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop*, i. p. 220.

³ *Ibid.* p. 221.

⁴ Comp. Burnouf, *Introd.* p. 205. B. St. Hilaire, *Le Bouddha*, &c. pp. 144, 145.

of discrepant and antagonistic beliefs. The Hindu, on the other hand, regarded all nature and existence as an unmitigated evil, to be minimized, thwarted, and repressed, or else escaped from with all possible celerity. His highest attainment and greatest delight was a state not of stolid but intelligent passivity. It was one of the many inconsistencies in his mode of thought that he thus attempted to unite what was really incompatible—the acquisition by knowledge, study, and contemplation of an immobility close akin to intellectual inanition. No doubt it was the appetitive part of his being that he was especially desirous of subduing—the desires, passions, impulses, and volitions that disturbed his equanimity; but such a treatment based upon physical austerities must in reality have affected his intellectual powers. The placid serenity and passionless quietude attained by a persistent repression of all vital energy is only purchasable at a cost of some portion of vitality itself. Indeed, perfect Nirvana is synonymous with death, or rather with extinction. There was, however, an inferior kind in the power of the living. This consisted in the imperturbable calm generated by asceticism and devout contemplation. The Buddhist employed all his efforts to force the different currents of his sensations and passions into one single channel. Shutting eyes and ears to the outer world, he concentrated all his faculties of mind and body on the contemplation of eternal nothingness. The tension of abstraction by which he was able to accomplish this has scarce a parallel in the history of human thought. It was not that he was able to conceive nothingness as an independent entity so much as that he took from all existing objects within his cognizance the attribute of existence. Thus wherever he saw matter, he conceived empty space, while all existing beings he imagined as non-existing, even himself with his consciousness, experience, &c. he reckoned as not really living, but as merely possessing so much vitality of a vague kind as enabled him to affirm his actual non-existence. With his perpetual austerities and depressed energies he had little difficulty in reaching such a stage of semi-animation. We must suppose that knowledge in the sense of mental conviction partook of this physical inanition. Indeed, whatever its advantages in inducing such a view of existence and of the perpetual transmigrations to which all living beings were subject as would justify the disgust with life which was the *Primum Mobile* of Buddhist speculation, as a qualification for final extinction knowledge was quite superfluous. To the Buddhist, as to his distant relative the Hebrew Koheleth, there was no device nor knowledge in the grave. Moreover, as forming part of existence by

being an attribute of human beings, knowledge itself was tainted with the pollution which attached to everything living.

It is needless to insist on the theoretical completeness of the Skeptical negation of Buddhism and its Nirvana. A Skepticism which destroys everything and which believes only in nothingness is clearly the *ne plus ultra* of negative thought. Nor is it any tangible objection to such an hypothesis that it is self-destructive. This the Buddhist would willingly allow; nay more, he would regard the fact as a confirmation of his doctrine. For if he admitted the proofs of his own existence to be beyond question, he would be positing in the realm of nothingness a demonstrable existence, in other words, he would be destroying it. Whatever seemed to him to exist went no further than mere seeming. The world itself was in this respect only a gigantic unveracity, in which the ignorant might possibly believe, but which the enlightened saw in its true character of inaneity and vacuity—to use the favourite Hindu simile—like the hollow of a drum. Pure Skeptics, as we have seen, did not carry their unbelief beyond the limits of their own consciousness. It was they themselves who were unable to discover truth; of the powers of others they dared not predicate dogmatically. Pyrrhonists, advancing a stage further, maintained truth to be undiscoverable, not only by themselves but by all beings similarly constituted. But Buddhism advanced far beyond both: it took away the standpoint of the Skeptic by denying his consciousness, while to the Pyrrhonist's denial of truth it replied by a denial of everything. The ordinary 'common sense' of humanity might well stand aghast at a negation so absolutely blank, at a vacuity so universal. Were it not for the evidence which the history of philosophy affords of the power of the intellect under given circumstances to eliminate whatever is inconvenient or disagreeable from the sphere of its convictions, added to the peculiar facility with which the Hindu passed from matter to spirit, and from spirit to matter, without apparently recognizing any inherent distinction between them, such a measureless negation would seem impossible. But for my part I have no difficulty in believing that, as a result of the various means they employed for the purpose, the persuasion of nothingness as the sole existence was really attained, and conscientiously held. What seem to us contradictions between the belief of the Buddhist and the volitions, acts, and perceptions of his ordinary life were evidently not contradictions for him. With an introspective power maintained by constant exercise at a high rate of activity and comprehension, he contrived, as did also the

Vedantist, so to discount and subtilize the factors of his personal existence that the outer world was for him just as shadowy and phantasmal as a scene of dreamland. It is usual to compare with this super-subtle thought of the Buddhist the efforts and aims of Christian mystics, and with the Nirvana of the former the ecstasy of the latter, but there seems to me a radical distinction between them. The object of the Buddhist was to realize and rest in nothingness. The mystic, on the contrary, aspired to lose his being in God regarded as a living personality. The first was a passion for death, the second for higher and fuller life. On the individuality of the persons concerned perhaps the effects were not very dissimilar. In each case we may assume that if not lost it was half-merged in a vague, diffused sentiment, as well as sustained by methods of a more or less violent and artificial kind.

We are now in a position to estimate roughly the relation which Hindu speculation has to Hebrew and Hellenic thought. It may be said to combine the special attributes of both, for it unites the religiousness of the Hebrew with the philosophical acumen of the Greek. As a rule, its methods and objects of research are presented as sacred duties. It asserts the noble principle of Scotus Erigena: 'Philosophy is true religion, and religion true philosophy.' To the old Hebrew thinker in the most flourishing period of the theocracy knowledge was regarded as a curse, a malign importation of the adversary of the Hebrew Jahve; while all the Hindu schools regarded it as a means of emancipation from the great curse of perpetual existence. At a later period the pessimism of Koheleth, the conviction that the pursuit of truth and of pleasure are equally vanity, furnishes a closer approximation to Hindu and especially to Buddhist thought. This is as close a similarity as could be expected from two systems starting from such divergent principles. The Monotheism of the Hebrews and the general Atheism of Hindu speculation furnished more occasions of contrast than of resemblance.

I have already touched incidentally on the relation of Hindu to Hellenic thought. Both the Indian and Greek philosopher took existence for their object of speculation, but they approached it from different directions. The latter regarded existence as a pleasurable but inevitable fact, with which he was compelled to bring his theories and speculations, so far as practicable, into harmony. Such an agreement when attainable constituted truth. If it could not be attained, as the Skeptic thought, a point of indifference might be established, which, while allowing the un-

deniable facts of existence, might cease to dogmatize on theories relating to it. But the Hindu saw in existence not so much an insoluble problem intellectually as a painful illusion in actual practice. Truth for him consisted in the permanence which he identified with nothingness. No material phenomenon, no result of human ratiocination, no kind of ordinary existence appealed to him with such absolute authority as the voiceless whisper of the Eternal silence. Nirvana—absolute extinction—formed his sole conception of Ataraxia or philosophic quietude. The means employed by the Buddhist to attain the former were no doubt similar to those which the Pyrrhonist adopted to acquire the latter. If the Greek discovered that his senses were unreliable and deceptive, so also did the Hindu. If the one affirmed the dependence of thought on sensation, so also did the other. Both Greek Pyrrhonist and Hindu philosopher revered knowledge, but both considered it as a means, not the end. Through knowledge, said the Greek, we attain to a consciousness of Nescience. By knowledge, said the Hindu, I attain annihilation. It might even be said that both goals are on the same road, only the Hindu traversed it further than did the Hellene. For conscious Nescience the feeling 'I know nothing' must certainly precede in logical sequence the conviction 'I am nothing.' But although there exist this similarity between the two methods of thought, although the Nescience of Sokrates and the Ataraxia of Pyrrhôn are both of them allied to the Nirvana of the Buddhist and the persuasion of non-existence of the Sankhya philosopher, there remains a notable distinction in respect of the feelings which accompany the two tendencies. It would hardly be too much to say that the Nescience and Ataraxia of Greek thinkers were products among other causes of their optimism. The calm serenity with which they enjoyed existence made them indifferent to the fact that most of the problems connected with it were insoluble, whereas all the efforts of the Hindus were prompted by a profound dislike of existence and an ardent desire to escape from it. The vehement repression of vitality required to attain Nirvana may serve as a measure of the strength of this feeling. Thus we have Skepticism enlisted in the services of optimism on the one hand and extreme pessimism on the other. Nor is this an isolated instance, I may add, of its discharge of functions not only divergent from but opposed to each other.

All writers on Buddhism are agreed that its influence on the whole has been salutary on the various races and peoples that have come under it. Its temporary sway in India had the effect

of freeing its people from a peculiarly galling chain of sacerdotal oppression and tyranny. Wherever it has obtained ascendancy it has humanized and refined Oriental races to a remarkable extent. It has quelled in many cases their savage and revengeful passions, has instilled gentleness and forbearance, mutual kindness and sympathy: in a word, has adapted them for social and national existence in a way that no other instrumentality would have done. That it has not had the effect of infusing industrial or civilizing energies, as we should understand these qualities, into the dormant temperaments of Eastern races, can scarcely be termed a defect. The utmost we can expect of any religious or philosophical system is that it should operate upon the natural lines of the instincts and inborn qualities of those subjected to its power, that it should foster those susceptibilities and develop those qualities that are worthiest of such treatment. This, it seems clear, Buddhism has successfully accomplished. On the other hand, I am far from denying that the extreme negation which is the main feature of Hindu speculation is at all free from the objections that seem to attach to every scheme of dogmatic negation. The remarks on this point I have already made *à propos* of Pyrrhonic negation apply with tenfold force to the yet more extreme negation of Hindu philosophy, and particularly of Buddhism. The dogma of individual or universal extinction, whatever amount of wholesome Skepticism it may imply, must be regarded as a bar to human inquiry, and thereby to all intellectual progress; and its influence in this respect will be the greater inasmuch as its scope is practical no less than speculative. Pyrrhonist negation, as we saw, was entirely speculative, and therefore exercised little effect for good or ill on the purely practical concerns of life. But the case was different as respects Hindu negation. Here the denial of the facts of existence was transformed into an imperative duty, a matter of persistent daily practice. It was erected into a cult, and thus invested with inviolable sanctions and sacred authority. It also appealed to the strongest desire of the Hindu—complete deliverance from existence. Little as we may appreciate the force of such motives, we know that they are peculiarly powerful among certain Oriental races. Bearing these facts in mind, we can realize, at least approximately, the wide-ranging and deeply seated nature of Hindu negation, and are able to comprehend why all the great Hindu schools of thought terminate either in extinction or in some form of self-absorption hardly distinguishable from it.

The general considerations pertaining to our subject I have already incidentally touched upon. I. We may note the strange peculiarity of intellect which regards with instinctive repugnance

the fact of existence, with all its inevitable concomitants. The sensations, perceptions, &c. usually most accredited among men seem to provoke in the Hindu a spontaneous feeling of doubt and contradiction. So far as this describes the genuine Skeptical impulse there can be no question as to the prevalence of Hindu Skepticism. We must allow that the sentiment is emotional as well as intellectual, perhaps even more so. How far the resultant pessimism is to be ascribed to climatic causes, to excessive and morbid idealism, or else to the intellectual excitation that undoubtedly accompanied the rise of Hindu philosophy, is a large question we cannot enter upon. That pessimistic views of life are closely allied to intellectual doubt is a truth to which both Hebrew and Hindu thought bear witness, and is largely attested by other examples in the history of philosophy—indeed the connection is in itself quite easy of comprehension; but the peculiarity in the case of Hindus is that the pessimism, the contempt for and disgust of life, seems to have engendered both the philosophic inquiry and the final negation in which it issued, instead of the more usual course of the despair of truth resulting in a despair of existence.

II. Next in importance we must place the witness of Hindu speculation to the effect of idealistic tendencies in inducing Skepticism. That idealism possesses this tendency, even when it is based on positive grounds and leads up to positive conclusions, as, *e.g.* in the case of mysticism and pantheism, is a well-known fact. Coleridge once remarked¹ on the benefit a study of Behmen's works conferred on him by preventing his imprisonment within the outline of any given dogma; and examples of similar latitude induced by idealism will meet us in the course of our investigations. But if this characteristic attaches to positive idealism, it is evident that the transcendentalism which is so far free of dogma that it denies and repudiates all material existence, and asserts annihilation as the sole article of its unfaith, is still more libertine in its scope and method. The masterly facility with which Hindu thinkers involved both matter and spirit in one homogeneous, or at least undifferentiated, substratum—spiritualizing the material and materializing the spiritual—gives the key to many apparent anomalies in their mode of thought, and conclusively testifies to their appreciation of intellectual freedom. The mental liberty which annihilates space and time, which is not impeded by the conditions and facts of ordinary existence, which is equally at home with material concepts and the most impalpable of human abstractions, discerning no difference between them, is one which cannot con-

¹ *Biographia Literaria*, p. 144.

ceivably be transcended. Other idealists, at least in European countries, think it necessary to apologize when their ethereal flights leave the duller intellects of ordinary humanity far in arrear. But the Hindu transcendentalist does not think this needful, nor apparently do his fellow-countrymen look for such consideration from his hands. They do not for a moment dispute that omnipotence of the human, or at least Hindu, intellect which, like a magician's wand, transforms matter to spirit, and being to nothingness, at will.

III. Our natural astonishment at the excessive negation of all Hindu thought is much lessened when we remember the forcible means adopted for attaining and developing it. All philosophical effort, be its direction what it may, is accompanied by, and dependent upon, mental discipline and repressive measures of a certain kind. The materialist, *e.g.* minimizes and adapts to his own hostile purposes metaphysical facts, just as the idealist attenuates the truths of physical existence. But no modification of alien influences, no coercion of adverse materials, no concentration of mind and body on one single object, can be conceived so efficiently adapted for its purpose as the general discipline of Hindu thought. Hindu philosophers have clearly understood better than any other thinkers the almost infinite plasticity of the human mind. They appear to have acted on the principle that no belief is inherently impossible to the intellect if the proper means of acquiring it are adopted and pursued irrespective of consequences. Let me read you, for instance, a few sentences from the 'Bhagavad-Gita,' which describes the perfect man according to the Hindu ideal of him. 'He who without hopes (of reward) restrains his own thoughts, abandons all that he possesses, and renders his actions merely corporeal, does not incur sin. Contented with what he receives fortuitously, superior to the influence of opposites, without envy, the same in success and failure, even though he acts he is not bound by the bonds of action. The entire action of a man who is free from self-interest and devoted, whose thoughts are directed by spiritual knowledge, and who acts for the sake of sacrifice, is as it were dissolved. . . . Some devotees attend to the sacrifice of the deities only; others offer sacrifice by the action of worship only in the fire of the Supreme Being. Some sacrifice the sense of hearing and the other senses in the fires of restraint; some offer objects of sense, such as sound, in the fires of the senses; and others sacrifice all actions of the senses and of vitality in the fire of devotion through self-restraint, which is kindled by spiritual knowledge. Others also sacrifice by their wealth, or by mortification, by devotion, by silent study and spiritual knowledge, being subdued in

their passions and faithful to their vows. Some also sacrifice inspiration of breath in expiration, and expiration in inspiration, by blocking up the channels of inspiration and expiration, desirous of retaining their breath. Others, by abstaining from food, sacrifice life in their life,'¹ &c. Without attempting an explanation of these hyper-mystical utterances, and merely insisting on their general tenor, it is clear that this passage—one of a thousand similar ones which might be adduced—expresses a self-renunciation, a completeness of negation, a self-absorption which would make Nirvana itself a possible attainment. We have here the abstraction of the idealist, the earnestness of the religionist, the austerity of the ascetic, the rapt contemplation of the mystic, and the exaggerated intensity of the fanatic all combined as coefficients of negation. There is indeed a deadly determination in impugning the facts of phenomenal and individual existence which nothing can resist. And this constitutes the peculiarity of Hindu negative Skepticism. In Greece we find Skepticism (including both suspense and negation) as a philosophy. Among the Hebrews it is an evanescent outcome of theocratic faith, but among Orientals it is consecrated to a cult with its own form and ideal of worship, and which numbers among its adherents more than all the positive religions of the world taken together.

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ARUNDEL. One obvious criticism, Doctor, to which the Hebrew half of your paper seemed to me open, was your determination to pose the writers of Job and Koheleth as modern philosophers instead of considering them from their sole legitimate standpoint of Jewish theologians. As a consequence you failed to appreciate the root-thought both of Job and the Preacher. This might, I think, be described in the definition of human wisdom propounded by the former, 'Unto man he said, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.' I submit that the only idea of knowledge professed by an average Jew was what we should call religious or ethico-religious knowledge, and his certitude in this appears to me quite as distinctly

¹ *Bhagavad-Gita*, Thompson's trans. pp. 33, 34. Comp. B. St. Hilaire, p. 160, and see on the discipline of the Dyana, Burnouf, *Introd.* &c. p. 168; *Le Lotus de la Bonne Loi*, pp. 347 and 800; Banerjea's *Dialogues on the Hindu Philosophy*, p. 263, &c.

marked in the later as in the earlier books of the Bible. You have not in my opinion shown us anything approaching that pronounced definitive doubt which can alone claim the designation of Skepticism. Occasional vacillations or uncertainties are merely the homage which the immensity, variety, and complexity of natural phenomena exact from every thinking man, and they no more favour inveterate doubt than an occasional ailment demonstrates chronic disease. Hence you were led to exaggerate incidental expressions of impatience, and to elevate wayward words to the rank of sustained permanent convictions. No doubt Job's discontent at what seems an exceptionally cruel fate is freely expressed, but it involves a total misapprehension of the purport of the book to make these accidental utterances of individual suffering generally received modifications in the national faith. Besides, all fervent religionists affect what appears to outsiders an undue familiarity with the Deity and an excessive liberty in criticising His acts. You remember, for instance, their ludicrous claim of insight into the motives of God's providential dealings and their language of menace when the Royal cause seemed prospering, which characterized the Puritan leaders in the English Revolution.

TREVOR. I am rather surprised at your criticism, Arundel. You must be aware that there is an enormous consensus of Biblical authorities in favour of the position I advanced, viz. that Job and Koheleth both indicate a waning faith in the old theocratic dogma of the Jews. I have already admitted that these writers fall back to a certain extent upon the unconditional affirmation of religious duty, and in this respect resemble other Free-thinkers; but you must confess that their speculative wanderings before settling down in this final conclusion are of quite a Free-thinking character. You must also bear in mind that in the case of a people like the Jews, whose whole creed and mode of thought were religious, as you rightly remarked, the evidence for an impaired or undermined belief may well be less than would be necessary in the case of a more comprehensive or more varied philosophy. We may, I think, accept it as an axiom that belief is emphasized in proportion to the narrowness of

its area, whence it will follow that an expression of doubt which might be unimportant when the range of conviction is large, becomes very significant when it is exceedingly limited. That a rigid monotheist, *e.g.* should question those attributes which constitute the very being of his Deity is for him almost the *ne plus ultra* of Doubt. Mistrust of Providence in its especial theocratic aspect really cut the ground from beneath the whole fabric of Jewish thought and life, and this, I contend, is strongly marked in Job and Koheleth.

HARRINGTON. For my part I question whether the field of Jewish speculation was really so limited as you would make it. The persistent efforts of legislators and prophets to confine all Hebrew ideas within the bounds of their intellectually speaking narrow monotheism, as well as the inculcation of the most revolting treachery and cruelty on the faintest suspicion of apostasy from the national creed, seem to me to point at something more than those occasional deviations towards idol-worship which are recorded in Hebrew history. There may easily have been inquiring tendencies and Ethic speculations of which we have no trace in Hebrew literature, previous to the time when Job and Koheleth were written, and of which these works are accidental expressions. The latter book seems to me quite unjewish. The writer possesses all the attributes of a Gentile philosopher of a free type—thirst for knowledge, eagerness, and it must be added unscrupulousness, in its acquisition, and dissatisfaction with it when acquired.

MRS. HARRINGTON. With reference to another part of Dr. Trevor's paper, I must confess to a doubt whether the hostility of the Jewish mind to all secular knowledge was so great as Dr. Trevor's interpretation of the narrative of the Fall would seem to imply. Moses, *e.g.* is praised for being learned in all the wisdom of Egypt, which I presume was to a great extent secular, and Solomon's botanical lore is adduced as a part of his wisdom. The designers of the Tabernacle and the workmen of the Temple are also eulogized. Besides which, the Book of Proverbs is largely taken up with the praise of wisdom, which certainly included more than its theological aspect of service rendered to God, if at least one

may rely on the translation of the oft-occurring words 'prudence' and 'discretion.'

TREVOR. No doubt you have incidental references to the worth of knowledge, especially when of a practical kind, but these are too scattered and unimportant to be taken as the ordinary mode of thought of the Jews. I am still of opinion that there was in the Hebrew mind, partly but not altogether in consequence of natural inaptitude, a decided mistrust of all speculation and research, and that this temper of mind was fostered by all the theocratic leaders of the nation, whether religious or political. Nor indeed do I see how the case could have been otherwise. The principle of a theocracy is as adverse to human knowledge and independent investigation as that of its ally, sacerdotalism. In both cases the inquirer is confronted at every step with an authoritative assumption of Divine knowledge which renders further research impertinent if not useless. The oracular utterances of Hebrew seers, *e.g.* were asserted as so many ultimate decisions which admitted of no argument and could not be gainsayed. I am, however, of opinion that Skepticism and Pessimism are late developments of Hebrew thought, at least I can discern no adequate grounds for Harrington's suggestion that Free-thought may have obtained currency before the times of Job and Koheleth. The extreme jealousy of alien worship and the revolting cruelty sanctioned against those who, however innocently, practised it, of which he speaks, are amply accounted for by the inherent exclusiveness of Jewish monotheism. They are unavoidable results of theocratic institutions and modes of thought.

MISS LEYCESTER. Hebrew Skepticism—the dissent from doctrines claiming the character of Divine Revelation—gives us a foretaste of the dissonance which we shall have more prominently brought before us in Christian Skepticism. The moral in both cases appears to be the ultimate inadequacy of any scheme of Revelation to satisfy the inquiring instincts of humanity when its doctrines are not in complete harmony with the laws of nature and the teachings of human experience. . . . As to Hindu Free-thought, I own I feel puzzled at its multitudinous, many-sided aspects. It

appears to me to contain germs or developed growths of every philosophy that has ever existed. Not its least strange feature is the starting-point usually assigned to it. I want to ask Dr. Trevor if he agrees with the opinion that all Hindu speculation has been engendered by a disgust of existence.

TREVOR. I do not. The most ancient religion of India—that of the oldest section of the Veda—seems to have been a kind of Nature-worship, and the earliest hymns in which it is expressed are as joyous and buoyant and as strongly marked by optimism as some of the Hebrew psalms. The general change of this mood of thought to ontology, negation, and pessimism is not easy to account for. Brahmanic sacerdotalism, with its stress upon certain ideal teachings, especially upon the continuity of existence implied in the doctrine of transmigration, seems to me to have been a co-operating cause. But the pessimism which underlies all Hindu belief must have had some predisposing causes in the general environment of the people, and among others perhaps the debilitating effect of the climate might claim some consideration.

HARRINGTON. We must be careful, I think, in assigning special or local causes for effects which, upon a broad view of the history of human thought, are generally discernible among all thinking people. A strong warrant for affirming the substantial identity of intellectual conformation among all races of civilized and thinking beings may be found in the fact that all the great philosophies show a progress from sensation, experience, and optimism to idealism, mysticism, and pessimism. Thus Greek philosophy, starting with the Ionic thinkers, ends with the Neo-Platonists and Skeptics. German thought, commencing with Lessing and Kant, has now a Hartmann for its chief exponent. English philosophy makes a progress from Locke and Hobbes to Berkeley and Hume. So Hinduism, from the Nature-worship of the Vedas, attains to the Skepticism of Sankhya and the Nihilism of Buddhism; and Hebrew thought, from the joyousness in creation which marks its earliest poetry, ends in the pessimism of Koheleth.

MISS LEYCESTER. A progress on similar lines of thought would be found to characterize not a few of the great philosophers of the world. For that matter, some such course is, from the nature of the human mind and its only possible mode of acquiring knowledge, inevitable. But one of the motive-influences of Hindu thought is pre-eminently worthy of praise. In directing its efforts to deliverance from pain it approved itself as humane, charitable, and sympathetic.

HARRINGTON. To my thinking the stress placed upon pain by Hindu thinkers, as well as by a large and increasing section of modern Europeans, as if it were an incongruous element in sentient existence, is utterly absurd. I am quite tired of sermons, treatises, and disquisitions of all kinds on the 'mystery of pain.' Pain itself does not seem to me nearly so great a mystery as the fact that so many thinkers regard it as mysterious.

ARUNDEL. Of course the source of the mystery is the incompatibility of the idea of pain with ordinary conceptions of the Divine omnipotence and beneficence.

HARRINGTON. No doubt. Men arbitrarily promulgate a dogma, devise a particular conception of Deity, and then, finding a large range of actual facts irreconcilable with their definition, they hasten to pronounce them mysterious. For my part I am heretic enough to wish to preserve the moral attributes of the Deity at the expense of some portion of His omnipotence. Hence I am prepared to concede that matter in some form or other must be eternal, and that allowing to God the power of moulding, shaping, qualifying, &c. I cannot conceive that He created or educed it out of nothing, as some thinkers, both Indian and Christian, say. Under such an hypothesis, and assuming the Divine beneficence, pain would no doubt involve a stupendous mystery. But suppose the Divine power limited by infinite wisdom, as Cudworth put it, or as I should rather say by inherent and indestructible properties of matter, then pain is not mysterious, but the most inevitable attendant on sentient existence. Conceive, *e.g.* such a complex organization as that of man's, and in the very conception pain as the effect of its disorders is postulated, as are also disease and death.

ARUNDEL. I do not deny a partiality for the line of thought you have just enounced, albeit it does border on the ill-defined limits which separate ortho- from hetero-doxy. But I should rather make the bounds of the Creator's power the self-imposed restraints of His own omniscient wisdom, instead of objective impossibilities in brute matter. Practically, the result would be the same, while in theory we should avoid the Manichæan dualism which would be the outcome of your own hypothesis.

MRS. HARRINGTON. But why did Hindu thought thus have an emotional instead of intellectual starting-point? It could not have been, I suppose, on account of their possessing a peculiarly sensitive physical organization, for I have always understood that the natives of India and the East are remarkably impassive and impervious to all manifestations of feeling.

HARRINGTON. I take it that we must attribute their inordinate stress on

The ills that flesh are heirs to,

more to metaphysical aptitudes than physical qualities. Once Hindu thought was started in a course of self-renunciation, its own super-subtle proclivity soon carried self-repression to the extremest possible limit. Moreover, pain from which they desired emancipation signified to them not merely the physical suffering we understand by the word, but every pronounced and obtrusive state whether of feeling or of consciousness. The Hindus as a race apprehended more clearly than any other the physiological truth that every emotion or intellectual perception, even those classed as pleasurable, carried beyond a certain limit induces suffering. This feeling, to which Shelley among English poets has given such distinct and sometimes piquant expression, was the root-thought of Hindu religion and philosophy, and serves to explain both the negation and pessimism which distinguished them.

MISS LEYCESTER. What seems remarkable is that the susceptibility to the ills of existence should have been conjoined in the Hindu mind with a theory of perpetual existence.

I should like some *rationale* of the Hindu stress on transmigration.

ARUNDEL. A still greater incongruity is presented in the coexistence in the same philosophy—for Buddhism is only the logical sequence of Hindu speculation—of the opposite phases of thought, of continuity of existence, and its absolute extinction.

TREVOR. On the contrary, one might have given rise to the other. It was the fact of innumerable successive births constituting the destiny of every man that gave the Nirvana of Buddhists and similar schemes of personal annihilation the enormous influence which it is evident they possessed. As to transmigration, more than one theory might be advanced for its currency in ancient thought. 1. It seems a transference to the individual of that perpetuity of life which men's experience convinced them was one great fact of the universe. The repugnance to future annihilation which Western and Christian teachers say is so influential among men, operated among Orientals in an opposite direction. That personal consciousness which we have learned to suppose incapable of perishing, the Oriental conceived impossible to have commenced. 2. The changes in nature and in certain natural products, animate and inanimate, supplied also an analogy of repeated migrations from one kind of life to another. 3. Possibly too the observed variations, mutabilities, &c. in the intellectual life of every thinker, as well as the ordinary growth of knowledge and experience, suggested another analogy to such introspective people as the Hindus.

MISS LEYCESTER. You have just said that transmigration of souls was a doctrine of Oriental thinkers. It seems likely in the future to occupy a foremost place in occidental schemes of thought. Heredity and evolution are merely modern forms of the same teaching.

HARRINGTON. You are indulging in one of your paradoxical generalizations, Florence.

MISS LEYCESTER. Not at all. The devout Hindu conceived himself to have descended through a long line of prior existences of various kinds. The modern hereditarian regards himself as the offspring mentally as well as physically

of a long succession of ancestors going as far back as the anthropoid ape, if not to still more rudimentary forms of life. No doubt the Hindu did not follow any prescribed order in his assumed progress from one life to another, while modern science makes such an order a material part of its theory; but this is only the difference between a crude, un-informed intuition and the elaborate systematization which pertains to modern science.

ARUNDEL. There is another difference, Miss Leycester. The Hindu conceived that it was an individual soul that thus passed from one existence to another, while the modern thinker, who is perhaps uncertain of possessing a soul as a distinct spiritual entity, regards himself as only a combination of inherited aptitudes and faculties. We may at least safely assert that the latter would repudiate the doctrine of transmigration with some degree of vehemence.

MISS LEYCESTER. Possibly, but his repudiation would not affect the facts of the case. Whether what I inherit from my forefathers be a peculiar combination of mental and physical qualities, or whether I choose to state the heredity in the ordinary form, that the soul I now possess once inhabited other living tenements seems to me a matter of but slight importance. Nor is there much difference between the Hindu and the Darwinian in respect of transmission of qualities through dumb animals. The latter is as eager as the former to trace the elementary germs of human feelings, passions, and habits in beings of a lower order.

HARRINGTON. A yet more vital distinction between the theories you have juxtaposed would be that the Hindu conception of soul implied in most cases (Buddhism being the most prominent exception) its immortality; whereas the Darwinian materialist, who derives it piecemeal from various ancestors and connects it indissolubly with bodily organization, must needs maintain its perishableness.

MISS LEYCESTER. In that respect I suppose I must allow a distinction.

ARUNDEL. While listening to Trevor's paper I was struck by the insistence of Hindu philosophy on knowledge and

on the emancipation of humanity by knowledge. I could not help contrasting the different idea of Christianity, which teaches freedom by virtue and moral practice. The latter, it appears to me, is an infinitely more wholesome doctrine for the bulk of humanity.

TREVOR. Your contrast is not well grounded. On the one hand, moral duty is enjoined in most schemes of Hindu thought quite as much as intellectual advance. On the other hand, you must not forget those passages in the New Testament in which the liberating power of knowledge is affirmed with no small emphasis. Take, *e.g.* the words of Christ. 'Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free,' and several passages with like implication in the Epistles. Moreover, the freedom obtainable by knowledge was a primary doctrine in Alexandrian and Neo-Platonic Christianity. Indeed, there are few general principles in Hindu thought which seem to me truer than this emancipation by knowledge. It is an assertion of the spiritual concentration, the sturdy self-reliance and mental independence which are some of the noblest fruits of knowledge.

The self-enthroned need fear no rival king.

HARRINGTON. For a professed Skeptic, Doctor, your encomium of knowledge is sufficiently enthusiastic. . . . But we have not yet discussed the most preposterous of the fruits of Hindu knowledge, as well as the most remarkable of all the products of Eastern speculation. I mean the Buddhist Nirvana. Nothingness as a future possible contingency and in the sense of infinite vacuum I can with some effort understand, but what I feel unable to comprehend is the positing nothingness as a condition attainable during a man's life.

TREVOR. The stages by which Nirvana was attained seem, roughly speaking, to have been the following:

1. We must remember that in Hindu as in every other philosophy existence begins in sensation, and thence arises or originates the phenomenal world.

2. Sensation matured and rarefied by intellect and imagination becomes an idealism which supplants and destroys its

parent, the result being the gradual disappearance of the phenomenal world.

3. The sole remaining subjective world of ideas is lastly submitted to other destructive agencies, and by devotion, contemplation, austerity, the sense of individuality is reduced to a hardly conscious mental vacuity. Both the outer and inner worlds have thus disappeared, and nothing is left but nothingness, or Nirvana.

HARRINGTON. But what a striking satire on knowledge and intellectual research is this reduction of a reasoning being to its lowest rational denomination, bringing it down in reality to the level of the most elementary forms of life; and what a Skeptical comment on the efficacy of knowledge to assume that its last phase is intellectual inanition and scarcely conscious life! Notwithstanding your remarks, I should be inclined to regard it as quite a hallucination.

TREVOR. So doing you would not be acting with your customary justice towards abnormal convictions. The object of the Buddhist, we must remember, was to attain a sort of spiritual and mental anæsthesia, and this object he pursued by all available means during the greater part of his life. With a knowledge of human, at least Oriental, nature that has never been surpassed, he deliberately and perpetually drugged himself with every species of intellectual anæsthetic, philosophical, religious, ascetic, volitional, he could possibly procure. The natural result was the attainment of a minimum of sensibility, which Europeans could hardly procure except by the aid of material anæsthetics—a stage of consciousness, *e.g.*, that might be temporarily induced by a dose of chloroform, ‘so low that a received impression remains in consciousness unclassified; there is a passive reception of it, and an absence of the activity required to know it as such or such¹;’ or—employing an illustration more familiar to most of us—Nirvana may be likened to that sweetly passive state of confused and waning consciousness, the gradually increasing perception of torpor which announces to the tired man the approach of healthy and welcome repose.

¹ Comp. ‘Report of Consciousness under Chloroform,’ in *Mind*, for October 1878, p. 558.

ARUNDEL. Miss Leycester has suggested a comparison of Buddhism and Darwinianism. Why not suppose that the forcible suppression of consciousness implied in Nirvana is a form of Atavism—the instinctive retrogression of our race to its primordial jelly-fish condition. . . . But perhaps I ought not to speak harshly of Nirvana in my own present semi-somnolent condition, for whether it be association with Buddhists or the three hours' length of our sitting, or else our long walk on the down, I feel the approach of that confused and waning consciousness which Dr. Trevor has so eloquently described as the harbinger of sleep. So I propose we close our discussion and incontinently adjourn.

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APPENDICES.

APPENDIX A.

(Page 29.)

The chief technical terms and definitions of Greek Skepticism.

It would seem that Dr. Trevor in casual conversation greatly underestimated the number of technical terms pertaining to Greek Skepticism. The following are the amended tables contained in his common-place book, and even these he considers as far from exhaustive.

(1) *Terms of enquiry.*

ἡ ζητητική	ἐρώτησις
ἡ σκεπτική (τέχνη or ἀγωγή)	συνερωτᾶν
σκέψις	ἡ συνερώτησις
ἐπιζήτησις	ἐριστική
ἐπιμονὴ ζητήσεως	

(2) *Terms of denial.*

ἀπορητική	ἀντιμαρτύρησις
ἀντέμφασις	ἀντιλογία
ἀντίφασις	ἀντικείμενα
ἀπιστεῖσθαι	ἀντικαθίστασθαι
ἀντιδοξεῖν	ἀντιδιατάσσω
ἀποφάσεις σκεπτικαί	ἀντιδιαστέλλω
ἀπεκλογή	ἀντιδιαζεύγνυμι
ἀντίρρησις	ἀντιδιαλέγομαι

(3) *Terms of doubt or suspense.*

ἐποχή	ἀμφισβητήσιμος
ἐπέχειν	ἀπαρέμφατος
ἀπέχειν	ἀπορητικός
ἀδοξάστως	ἰσοκρατεῖν
ἀμφισβητέω	ἰσολογία
ἀμφοτερόβλεπτος	ἐφεκτική
ἀνταπορέω	Πυρρώνειος

(4) *Objects or results of Skepticism.*

ἀδιαφορία	ἀφασία
ἀδιαφωνία	ἀγνωσία (τῆς ἀληθείας)
ἀκαταληψία	ἀρρεψία
ἀταραξία	ἰσοσθένεια
ἀκινήσια	μετριοπάθεια

(5) *Current phrases, definitions, &c., of Greek Sceptics.*

οὐ μᾶλλον οἱ οὐδὲν μᾶλλον	ἐρωτᾶν λόγον
οὐδὲν ὀριστέον	πάντα ἐστὶν ἀκατάληπτα
τάχα	ἀκαταληπτέω
ἕξεστι	οὐ καταλαμβάνω
ἐνδέχεται	πάντα ἐστὶν ἀόριστα
ἐπέχω	παντὶ λόγῳ λόγος ἴσος ἀντίκειται
γνώθι σεαυτὸν	ἄριστον μέτρον
διάλληλος	μηδὲν ἄγαν
διαλογισμοί	μελέτη τὸ πᾶν

APPENDIX B.

(Page 111.)

On the School of Elea.

Of all schools of thought that have emerged in the history of philosophy, and that are able to claim in some sort 'a local habitation and a name,' none is more remarkable than that of Elea. In respect of its general influence on the thought of Europe, and its special relation to the philosophy of Italy, it may almost claim to be unique. It took its rise in the teaching of Xenophanes some five centuries before the Christian era. At that period Elea was a maritime town of some importance commercially, while in intellectual advance, in general culture and refinement, it might be termed the capital of the flourishing province of Magna Græcia. Indeed, the surrounding country is connected with Elea at this early period by remarkable intellectual affinities. There flourished for some centuries the Pythagorean philosophy—that marvellous compound of profound wisdom and puerile superstition, that heterogeneous conglomerate of pure transcendentalism, oriental theosophy and magical lore—whose teachers and eminent disciples were at one time so numerous that Fabricius collected the names of nearly two hundred who flourished in Magna Græcia or in the neighbouring island of Sicily.

But the purer idealism of the Eleatics is, in relation to the subsequent thought of Europe, more remarkable than the system of Pythagoras. From the thought-tendencies conjointly produced by Xenophanes, Parmenides, and Zenon, we seem able to trace in unintermittent succession the stream of European idealism, through Socrates, Plato, and their successors, the New Academy, the Neo-Platonists, the Christian Fathers, the Realistic Schoolmen, the Platonists of the Renaissance, the Idealist Free-thinkers of the same period, the German mystics and Kabbalists, down to its latest development of Hegelian transcendentalism. Of no other school of purely philosophic speculation could an equal proportion of enduring many-sided influences be affirmed.

The first stage in this marvellous evolution is that described in the text. Under Parmenides and Zenon the city of Elea enjoyed the rare position of being a free municipality, whose governing minds were philosophers. In contrast to the contempt, now so common, of politicians for philosophers—the men of action for the

men of thought, the ancients considered Elea as the best governed city of Magna Græcia, because its laws were devised by Parmenides. The nature of this philosophic régime we are only able to guess at. That its tendencies were in the direction of freedom we may well be certain, both from an examination of the Eleatic philosophy itself, and from the historical fact that its founders were regarded as the earliest teachers of Hellenic Free-thought. Nothing need be said here as to the tenets of Xenophanes and his successors, which have already been treated in the text, but it may be remarked that the transcendental teaching of the Eleatics, while undoubtedly constituting the most characteristic feature of the school, does not exhaust its philosophical importance. If we may credit an early tradition, Leukippos was an offshoot of the Eleatics, and as he is the accepted teacher of Demokritus, and (through him) of Epikouros, we have the remarkable fact that this early Hegelianism of Magna Græcia, like its modern German descendant, became subdivided into a right and left; the right maintaining the pure idealism of their teachers, the left transmuting it into—or deriving from its relation to the phenomenal world—certain atomistic or materialist theories. Granting the truth of this hypothesis, the Eleatic School becomes the progenitor, not only of the idealism of Hellenic philosophy, but also of its concrete and materialistic systems.

But the school of Elea is equally remarkable in its relation to the whole course of Italian philosophy. The characteristics and tendencies of Italian speculation have retained for upwards of two thousand years the impulse originally imparted to them by the Elean thinkers. A recent writer (Giuseppe Buroni '*Dell' Essere e del Conoscere, studii su Parmenide Platone e Rosmini*'), who has made it his object to trace the connection between the speculations of Parmenides and those of Hegel, terms the main principle of the former—the identity of thought and existence—'*il principio splendido e supremo dell' antica e nuova filosofia italiana.*' Nor can it be said that this is an exaggeration. The modern school of Italian secular philosophy, together with the speculations of its mediæval theologians, is indissolubly united to the teaching of the Eleatics. The identity of thought and being, whatever its value philosophically or otherwise, may be said to be the primary article in the creed of Italian thinkers—the animating principle of all her highest thought. With the possible exception of England—insular in this as in other respects—no European country has kept its philosophic speculation within the same general lines so persistently as Italy. Whatever its occasional deflections from the

straight path of idealism—caused mostly by foreign influences—Italy has never been quite devoid of her own native product of transcendentalism; and for the most part the neighbourhood of Elea, Nola, Naples—towns on or adjoining the old seaboard of Magna Græcia—have furnished the larger contingent of such idealist thinkers. It is possible that this evolution of ontology may be due partly to the connection of Italian thought with the theological metaphysics and conclusions of the papacy; but inasmuch as Italian thinkers have never been wanting in independence, and their idealism is just as often employed in the interests of Skepticism as of Romanist dogma, this does not seem a sufficient explanation of the phenomenon. It would take too much time to detail the whole course of Italian idealism, from its first origin in the schools of Elea to the Hegelianism now dominant in all the Italian universities; but it may be pointed out that most of the schoolmen of Italian origin—*e.g.* Bonaventura, Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas—were men whose doctrines were not only leavened by but based upon ontological conclusions. The selfsame tendencies are markedly conspicuous in the free-thinking speculations of Giordano Bruno and the school of idealists with which he is allied. Bruno is besides a native of Nola, and on this ground claims the Eleatics as his own predecessors and fellow countrymen. His biographer, M. Bartholmess ('*Jordano Bruno*,' ii. p. 310), tells us that, 'every time he mentions the Eleatic School, it is with a kind of national pride.' But Bruno is only one of an illustrious band of Italian free-thinkers, who, in the 15th and 16th centuries were natives of the territory surrounding Elea, Naples, &c. Connected with the same district, of which it might be said, as Diogenes Laertius remarked of Elea, that 'it was capable of producing great men,' are the names of Valdez, Vanini, Telesius, Campanella, and Ochino—all thinkers in whom idealism, whether philosophical, religious, or both, is abundantly traceable.

Another offshoot, at least indirectly, of Elean idealism is found in the School of Platonists which flourished at Florence during the 15th century. The speculations of Plethon, Ficinus, Picus Mirandula, Patrizzi, though not immediately affiliated to the Eleatics, belong to the later developments of Hellenic transcendentalism, the original ancestor of which is unquestionably Parmenides of Elea. Nor is this by any means the last appearance in Italian philosophy of the same idealism: to quote the historian of Italian philosophy (L. Ferri, *Essai sur l'Histoire de la Philosophie en Italie*, vol. i. p. vi.), 'L'idéal, qui brilla jadis d'un si grand éclat dans le Platonisme de Ficin, de Léon l'Hébreu, de Pic de la

Mirandolè et de François Patrizzi, a reparu, après une disparition plus que séculaire' (this may be doubted), 'dans les écrits de Rosmini, de Gioberti, et de Mamiani, pour développer, cette fois, dans l'esprit de l'Italie, non le sentiment du beau et les instincts esthétiques, mais la conscience du droit, et le désir réfléchi de la justice.'

In these words we have a succinct description of the present position of idealism in Italy, and the latest service which the thought-tendencies generated in Elea 500 B.C. have rendered to the country of their birth. Ontological speculation, it need not be said, is capable of assuming many aspects, and of subserving various and even conflicting interests. In the course of Italian Thought-evolution we find it sometimes employed as a weapon of ecclesiasticism to suppress freedom of thought, or as a basis on which to found harsh and unsustainable dogmas. It is therefore satisfactory to find that at present the teachings and thought-impulses of ancient Elea are in harmony with free speculation, and with the growth of civil and religious liberty in their native land. After centuries of struggle, bloodshed and suffering, Italy has arrived at the standpoint of philosophical liberty which Parmenides legislated for Elea two thousand three hundred years ago. She has allied idealism and introspective speculation with the mental liberty, which, when unhampered, these are calculated to produce. She has united—it may be hoped indissolubly—the speculations and political energies of her most ancient thinkers with her own most pressing needs as a modern European state—with free institutions, popular aspirations, and general progressive enlightenment. It is this remarkable *dénouement* which gives to the history of Italian idealism, from its first origin to the present day, the peculiar if not unique character of being a kind of philosophical romance.

APPENDIX C.

(Page 198.)

On some aspects of the character and life of Sokrates.

The estimate here advanced of the moral purity of Sokrates was arrived at after a full and impartial consideration of the whole question. Indeed, a substantial agreement on the point seems now to have been attained by all the historians of Greek philosophy, which might be described as consisting of partly the verdict of 'not-proven,' partly the conclusion of 'not probable.' The evidence adduced for the opposite conclusion is resolvable, (1) into an affectation of eccentricity not uncommon to independent thinkers. That Sokrates was apt to conceive himself and his mission under grotesquely humorous aspects is evidenced by his ironical profession of being a gadfly, a torpedo fish, a hundred-headed Typhon, a professor, like his mother, of the maieutic art. Judging from these examples, it is not impossible that he may have symbolically represented himself as a kind of aged Cupid, or mediator between the sexes. Such a profession, casually made, might easily have been strained from its innocent to its degrading aspect, or, intended as it was metaphorically, might have been taken literally by such practical-minded hearers as Xenophon. Add to this that Sokrates was often described by personal friends as an eccentric, though his eccentricities are avowedly in the direction of asceticism and endurance; but it is quite conceivable how extravagant metaphor, arising from the contempt of an independent thinker for mere conventional opinions, might give rise to imputations of immoral conduct, which were far from being based on fact. (2) The possibility of a perverted inference from his teaching is further shown by his doctrine of Eros. Most writers agree that the Platonic Symposium is, of all Plato's writings, the most likely to have originated the charge of Sokrates' participation in the national sin of Greece. But the Symposium, with its doctrine of Eros, probably represents the mature and extreme stage of its author's constructive idealism. Every student of Plato knows how zealously he endeavoured to make his master the participator of his transcendental opinions, even when these had assumed a trenchantly dogmatic aspect wholly inconsistent with the Sokratic standpoint of Nescience. Thus in the Symposium he tries to implicate him with his own conception of Eros, as an unappeasable yearning for unattainable fruition in every sphere of human

desire. No doubt to Plato, in the very climax of his idealistic evolution, the doctrine of Eros assumed a somewhat wild and extravagant form. To his vivid imagination, his emotional sensibility, and intensely ardent temperament, no satiety was conceivable to any human appetite, whether grossly sensual or sublimely ideal. There was always a beyond, conceivable in imagination, however impossible of actual achievement. This was probably the principle that served to veil from some of the wisest of the Greeks the extravagances and loathsome excesses to which, on the side of the baser passions, it was liable. That Sokrates accepted the principle of Eros as unappeasable desire must be admitted. On the one hand, it was allied with, and in part founded upon, the conscious defect which he called his Nescience; on the other, it served as a poetic presentation of his desires for absolute truth, beauty, virtue; but he limited its scope and operation to these spiritual and intellectual yearnings. Now we can readily perceive how the larger and more ordinary conceptions of Eros may have induced a misconception of his language on the point, which was capable of increase both by his general habit of illustrating abstractions by concrete examples, and by his special propensity for ironically describing his intellectual passion for fair virtuous minds in the terms of corporeal affection. It should perhaps be added, as to this and other subject-matters on which there is some danger of misconceiving Plato's ideal and symbolical language, that Xenophon is a more trustworthy exponent of Sokrates than Plato. But on this point of his purity of life the testimony of the 'Memorabilia' is complete and unexceptionable.

(3) But the most decisive among the indirect arguments against the alleged immorality of Sokrates arises from its incompatibility with his mission. Above aught else, Sokrates was a teacher of self-renunciation, both mental and physical. He was a philosophic John the Baptist, preaching self-mortification and practising it—if not on locusts and wild honey, upon some approach to that spare diet. Physical self-renunciation was the necessary counterpart and complement of the philosophical Nescience, the intellectual humility which he constantly advocated. That his mission achieved a measure of success is in part proved by his martyrdom. But this fact is fatal to any reliable imputation on his moral conduct. Such a flagrant inconsistency on the part of a preacher of asceticism would neither have been unnoticed nor unreprehended by his critics. Indeed, men are unusually keen-sighted in detecting, and full-voiced in condemning, the aberrations or shortcomings of ethical missionaries, and the history of their prominent teachers

and political leaders shows that the Greeks were especially sensitive to imputations of private conduct inconsistent with their public professions. Nor was it only on the subject of self-mortification that his alleged immorality conflicted with the teaching of Sokrates. All his energies, tendencies, and predilections were distinctly intellectual. The aim of his teaching was to mould and fashion fair virtuous minds. Physical manly beauty, however much he might, in common with the rest of his fellow-countrymen, have valued it, was without corresponding qualities a shrine without a deity, a body without a soul. But this stress on intellectualism and ethical excellence renders the vices attributed to him absolutely inconceivable, except on an hypothesis that would make the 'wisest of the Greeks' the most hypocritical and self-perjured among the sons of men. Add to this his severe habit of self-enquiry, his vivid realization of conscience until it assumed the form of an attendant *daimon* whose prohibitions were for him inviolable and divine, and the improbability of his assumed guilt reaches a climax difficult to overstate.

Turning to the direct arguments on the point, we are met by the remarkable fact that these accusations were not made during his lifetime, and formed no part of his indictment before the Dikastery. Now, on the assumption that there existed some ground for the charge, or even that a scandalous rumour of his guilt was widely prevalent, such an omission is quite inconceivable. The accusation of corrupting the Athenian youth seems to have clung to him during the greater part of his life. Aristophanes adduces it in the 'Clouds' just as pointedly as Meletos and Anytos before the Dikasts. But in both cases there is no attempt to corroborate the charge by any immoral conduct on the part of Sokrates. Aristophanes, as Zeller has pointed out, would have only been too eager to avail himself of an accusation which, while it brought to a practical issue the ill-effects of Sokratic ratiocination, was peculiarly in harmony with his own broad comedy, while the indictment of Meletos and his fellow plaintiffs would have derived untold strength had they been able to substantiate his immoral teaching by his own immoral conduct.

So far, indeed, is Aristophanes from being aware of any laxity in the life of Sokrates, that he tries to turn to ridicule his continence, his power of physical endurance, and his mental serenity. This is how the 'Clouds' represent to Strepsiades the aims of the Sokratic teaching: 'How blessed among Athenians and Greeks will you be, if you have a good memory and much sophistical wisdom, and endurance dwell in your soul; if you are never

tired whether by standing or walking ; if you do not suffer much by cold, nor are eager to break your fast, and keep away from wine and gymnastics, and the other follies ; and, as becomes a clever man, consider this the best—to triumph by deeds and words, and by contending with your tongue' ('Nubes,' 413-419). Whatever may be thought of this exposition of Sokratic wisdom, it certainly does not convey the idea of a self-indulgent teacher, nor one who was accustomed to pander to the most depraved passions of his nation. We are almost inclined to pity the straits to which Aristophanes was reduced when he was compelled to devise or assign ludicrous aspects to the virtues of Sokrates, instead of discovering some ethical deficiency on which to base his buffoonery. Moreover, the testimony of Aristophanes is of peculiar value, inasmuch as it covers the earlier life of Sokrates, just as the accusation of Meletos and Anytos comprehend the later years of his life. Some writers have thought that the alleged immorality of Sokrates was a characteristic of his youthful years, but their opinion seems sufficiently rebutted by the presentation of him given in the 'Clouds.' The impossibility of Aristophanes being aware of anything detrimental to his moral purity is only equalled by the further impossibility that knowing, he should have forborne to make use of it. The testimony thus adduced on the part of an unwilling witness is confirmed by the Platonic 'Apology,' and the 'Memorabilia' of Xenophon, and it is on these, the only contemporary authorities on the question, that its decision must ultimately rest.

Since this work was sent to press the author has had opportunities of reading some recent researches on the perennial theme of Sokrates, his life, teaching, and death, but they have only served to confirm the conclusions he had already come to on the subject. Among recent contributions to the subject may be mentioned Signor Bonghi's paper in the *Nuova Antologia* (July 15, 1880), entitled 'Socrate nella difesa scrittane da Platone.' Although this article is confined to the consideration of the Platonic 'Apology,' it incidentally reopens several questions which it might be feared English scholars have regarded as finally determined by Mr. Grote's estimate of Sokrates. Signor Bonghi lays some stress on what, though generally acknowledged by critics, is not sufficiently insisted on, viz. the remarkable agreement between the 'Clouds' and the Platonic 'Apology' as to the place which Sokrates occupied in the estimation of his fellow citizens, though he shares the opinion of most modern scholars that the 'Apology' of Plato must not be accepted as the actual defence made

by Sokrates. What Plato did, he says, was not to alter, change, or vary the substance of the real 'Apologia,' but to recast it, possibly in some slight measure rearranging its subject-matters and clothing its sentiments in his own poetic diction. Touching the purely legal aspect of Sokrates's condemnation, Signor Bonghi confesses his inability to perceive the precise mode of his contravention of the law of Athens, unless it were his declaration of the divine origin of his *daimon*, which was held equivalent to the erection of a private shrine entirely independent of and unrelated to the national deities. This is indeed the best solution of the question, and it does not seem much weakened by what is equally true, that men like Euthyphron and Xenophon, although knowing the relation of Sokrates to his *daimon*, still professed themselves unable to determine how he had violated the laws. A moot point of Sokratic enquiry has always been the possible effect as a contributory cause of the death of Sokrates, the democratic reaction after the suppression of the Thirty Tyrants. This opens up a large question which it would be impossible to discuss here. Signor Bonghi lays some stress on these political con-causes, more than, as it seems to the author, they are able to bear. The chief objection against any undue weight on the political conditions of the time, is found in the fact that they are unnecessary as a reason for the condemnation of Sokrates. The cause which appeared sufficient to Plato and to Sokrates ought to suffice us, and that was none other than the relentless application of his elenchus, combined with the divine character he attributed to his *daimon*. Signor Bonghi is inclined to credit the tradition of the penitence of the Athenians for the death of their great mentor, and the unhappy fates which, according to some writers, befel his accusers. As a matter of sentiment, most persons would readily accept the tradition, which is indeed by no means utterly devoid of probability; but, regarded as a matter of fact, we must admit that there is little direct evidence for such an opinion. Signor Bonghi does not contribute any new materials towards the decision of the question. His chief reasons for believing that there was a change of sentiment in the Athenian mind being (1) a passage in Isokrates ('De Permut.' § 19), which, without naming Sokrates, mentions an angry and baseless decision of the Athenians for which they were afterwards eager to atone by persecuting its originators; (2) the smallness of the majority by which the condemnation of Sokrates was secured; and (3) the statue mentioned by Diogenes Laertius, which the Athenians subsequently erected to his memory. On Grote's decision of the point Signor Bonghi quotes with approval the judgment of Herman ('De Socratis accusa-

toribus,' p. 8): 'Scilicet Grotius id, in quo Diodorus, Plutarchus, Diogenes Laertius, Themistius, Augustinus, Suidas consentiunt, quia auctore careat, credere recusat, nos sibi auctori credere vult, Athenienses non pœnituisse.'

APPENDIX D.

(Page 349.)

On the chronological succession of the later Greek Sceptics, extracted from the 'De philosophorum Scepticorum successione' of Dr. P. Leander Haas.

I. TABELLA PHILOSOPHORUM SCEPTICORUM EX TEMPORUM RATIONE COMPOSITA.

I. SCEPTICI ANTIQUIORES.

	B.C.
Pyrrho	365-265
Pyrrhonis discipuli : Eurylochus, Philo Atheniensis, Hecataeus Abderites, Timon Phliasius, Nausiphanes, Teius.	
Timon Phliasius	325-235
Timonis discipuli : Dioscurides Cyprius, Nicolochus Rhodius, Euphranor Seleucius, Praylus Trojanus, Xanthus, Timonis filius.	
Pyrrhonorum cum Academicis post Arcesilai obitum con- junctio.	
Euphranor Seleucius	235
Eodem fortasse tempore fuerunt Numenius, Mnaseas, Philo- melus.	
Eubulus Alexandrinus	150
Ptolemæus Cyrenæus	150-120
Sarpedon.	
Heraclides Tarentinus	120-90
Ænesidemus Cnossius	90-60
Post Ænesidemum defecit successio.	

II. SCEPTICI RECENTIORES.

	A.D.
Zeuxippus Politanus	70
Zeuxis Tarentinus	70-95
Agrippa, recentiorum Scepticorum parens.	
Antiochus Laodicensis	95-120
Antiocho æqualis Apellas.	

	A.D.
Theodas Laodicensis	105-135
Menodotus Nicomediensis	120-150
In eandem incidit ætatem Theodosius Tripolitanus.	
Herodotus Tarsensis	156-180
Sextus Empiricus	180-210
Saturninus Cythenas	210-240
Dionysii Ægiensis ætas ignota est.	

(The age of Favorinus, whose works are supposed on good grounds to have been the sources whence Diogenes Laertius drew his knowledge of the Sceptics, is very doubtful. Dr. Haas places him after A.D. 150. See his work, p. 87 note.)

II. INDEX ILLORUM SCEPTICORUM QUOS LIBROS SCRIPSISSE CONSTAT VEL IPSIS LIBRORUM TITULIS SERVATIS VEL ALIIS SCRIPTORUM ANTIQUORUM TESTIMONIIS.

I. SCEPTICORUM ANTIQUIORUM.

Pyrrho nihil scripti reliquit.

Hecataeus : Περὶ Ὑπερβορέων—Αἰγυπτιακὰ (περὶ τῆς τῶν Αἰγυπτίων φιλοσοφίας)—περὶ τῆς ποιήσεως Ὀμήρου καὶ Ἡσιόδου (?)

Naasiphanes.

Timon : Σάλλοι (ἴαμβοι?)—Πύθων—Ἰνδαλμοί—περὶ αἰσθήσεων—πρὸς τοὺς φυσικούς—περὶ Ἀρκεσίλαου δειπνοῦ—ποιήματα καὶ ἔπη—satyri—triginta comœdiæ—sexaginta tragœdiæ.

Numenius, Mnaseas, Philomelus.

Ptolemæus.

Heraclides : Περὶ τῆς ἐμπειρικῆς αἰρέσεως—Commentarii in omnes Hippocratis libros.

Ainesidemus : Πυρρῶνείων λόγων ὀκτώ—κατὰ σοφίας—περὶ ζητήσεως.

Cassius.

II. SCEPTICORUM RECENTIORUM.

Zeuxis : περὶ διττῶν λόγων—Commentarii in omnes Hippocratis libros.

Agrippa.

Antiochus.

Apellas : De Agrippa.

Theodas : Εἰσαγωγή—κεφάλαιον (κεφάλαια).

Menodotus : Σεβήρῳ ἑνδεκα—adhortatio ad artes discendas (?).

Theodosius : Ὑπομνήματα εἰς τὰ Θεωδᾶ κεφάλαια—κεφάλαια Σκεπτικά
—εἰς τὸ ἕαρ (?).

Herodotus.

Dionysius : Δικτυακά.

Sextus Empiricus : [Πυρρῶναι Ὑποτύψεις ἢ σκεπτικά ὑπομνήματα
—Πρὸς τοὺς μαθηματικοὺς ἀντιρρητικοί—τὰ ἐμπειρικὰ ὑπομνήματα
—περὶ ψυχῆς—περὶ τῆς σκεπτικῆς ἀγωγῆς—τὰ ἱατρικὰ ὑπομνήματα.
Of these works of Sextus only the first two are extant.]

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

EVENINGS WITH THE SKEPTICS

OR

FREE DISCUSSION ON FREE THINKERS

BY

JOHN OWEN

RECTOR OF EAST ANSTEX, DEVON

'Believe it, my good friend, to love Truth for Truth's sake is the principal part of human perfection in this world, and the seed-plot of all other virtues.'—LOCKE

VOL. II.

CHRISTIAN SKEPTICISM.

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EVENINGS WITH THE SKEPTICS.

EVENING VI.

TWOFOLD TRUTH.

‘Einheit war das Wesen des Klassischen Heidenthums; Dualismus, Zweispalt, ist das Wesen des Klassischen Christenthums.’—Feuerbach: *Pierre Bayle*, p. 9, *Werke*, vol. vi.

‘Die Scholastiker . . . hatten hingegen der Religion nicht bloss die Suprematie über die Philosophie eingeräumt, sondern auch diese letztere für ein nichtiges Spiel, für eitel Wortfechtere erklärt, sobald sie mit den Dogmen der Religion in Widerspruch gerieth.’—Heine, *Ueber Deutschland*, *Werke*, v. p. 109.

‘Les uns disent que non, les autres disent que oui; et moi, je dis que oui et non.’—Molière, *Le Médecin malgré Lui*.

‘Il y a donc un grand nombre de Vérités, et de Foi et de Morale, qui semblent répugnantes et qui subsistent toutes dans un ordre admirable.’—Pascal: *Pensées*, Ed. Faugère, i. p. 322.

‘Now, that a man cannot command his own understanding, or positively determine to-day what opinion he will be of to-morrow, is evident from experience and the nature of the understanding, which cannot more apprehend things otherwise than they appear to it than the eye see other colours in the rainbow than it doth, whether those colours be really there or no.’—Locke: *On Toleration*, *Fox-Bourne's Life*, i. p. 176.

EVENING VI.

TWOFOLD TRUTH.

TREVOR. Our subject to-night is a cabalistic one—we have to investigate the mysterious properties of the number two.

MISS LEYCESTER. I never knew that two had any mysterious properties: I thought these were confined to the sacred numerals three and seven.

TREVOR. For that matter every number has its own secret and profound mysteries. Consider a moment, and you will see the reason of it. Number itself in its final analysis is just as inscrutable as space and time, of both of which, in fact, it is the outward calculable expression. Pythagoras, you know, resolved the universe into numbers. Without going quite so far, you must acknowledge that the world around us has a strange affinity for numbers; for what is there existing or conceivable which cannot be brought under the noble science of computation? Are there not so many planets with so many satellites? so many kings of England and popes of Rome? Has not a quadruped the exact number of four legs, neither more nor less, strange as it may seem? And with regard to man, what would he be without number? Arithmetic is the very test of civilization. Savage races have no numbers, or at least only very few, and the increase in their numerical capacities gives the measure of their general intellectual progress. Imagine existence devoid of arithmetic! It would be only a kind of annihilation. What has a more potent influence over every unit of collective humanity than 'number one'? What care is lavished on it! What expense laid out on it! What virtue ascribed to it! How much is it exalted and extolled, so that every other

existing thing, nay, every other human unit, is made subservient and secondary to its projects, its interests, and its wishes! As to number two, the subject of our discussion this evening, you will readily understand its importance to man. Is not man a biped? Has he not two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, two hands, right and left sides, besides other dual attributes too numerous to mention? If you would learn the wonderful qualities of number two, you must look into my friend Sextos Empeirikos,¹ to whom the binary number, with its inherent properties, its infinite possibilities of subdivision, and the mutual opposition of the units of which it is composed, offers unlimited scope for Skepticism. Indeed, the uncertainty pertaining to number two weighed heavily upon the great mind of Sokrates himself, so much so that he infers from the antagonism of its component units the non-existence as demonstrable fact of all number²—one unit annihilating the other, after the manner of the famous Kilkenny cats. In the ‘Occult Philosophy’ of Cornelius Agrippa³ also, as in most works of the same kind, you have a whole chapter on the properties of the dual number. *E.g.*: it is the first plural composed not of numbers but of units; it is the number of equality, of justice, of the balance, of charity, of love, of marriage. *Per contra*, it is the principle of division, discord, disintegration, and confusion, and so on for nearly two pages of dualisms, some of them obvious enough, while others are well worthy of a place in a philosophy that claims to be occult. Our concernment with it to-night is not as the type of union but of disunion, for we have to consider the possibility of the existence of double or twofold truth. We have to ask, in other words, whether what is demonstrably true in one subject or from one point of view can be false in another or from a different standpoint. Can, *e.g.* the truth which is true in philosophy be false in theology, or *vice versa*?

MRS. HARRINGTON. For myself, I should say, ‘Certainly

¹ *Adv. Math.* lib. iv. § 21; *Op. Om.* ed. Fabricius, vol. ii. p. 204.

² Plato, *Phaidon*, Steph. 97, Jowett’s trans. vol. i. p. 446.

³ *Op. Om.* vol. i. pp. 127, 128; comp. Giord. Bruno, *Cena de le Ceneri*, *Op. Ital.* i. p. 124.

not;’ but why should we have to decide such a profound question?

TREVOR. For this reason. ‘Twofold truth’ is that particular phase of Skepticism which is called forth as at least a possible contingency by the fact of an external authoritative Revelation: and as we are about to consider the operation of Free-thought in relation to Christianity, it is important we should determine how far it is right or possible for Christian philosophers, if so minded, to divide their allegiance between, *e.g.* the claims of reason and the dictates of faith. Just to give you an instance of the practical operation of twofold truth, we shall among our Skeptics come across an Italian Free-thinker, Pomponazzi, who declared that he believed the doctrine of immortality as a Christian, but as a philosopher he did not believe it.

MISS LEYCESTER. That is what they call in Germany ‘double book-keeping,’ or ‘book-keeping by double entry,’¹ not very happily though, where one entry is the precise opposite to the other, the figures, *e.g.* in the right-hand column being all erased in the left.

ARUNDEL. The ‘double entry’ that should truly represent the duplicity of twofold truth would be the false balance sheets of some rotten concern, or the ‘cooked’ accounts of a defalcating secretary.

TREVOR. I don’t agree with you, Arundel. In the cases you mention there is a distinctly dishonest intention. I think we shall find, after an investigation of twofold truth, that whatever difficulties, intellectual and moral, it may imply to others, it has been maintained conscientiously by thinkers of no small power. Dimly traceable in Greek thought whenever the conclusions of the philosopher collided with dominant popular convictions especially of a religious kind, it is very distinctly marked in the more profound of the Christian Fathers and Schoolmen. The principle was involved in every impartial attempt to reconcile the wisdom of Christianity with that of Paganism. It came to maturity in France and Italy during the Renaissance movements in

¹ ‘Doppelte Buchführung.’ Cf. Lange, *Geschichte des Materialismus*, i, p. 181.

those countries in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. But as a general rule it is a principle that has acquired prominence in every age of religious controversy, and may therefore be said to be incident as of right to every authoritative creed that has ever been controverted.

ARUNDEL. With the exception, I suppose, of Protestantism. A creed that lays such stress on human reason ought not to want a point of convergence and of unity for varying truth, or rather for varying aspects of the same truth.

TREVOR. But you forget the other element of Protestantism, the position which Scripture held in its original conception. The dualism originally existing between human reason and ecclesiasticism only took a new form. It became Reason *v.* Scripture. Luther himself was a decided upholder of 'twofold truth,' maintaining that what was true in theology was not always true in philosophy,¹ though his object was not to assert the coequal authority of the two principles as much as to subordinate reason to faith by the process of 'Divide et impera.'

HARRINGTON. Well, you need not go back so far as Luther to find Protestant defenders of 'twofold truth.' On the Continent you have Lessing and Kant as propounders of the doctrine, while in England, passing over other instances, 'twofold truth' was preached only a few years ago from the pulpit of our greatest university by a Bampton Lecturer. Astounding as it may seem, the preacher deliberately maintained that faith and reason were two different territories, each with its own boundary, laws, and government, and were of necessity engaged in internecine strife—a pretty prospect for poor speculating humanity!

MISS LEYCESTER. Yes, but you forget, Charles, that 'double truth,' in relation to Christianity, is not a principle of hostility, but of conciliation. It is put forward as a kind of intellectual 'peace at any price.' Reason has her claims

¹ Comp. *Luther's Theologie*, von Julius Kostlin, vol. ii. pp. 290, 291; Sainte's *Hist. Crit. du Rationalisme*, p. 29; Zeller, *Gesch. der Deutsch. Phil.* p. 29. And on the general position of the Reformers on this point comp. Renan and Le Clerc, *Hist. Litt. de la France au 14^{me} Siècle*, vol. i. pp. 375, 376.

conceded, so also has Revelation, each is awarded its own particular territory, each is forbidden to cross or appropriate that of the other—no doubt an impossible condition when the territory to which both lay claim is to a great extent the same. . . . It has always seemed to me that the distinction sometimes made between the oneness of the Greek and the essential duality of Christian philosophy might be represented by the difference between a circle and an ellipse. The first has a single focus, viz. reason. The second has double foci, *i.e.* Reason and Revelation. The further apart the foci, the more oblong and irregular the ellipse. The closer they approximate, the nearer does the figure attain the perfection of a circle.

ARUNDEL. The main objection to your illustration is that it merges Revelation in Reason, and so far tends to make it unnecessary. A better illustration to my mind would be this: reason and faith starting from divergent directions are originally like two circles on the same plane, which only touch each other at one point of the two circumferences, but gradually, by mutually yielding each to the other, they are so brought together as to represent two distinct half-circles possessing a common centre, as Dr. Donne says¹:—

For reason, put to her best extension,
Almost meets faith and makes both centres one.

HARRINGTON. I do not think your illustration as good as Florence's. It assumes that the respective limits of faith and reason are capable of distinct visible demarcation, which I humbly submit they are not. Reason has her functions in matters of faith, and Faith her office in matters of reason. Indeed, it is only because their limits are thus largely conterminous that you are at liberty to postulate the oneness of truth. Once grant that their powers and objects are distinct and separable, and you introduce a dichotomy into human faculties which would soon make twofoldness and antagonism prime characteristics of truth.

MRS. HARRINGTON. But does not the man of science escape the dilemma involved in 'double truth'? He has

¹ Lines on the Death of Prince Henry.

only to determine the facts and processes of nature a experiment reveals them to him, and he is not obliged to reconcile his discoveries with foregone conclusions or hypotheses of any kind.

TREVOR. Not so, Mrs. Harrington. Science just as much as theology or philosophy is largely made up of hypotheses, any one of which may at any moment turn out questionable, if not demonstrably false, and so involve the inquirer in self-antagonism or 'twofold truth.' Besides which, men of science are not free from the emotional, sympathetic, and ideal wants of humanity. They are also placed in the midst of an objective environment of which they must needs take some account, especially in its religious aspect. For these reasons twofold truth is just as common among men of science as among philosophers and theologians. A striking instance of this you have in Michael Faraday, who persistently refused even to attempt the unification of his religious and scientific standpoints. Let me read you his remarkable words on this subject: 'I do not think it at all necessary to tie the study of the natural sciences and religion together; and in my intercourse with my fellow-creatures that which is religious and that which is philosophical have ever been two distinct things.'¹ From a similar conviction of the incompatibility of the philosophical and popular religious standpoints Buffon defended esoteric and exoteric teaching—another form in this instance of twofold truth; while David Hume, ranking him among men of science, though he denied that the historical veracity of miracles could be demonstrated, thought that they might be believed as articles of faith.

ARUNDEL. Do I understand you to say that esoteric and exoteric teaching involve an admission of double truth? If so, I think you are mistaken. 'Twofold truth' presupposes a condition of irreconcilable hostility. The contradictories are opposed in kind, whereas the differences between exo- and esoteric teaching are differences in degree. You would not say that the professor of high mathematics who also taught the elementary rules of arithmetic was a maintainer of 'twofold truths,' even though it might be true that the

¹ Tyndall's *Fragments of Science*, p. 369.

principles to which he appealed were divergent in the two cases.

TREVOR. No, I should not, if the difference were of degree and not of kind. But it appears to me that the distinction is generally of the latter description. Esoteric teaching is put forward as not only higher than, but irreconcilable with, exoteric. It was so in the case of Pomponazzi and other defenders of twofold truth. It was so in the case of Buffon. It is so in the case of scientists among ourselves, who discern no middle point between science and religion, and yet hold both to one and to the other. It is so also in the casuistical ratiocination of the Jesuits. Indeed, I should not hesitate to state it as a general rule, that wherever the distinction between esoteric and exoteric doctrine is strongly emphasized, a leaning to 'twofold truth' may be fairly suspected.

MISS LEYCESTER. Among learned professions I suppose lawyers and judges have the strongest leaning to 'twofold truths.' Their calling is so entirely taken up with examining the opposing claims of rival parties that their minds must acquire a tendency to chronic equilibrium, *i.e.* holding every issue in suspense until they hear the opposite sides fully argued. In view of the curious decisions one sometimes hears, one wonders whether judges themselves re-try in the secret tribunal of their own minds the causes on which they have pronounced their decisions.

HARRINGTON. I suspect judges have little time and less inclination for such extra-judicial and nugatory employment. *Prima facie*, no doubt, the judicial faculty has in it much that is suspicious and Skeptical, though the incertitude that comes from the perpetual balancing of conflicting evidence is corrected in a great measure by the necessity of a definite decision on its merits. Still I agree with Florence. I think lawyers and judges are as a class more Skeptical than others. Such, at least, is my own experience. At the same time, I never knew a case of professional indecision quite so helpless as the instance quoted by Hazlitt¹ from Abraham Tucker. The latter writer used to relate of a friend of his, an old special pleader, that once coming out of his chambers

¹ *Table Talk*, vol. i. p. 238.

in the Temple to take a walk with him he hesitated at the bottom of the stairs which way to go, proposed different directions—to Charing Cross, to St. Paul's—found some objection to them all, and at last turned back for want of a casting motive to incline the scale. Tucker gives this as an example of that temper of mind which, having been long used to weigh the reasons for things with scrupulous exactness, could not come to any conclusion at all on the spur of the moment. On the other hand, we must recollect that the incertitude of lawyers and judges is generally confined to the exercise of their profession, and that in matters outside of it they are often as confiding and dogmatic as the rest of the world. Lord Eldon's perpetual 'I doubt' grew to be a standing joke; but his lordship's constitutional wariness in professional matters did not prevent his being an extreme bigot and dogmatic in politics and religion.

MISS LEYCESTER. We touched slightly a point in our Sokrates discussion which appears more appropriate to our present subject of 'twofold truth,' *i.e.* the relation of irony to intellectual dualism or Skepticism. Irony seems the fit and proper method of expressing cautiously and reservedly dual-truth. Itself a method of speech, of which the overt signification is not only separable from but opposed to its real intentional meaning, it is eminently adapted to suggest twofold truth, while it has a further cause of duality as representing the antagonism so often existing between the independent thinker and his surroundings, social, philosophical, and religious. That, I suppose, is the reason why irony has been so generally employed by Neologian teachers from Sokrates downwards. Indeed, I have sometimes thought it a characteristic of all teachers of new and unpopular truth.

TREVOR. The question of the relation of literary style and method to intellectual idiosyncrasy and position is an interesting one, which has, so far as I know, never been discussed; but I quite agree with you that irony is frequently a characteristic of new thought. Assailing old beliefs, the new teacher seems compelled to employ defensive armour while making his attack. . . . By the way, here are some admirable remarks of Bishop Thirlwall on the relation of

irony to the employment of judicial functions or discrimination between rival truths: 'There is always a slight cast of irony in the grave, calm, respectful attention impartially bestowed by an intelligent judge on two contending parties who are pleading their causes before him with all the earnestness of deep conviction and excited feeling. What makes the contrast interesting is that the right and the truth lie on neither side exclusively; that there is no fraudulent purpose, no gross imbecility of intellect on either, but both have plausible claims and specious reasons to allege, though each is too much blinded by prejudice or passion to do justice to the views of its adversary. For here the irony lies not in the demeanour of the judge, but is deeply seated in the case itself, which seems to favour each of the litigants, but really eludes them both. And this, too, it is that lends the highest degree of interest to the conflicts of religious and political parties.'¹ Thus, according to this profound thinker—himself one of the greatest masters of irony of our time—the ironical mode of presentation belongs essentially to twofold truth.

HARRINGTON. I should put the fact somewhat differently. Twofold truth is only an extreme, and to my mind not very inviting, form of the general method of thought which we call Skeptical. Now I quite think that there is a general affinity between the Skeptical method and the ironical expression of thought. I don't attempt to account for it psychologically, but an induction of Skeptics and their literary weapons tends to show a predilection to irony. Thus Sokrates was a Skeptic, at war with the convictions of his country, and one of the most noteworthy features of his intellect is his large employment of irony. Pomponazzi is a decided upholder of twofold truth, and his irony was of a peculiarly bitter and trenchant description. Erasmus was, as regards Romanism, a religious Skeptic, and his delicate and subtle irony is one of the most marked features of his style. So also, coming home to our own country, Hallam, George Cornewall Lewis, and Thirlwall were historical Skeptics, and they largely employed irony. Swift, Sterne, and Thackeray

¹ Thirlwall's *Remains*, vol. iii. p. 8.

were social Skeptics, and irony is conspicuous in their writings.

ARUNDEL. Well, I can suggest, as against Miss Leycester's notion, one case of a religious teacher—indeed the greatest—in whose sayings no irony is perceivable—I mean Jesus Christ.

HARRINGTON. Do not be too sure of that, Arundel. I have always thought that there is a considerable amount of irony in the teaching of Christ. In the indirect method of the parables you have a kind of irony; while the defence of that mode of popular instruction, 'That seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand,' is emphatically ironical. So also, I take it, is the injunction to festive preparations for fastings, 'Anoint thine head and wash thy face.' His invective against the Pharisees is also occasionally marked by both irony and sarcasm. I forbear to notice other instances from a fear of trespassing on sacred ground.

MISS LEYCESTER. You have not noticed the example which Robertson of Brighton was accustomed to adduce—I mean the passage, '*Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition*'¹—where you have the ironic dualism distinctly marked, viz.: 1. Jewish infidelity considered as a reproach; 2. The same thing regarded as an object of mock congratulation on account of its complete success.

HARRINGTON. Very true, that striking instance escaped me; . . . but, as a general rule, I agree with Arundel so far that I think irony somewhat rare in Semiticism. It is a plant of robust habit, such as will only thrive in certain strong soils. The Semitic intellect was neither sufficiently vigorous, independent, and recalcitrant, nor comprehensive and many-sided enough to allow of much development in that direction.

TREVOR. Well, our present object is not so much the verbal modes in which 'twofold truth' is accustomed to find expression, as the phenomenon itself. I think we shall find on fair examination that the antinomy which takes so extreme a form as the deliberate combination in a single intellect of contrary truths is really traceable to causes lying

¹ Mark vii. 9.

far down in the constitution of the human mind and its relation to nature and humanity. That at least is the moral of my paper on 'Twofold Truth,' which I will now proceed to read.

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Although thinkers in the present day are taught to regard their minds as the products of that omnipotent evolution that has educated the whole of natural phenomena, metaphysical as well as physical, from primæval chaos, there seems still left, perhaps as a 'survival,' an ineradicable instinct to assign it, so far back as we can trace it, an independence and autonomy of its own. Probably there never existed a race so rude as not to possess some power of discriminating between the subjective thought and objective being, between the 'ego' and the 'non-ego.' Thus in man's most rudimentary relation to the outer world there is postulated a dualism. No sooner does he begin to think than he recognizes himself as an entity disparate from and even partially opposed to the environment in which he lives. At first this perception of duality is not a strong feeling; but as man advances in civilization, as he becomes able to discriminate clearly his position with regard to nature and humanity, the feeling increases. He begins to find that just as he himself forms an infinitesimally small part of the universe, so his personal knowledge is utterly incommensurate with the sum-total of existence, which nevertheless it would fain fathom. Thence results a feeling of incongruity between man as the knower and the universe as the thing known, which reaches its extreme stage when the philosopher refuses to make himself and his limited experience the sole measure of existence. This is the stage really reached in the maxim of Protagoras, 'Man is the measure of all things,' for the import of that dictum was not that man should make his individual experience the law of the universe, but that we should recognize the personal limitation and relativity of all his knowledge. Here then the dualism becomes well marked. The thinker rightly regards himself and his knowledge as a small islet in the immeasurable ocean of the unknown. Moreover, this conviction of disparity tends to advance with the progress of knowledge. Every extension of the bounds of the universe, whether in space or time, enlarges the limits of human Nescience, and the philosopher is fain to confess, 'What I know is a small part of what might be known,' indeed the aggregate sum of actual human knowledge is an inappreciably small fraction of conceivable knowledge, to say nothing of omniscience. Perhaps he advances a step further

and says, 'My infinitesimally small knowledge, nay, that which I share with all other human knowers, can form no just or adequate standard of universal knowledge. Truths that I regard as absolute may not really be so. Those certainties of which I cannot even conceive the non-existence or incertitude may be to others no certainties at all. In other worlds, perchance scattered through space, matter may exist without any law of gravity, and our vaunted principles of arithmetic and geometry may be so modified that $2 + 2$ might possibly make five, and two straight lines might haply inclose a space.'

Here, then, we have in man's elementary position in nature, regarding him as a rational being, a clear *locus standi* for some such principle as twofold truth. Gradually man acquires the conviction that the known can never be an adequate measure of the unknown. Indeed the assertion of an inevitable antinomy between man and the universe is no more than the involuntary homage we are compelled to render to the infinite possibilities by which we are surrounded, and so far 'twofold truth' might conceivably claim to be the erection of an altar to the unknown god.

Nor is this relation of man to the unknown materially modified by the fact that he has no means of determining the degree or kind of antagonism that may exist between himself and the universe outside of his cognition. We have no difficulty in conceiving, indeed our usual mode of generalization tends in this direction, that all other thinking beings in the universe may be constituted as we ourselves are; nor is it hard to imagine that distant portions of the universe may be formed after that model and with those laws with which our terrestrial *habitat* has made us acquainted. For aught we know, the antinomy that justifies twofold truth may not exist, or it may exist only partially, not sufficiently to warrant a complete dichotomy of the human reason. Still this consideration only serves to remove the difficulty a stage further off. Truth, to be complete and infallible, must be demonstrably true for all space, all time, and all legitimate thinking. Once admit that this cannot be proved, once suggest if only as a possibility that the truth lying outside of our experience is not of the same kind as that within, that existence elsewhere may be governed by laws and conditions of which we know nothing, and immediately there is introduced a basis for double truth. Henceforth it is open to the Skeptic to deny the existence of truth as a demonstrable universality. Compelled to accept the doctrine of the relativity of human knowledge, he is cut off by his very acceptance from all connection with the absolute.

2. But there is another dichotomy incidental to man as a thinking being. Sooner or later he begins to discern that his own knowledge—the result of personal research and experience—has only a partial affinity with the general sum of knowledge professedly possessed by his fellow-men. Perhaps also he is led to doubt whether the faculties and methods by which he acquires knowledge operates in his own case and in the case of others in a precisely similar manner. He conceives himself to know and is dimly cognizant of the methods whereby he has attained knowledge, but how far either the method or result is shared in all its entirety by his fellow-men he cannot know. No doubt the discrimination here mentioned is a product of some advance in metaphysical inquiry. Among uncultured races there is no aptitude for the individualism which it implies. But it is inevitable to all higher thought, and wherever it takes place the result is a differentiation of the individual from the sum of humanity outside him, which implies, or may be held to imply, twofold truth. All higher philosophy teaches the thinker to admit the essential individuality of his thought. It forces from him the admission: ‘The truth I conceive myself to know may not be in its precise form, nature, quality, and quantity, the truth that other men call by the same word, or embody in similar definitions. The means and processes that have enabled me to acquire it may not operate in the same manner and degree in the case of others.’ This inevitable isolation of every thinker and every thought-process therefore carries with it an admission of double-truth, if not as an actuality, yet at least as a probability of a very high degree; and Clough’s aspiration for himself—

‘O let me love my love unto myself alone,
And know my knowledge to the world unknown.’¹

—really expresses the destiny of every self-reliant and profound thinker. To him the outside world—man with his vaunted knowledge—is but the counterfeit presentment of an existence which he does not and cannot share, or at most the externality is like the images in Plato’s cave simile, consisting of dim shadows of objects existing in an unknown elsewhere, and which he can never expect to apprehend as substantial here-present realities.

3. But besides these conditions of dualism inevitable to man as a reasoning and progressive being, there are in most conditions of social life certain limits and restrictions which tend to demarcate the individual thinker from the environment in which he dwells.

¹ *Poems*, p. 89.

Even in rudimentary stages of civilization man comes into contact with a body more or less compact of traditions, usages, beliefs, and opinions of various kinds. Endowed with a reasoning power capable of apprehending and testing truth, he finds that together with his inborn capacity for employing it he has ample material ready prepared for such employment. Between the 'ego' and the social 'non-ego' there hence arises a divergency that may possibly attain the dimensions of twofold truth. Religious or other beliefs may, for example, be presented to the thinker as a body of infallible and divinely prescribed truth which he must accept without hesitation or criticism. Perhaps, notwithstanding all the divine and human sanctions attesting such traditional beliefs, his own reason freely applied is able to detect a weakness or incongruity in what he is asked to accept. This of itself suggests a dualism. The thinker in self-defence is compelled to assume a critical, if not negative, attitude to the general stock of beliefs which constitute his mental environment. I need hardly add that this is the starting point of all Skepticism, which begins if it does not end in antagonism and twofoldedness. No doubt the phenomenon here mentioned is common to all creeds resting on external and supernatural authority. So great is the native vigour, the spontaneity of the human reason, that a conflict with mere superimposed tenets and convictions may be regarded as a normal condition of its growth. Even in Greek philosophy, with all its speculative freedom, there are occasional signs of this dualism. Its mythological systems, its mysteries, philosophical schools, political parties, exercised a restraint greater or less upon its independent thought. The death of Sokrates is a salient and indisputable proof that Hellenic speculation was not absolutely free. Still it attained as great a degree of freedom as seems compatible with the ordinary prejudices and institutions of mankind. Its research extended itself into every department of human thought, and in each such direction it carried its maxim of theoretical liberty. Beyond Sokrates, Pyrrhôn, and Sextos, it was impossible to go. Freedom might be said to have transcended in those thinkers all reasonable limits, and to have attained a licence of self-contradiction which even became suicidal—so far as pure speculation with its intense vitality and endless capacity for transformations can be said to be capable of utter self-extinction. But in no creed has the dualism between its own authority and the mental freedom of its disciples assumed so vehement a form as in Christianity. This is to be accounted for not by anything in the teaching of its founder hostile to intellectual liberty, for it would be difficult to conceive

any religion freer in its most authoritative prescriptions and involved tendencies than that of Christ. But it is due almost entirely to the form and nature of its ecclesiastical development. The very idea of Revelation—especially in the trenchant and exclusive form in which it was eventually asserted by the Church—postulated a condition of the recipient human reason which must sooner or later have entailed revolt. It was presented as the sole absolute authoritative and definitive enunciation of the Divine Will. It was expounded as leaving no room for hesitation or criticism: indeed the faintest attempts to reconcile its claims with Nature or Reason were reprobated as gross instances of impiety and ingratitude. Its dogmas were propounded not only as infallible truths, but as covering the whole area of knowledge and speculation permissible to humanity. No doubt this autocratic conception of the claims and powers of Revelation was a doctrine of somewhat slow growth. It cannot be said to be distinctly marked in the history of Christianity until after the Council of Nice. But even in the more moderate stages of its evolution prior to that event, the antagonism between Faith and Reason may be detected. A cursory glance at the steps by which the antinomy grew until it attained the dimensions of double-truth will not be an unfitting episode in our history of Free-thought.

The commencement of any great religious movement is so far like initiatory stages in the development of the human mind that there is no scope for dissidence or doubt. Whatever be the varied aspects under which it is presented to its adherents, they all have points of convergence and unity either in the creed or in the person of its founder. In the glow of religious enthusiasm, the passionate fervour of men animated by powerful feeling and united by common sympathies and opinions, there is little room for hesitation and criticism, still less for actual divergency. Different interests and standpoints coalesce for the time being like the interfusion of various chemical substances in a furnace; and it is only when this amalgamating point of temperature becomes lowered—when the first warm enthusiasm has subsided—when what was largely emotional manifests a tendency to become critical—that signs of disparity and segregation proclaim themselves.

We do not therefore find for some time after the birth and first propagation of Christianity any pronounced trace within the Church itself of a Skeptical dualism. No doubt there were conflicting standpoints to be reconciled. The position, *e.g.* of Christianity to Judaism was a question which might be deter-

mined by the hypothesis of dual and antagonistic revelations. In some cases it is evident this result was actually proclaimed as a solution of the incompatibility. At the same time this difficulty was only local, the relation of one Palestinian religion or stage of religious thought to another. But a far profounder dichotomy was that disclosed when Christianity began to take deliberate cognizance of its position as regards Pagandom. This dualism, or at least this standpoint containing the elements of dualism, came to maturity in the school of Alexandria. Here we find Christianity in direct contact with Hellenic thought, no doubt of a somewhat debased character, but still possessing the attributes of intellectual freedom and genuine love of enlightenment that distinguished its earlier stages. Regarded from the standpoint of ecclesiasticism, the contact was strongly suggestive of antagonism. Broad thinkers like Clement and Origen were bound to take a liberal and comprehensive view of the mutual relation of Gentilism and Christianity, and actual dualism might accordingly be avoided by theories of prior revelations or the help of a mystical allegorism. But to fair and critical thinkers not largely endowed with imagination, the coequal veracity of Gentile thought and Christian revelation could only be reconciled by a dualism that accepted both without even trying to find a point of junction between them.

But the influence of Alexandrian Hellenism tended to create a permanent basis for 'Twofold Truth' in the Christian Church for another reason. Among all its legacies to after-ages Greek philosophy bequeathed none more important than its dialectical research, whether in the Skeptical form of the Dialogues of Plato or in the more positive one of the formal logic of Aristotle.

In the works of Porphyry and the other commentators on Aristotle lay the seed of that dialectic that was destined to bloom so many centuries afterwards in Scholasticism,¹ and that gave birth to more than one form of intellectual antagonism. Though patronized by some of the Fathers, and afterwards introduced into Christian schools, the study of dialectic was always regarded with a suspicious eye by the leading dogmatists of the Church. Irrespectively of its pagan origin and associations, its implicit tendencies in the direction of intellectual freedom and independence were too strongly marked to allow its favourable reception at the hands of a dominant sacerdotalism. Such men as Jerome were just as keen-sighted in foreseeing the havoc which mental science

¹ Comp. Prantl, *Geschichte der Logik*, vol. i. ch. xi.; Hauréau, *Hist. de la Phil. Scol.* vol. i. chap. ii.

must cause to ecclesiastical dogmas as the Athenians were when in the interests of their mythological beliefs they opposed the logical exertations of the Sophists and Sokrates.¹ It was a sufficing condemnation of dialectic that its principles and scope lay outside the domain of theology, and if the latter were held to be 'super logicam'—superior to logic—the inevitable result would be Twofold Truth.

Nor do the influences already mentioned exhaust the aspects of dualism presented to us in the early history of Christianity. The Gnostics, *e.g.* opposed their intuitional supernatural enlightenment (*γνώσις*) to the teaching of the Church (*πίστις*), and the so-called half-Gnostics took in the issue the position of 'double truth.' Gnosticism with its many ramifications is indeed only one form out of many in which Oriental dualism is traceable in sects, existing either within or on the confines of the Church. A kind of Twofold Truth is also discernible in the rival authorities deferred to by Augustine and other Fathers, under the titles the Light of Nature and that of Grace. The predilection of the Bishop of Hippo for such dualisms both in philosophy and theology is a distinctly marked feature of his thought, which he did not throw off with his renunciation of Manichæanism. Similar affinities also distinguish a few of the Greek Fathers. Nor have we any reason to feel surprise at these occasional manifestations of antagonism among the ablest teachers of the Christian Church. The very progress of Ecclesiasticism in relation to human thought was surcharged with antinomical conditions. Thus, when the formation of the canon raised the text of Scripture into a final and authoritative standard of faith, the possibility of Twofold Truth was implicitly affirmed. In many cases the theory of an infallible book, claiming to be the sole word of God, had the effect of ruling profane literature out of court. This was indeed the ordinary result of that prepossession in the Latin Church. But there were instances of men adopting the conclusion of double-truth whenever the divergency between Scripture and Reason assumed an irreconcilable form. Another duality akin to this, but of somewhat later origin, was that of Scripture and Nature regarded as the twofold revelation of the Divine Mind. This also had its defenders among the more profound and farsighted theologians of the Church, *e.g.* Albert the Great. We shall have to discuss the most remarkable of them in point of development when we arrive at Raymund of Sabieude. It need scarcely be added that what holds good of Scripture, considered as a basis for dogma, holds

¹ See the collection of passages in Prantl, vol. ii. p. 6.

good of every successive accretion to the systematic beliefs of the Church. They were so many objective poles of supposed truth placed in juxtaposition with the subjective pole of the human reason, sometimes even assuming a relation of repellency with it; and yet, like the opposition of positive and negative poles in an electric battery, not unfrequently generating light by their contact.

I do not, however, wish to insist too strongly on these elements of dichotomy in the gradual growth of ecclesiastical Christianity, preparatives though they were to the full avowal of Twofold Truth. We must bear in mind, as partly explaining the absence of vehement antagonism between Faith and Reason in the early history of the Church, that its dogmatic system was as yet in a vague and unformed condition, and did not at first present that harsh and repellent aspect to all alien modes of thought which it subsequently did. Besides which, it is true of intellectual as of every species of insurrection, that it implies a certain growth of self-assertion and reactionary power. The Reason must attain to a consciousness of its strength and of its claims before it can be expected to assert either the one or the other. During the ages usually styled dark, what with ecclesiastical oppression, the prevalence of ignorance and superstition, and the political disorganization that reigned throughout Europe, there was little chance for any open and pronounced dissidence from the dogmatic teaching of the Church. Scotus Erigena might claim to be the dividing point between the substantial unison of the past eight centuries of Church history and the distinct dissonance of Faith and Reason which began with Scholasticism. His avowal that true philosophy was really identical with religion may be taken as the final form of that truce between authoritative dogma and mental freedom that had so long existed before the breaking out of the formidable struggle between the belligerents which has continued to the present day.

Twofold Truth may be said to have come to maturity in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. By this time the human reason was beginning to recover from the repression to which it had been so long subjected by the Church. Stimulated by various quickening agencies, which we shall have to notice more fully when we discuss the Italian Renaissance, and of which I will only mention one in this place—the Arab philosophy—it acquired no small share of that independence and self-reliance that belong to it of right. One of the first objects which the awakened Reason had to consider was its relation to dogma regarded as definitive and infallible truth. As we have seen, the authority of the Church had long proscribed all kinds of inquiry, which tended in their

methods to mental freedom and in their results to conclusions outside her ordinary limits. All human knowledge was absorbed by Theology.¹ This 'mistress science' had, perhaps by way of evincing her superiority, devoured all the rest. When Christian philosophy, therefore, came into being with the advent of Scholasticism, it was at first only regarded as a novel mode of theological inquiry.² The truths so long maintained by the Church and set forth in her creeds were merely reiterated and confirmed by the special faculty of the Reason. The goal was the same; it was only the starting-points and directions that differed, and even these were to a great extent coincident. Reason was thus in the position of a minor state, having within it the elements of freedom and autonomy, but kept in subjection by a powerful and unscrupulous neighbour. Naturally, the first aim of philosophy, or its instrument the Reason, was to effect something like a new *modus vivendi* with its oppressor. There was no attempt as yet to proclaim the independence of philosophy. The 'handmaid of theology' was still compelled to keep to her subordinate place, however much she might endeavour to enlarge its duties or widen her own experience. Like the squire of a knight of chivalry, it was enough that she should be allowed to fight the battles of theology, to wield her self-forged weapons in her defence. For the moment Theology failed to perceive that the skill and prowess philosophy was thus able to attain might hereafter be applied to her own purposes, to secure, *e.g.* her own independence and the undisturbed exercise of her autocratic functions. Happily for human progress, this was precisely what took place. Reason, growing in strength and resolution as well as in the power of handling her native weapons, was not averse to employing both it and them in struggles outside the limits of theological dogma. This employment was justified in the eyes of the greatest mediæval thinkers by the inherently different methods which pertained to reason and faith. One was the region of belief and feeling, the other that of intellection and conviction. Gradually this original disparity took a more definite and pronounced form. Different

¹ Among the propositions condemned by Stephen, Bishop of Paris, in 1276, occur the two following:

Cap. xi. 4. 'Item quod nihil plus scitur, propter scire Theologiam.'

Cap. xi. 6. 'Item quod lex Christiana impedit addiscere.'

It would be exceedingly difficult to disprove the truth contained in these opinions of the advanced thinkers of Paris in the thirteenth century. *Comp. Max. Bib. Vet. Pat.* vol. xxv. p. 335.

² *Comp.* Baur, *Dogmengeschichte*, ii. p. 208; and Hauréau, *Hist. de la Phil. Scol.* vol. i. p. 30.

methods might justifiably lay claim to diverse and even opposite results. If Faith ended in religious dogma, why might not Reason find her own outcome in philosophical convictions? In this case Reason might fairly assert within her province her own rightful autonomy, and proclaim her independence of the supremacy of Faith. Nor would it be necessary to go beyond this. Reason, both from fear and policy, had no desire to injure or supplant Faith. She did not even pretend to be the equal of Faith in every respect. All she pleaded for was a recognition of independence, deliverance from the heavy fetters and manacles that had so long bound her; freedom to pursue her own methods and avouch her conclusions without the perpetual supervision and the arrogant dictation of her acknowledged superior. At this precise stage Twofold Truth made its appearance. Reason and Faith were declared to imply two different territories, ruled by different laws and actuated largely by rival interests. This position seems to have been taken nearly contemporaneously both in France and Italy, especially in the universities of Padua and Paris. In the year 1240, *e.g.* we have a condemnation by William, Bishop of Paris, of certain 'Detestable errors against the Catholic faith,'¹ among which we find the opinion that 'many truths are from eternity which are not God Himself,' against which the bishop affirms the counter-proposition, that 'only one truth is from eternity, which is God Himself, and that no truth exists from eternity which is not that truth.' But a more elaborate proof of the extent and ramifications of Twofold Truth in the University of Paris is supplied by the denunciation in 1276 by Stephen, Bishop of Paris, of certain errors attributed to the Averroists, and professed by certain members of the university.² Among these errors were certain assertions founded on the writings of the heathen which were held to be 'true in philosophy, but not according to the Catholic faith, as if,' adds the bishop, 'there were two antagonistic truths, and as if in opposition to the truth of Holy Scripture there could be truth in the writings of these accursed Gentiles, of whom it is written: "I will destroy the

¹ *Maxima Bibliotheca Vet. Patr.* vol. xxv. p. 329; D'Argentré, *Coll. Jud.* vol. i. p. 158. Compare on Mediæval Double-Truth, Dr. M. Maywald's interesting monograph *Die Lehre von der Zweifachen Wahrheit*.

² Few documents on the Free-thought of the Middle Ages are more interesting than this. The inculcated articles number over 200. They may be found in *Max. Bib. Vet. Patr.* vol. xxv. pp. 330-35, and in D'Argentré, *Coll. Jud.* i. 177-84. But most of the articles bearing on Twofold Truth are collected in Maywald's monograph *Lehre von der Zweifachen Wahrheit*, pp. 9-11. Comp. also Crevier, *Hist. de l'Univ. &c.* vol. ii. pp. 76, 77.

wisdom of the wise," &c.'—words which express clearly the general principle as well as the probable issue of double-truth. I will add a few more of these incriminated propositions, in order to show the method and real purport of this and similar conceptions in the thirteenth century. The bishop condemns the tenets—

'That the natural philosopher as such ought to deny the creation¹ of the world, because his opinion is based upon natural causes and reasons. The Christian, on the other hand, may deny the eternity of the world because his opinion is founded on supernatural causes.'

'That creation is impossible, although the contrary may be held as a matter of faith (*secundum fidem*).'

'That no question is reasonably disputable which a philosopher ought not to dispute and determine: because reasons are received from things. To philosophy, however, pertains the consideration of all things according to their various parts.'

'That the wise of the world are the only philosophers.'

'That there is no state more excellent than the cultivation of philosophy.'

'That a man should possess a certain conclusion, it is necessary that it should be based upon principles known independently (*per se*). It is an error when a general proposition is made as to one certitude of apprehension and another of adhesion.'

'That a future resurrection should not be believed nor granted by a philosopher because it is impossible to ascertain its truth by reason—an error, because even the philosopher ought to surrender his intellect as a captive to the obedience of the faith of Christ.'

'That the individual soul is unchangeable according to philosophy, but changeable according to faith.'

'That man should not be satisfied with authority if he can attain any other kind of certitude.'

It is clear that a scheme of thought of which such maxims reveal the general method and purport is one characterized by no ordinary freedom and audacity. The Reason that could have educed those conclusions and set them forward in a determined self-asserting manner was never, we might suppose, in great danger of being extinguished by the authoritative dogmas of Faith. We begin to perceive, too, what a powerful lever was afforded by the dualism of Faith and Reason for emancipating the human intellect from the thralldom of Ecclesiasticism; for, leaving out of consideration the legitimacy of the instrument, we cannot deny its unrivalled potency. Never was there a more conspicuous instance of the effectiveness of the 'Divide et impera' method. The dogmas of the Church, with

¹ *Novitas* as distinct from *æternitas*.

their manifold accretions of ignorance and superstition, were found to have lost at least half of their authority and thereby half of the terrorism they had long exercised over humanity. We cannot, I think, feel surprised that the Church from her standpoint of exclusiveness and infallibility should have hurled her anathemas against the authors and propagators of these opinions. Keeness of insight far less prompt than that which has always characterized Romanism might have easily discerned the issue involved in Twofold Truth. It clearly undermined her own position as the divine and sole accredited source of all truth. The verities she chose to stamp with her own brand were to have no longer the exclusive monopoly hitherto assigned them. Philosophy as a rival trader and bidder for the patronage of humanity set up a store of her own, with her own special commodities, authenticated by her own mark, and trader-like did not scruple to boast the superiority of her goods in certain respects to those retailed by the Church. Whatever other effects might attend this rivalry, at least there was opposition—rudimentary free-trade in human dogmas and opinions. A new condition of human liberty was established, which if not destined to bear much fruit for the present was full of promise for the distant future. The Church could only fall back on her ancient claim of oneness and individuality. To her boasted unity of form she was astute enough to add the philosophic conception of the essential oneness of all truth, and laid claim to both alike. Truth was not biform as those dualists asserted—a kind of centaur, half divine, half human. On the contrary, truth was *ex vi termini*, whole, complete, and indiscerptible, fully embodied and revealed in her own doctrine, form, and polity. It was to no purpose that divines like Abelard and Aquinas, and philosophers like Giordano Bruno, pleaded for the separate existence of secular truth, and expatiated on the natural diversity in object and method between Religion and Philosophy. Both the reasoning and the conclusion were alike disclaimed. As the virtues of the heathen were to earlier ecclesiastics only ‘splendid vices,’ so the mediæval Church was eager to pronounce all truths not originated by herself, and which had never received her sanction, mere plausible forms of falsehood. Nor is this prejudice confined to any one part of the history of Romanism. Up to the present day she has reserved her most implacable hostility, her choicest vocabulary of vituperation, for the daring propounders of truth, of whatever kind, outside the limits of her own dogma.¹ What was true of philosophy in the

¹ For the more recent decrees and pronouncements of the Papacy on this point, comp. Casare Cantù: *Gli Eretici d'Italia*, vol. i. p. 197.

time of the Schoolmen became true of astronomy in the time of Galileo, and of general physical science in all subsequent periods.

On the other hand, from the standpoint of intellectual progress Twofold Truth was not without its value. For whatever peril might attach to its extreme assertion, however much it might conflict with logical axioms and laws of thought, and however destructive it might seem to the oneness and solidarity of the individual consciousness, it was at least useful as a method of inquiry. The vindication of the rights of Reason which it implied was in point of fact a philosophical Protestantism. Outside the Church, philosophy had now erected a conventicle, just as Protestantism under Luther did two centuries subsequently. Room was thus afforded for conscientious dissidents, and a fatal blow was struck at the assumed unity and tyrannical aggrandizement of the Papacy. Nor was this all. The assertion of the coequal authority of the Reason with the Ecclesiasticism hitherto exclusively dominant had further implications. It imparted a breadth to intellectual research hitherto unknown to Christendom. The exclusiveness and dogmatism of the Church had necessarily curtailed the scope of human inquiry. When Theology claimed to be the only truth, and her methods the sole avenues to its possession, there could be no further question as to other verities or alien methods. The field of nature might be ever so great, its contents never so inviting, but of what avail was this in the face of a dogma that theoretically included nature and everything else in its conspectus of infallible certainty? Similarly the field of mind might invite investigation and be well calculated to repay it; but in its fullest sense this department of culture was equally prohibited, or, which came to the same thing, the cultivation was rendered nugatory by the all-inclusive claims of the Church. Twofold Truth was a natural protest against this condition of things. Declaring Reason to be autonomous, it demanded scope for its free exercise. Nor was the territory thus claimed a small one. With a true perception of the rights of Reason, it required a field for criticism and research in every direction. 'Philosophy,' said the maintainers of double-truth—perhaps in satirical imitation of the claims of theologians—'should be conversant with all things.' When we come to the Renaissance we shall find how much this encyclopædic view of knowledge governed human research. In this commencement of science the human mind, on account of its long starvation, claimed to be omnivorous. All knowledge, real and supposed, was devoured with a passionate craving which men nurtured on regular and plentiful diet fail to understand. This tendency to universality

reacted on the great intellects of the Church itself, and the *Summists*, as the writers of *Summæ* were called, did what in them lay to make theology comprehend in its subdivisions and ramifications all knowledge, even when its component parts were largely self-contradictory. But it is evident that neither among early science-workers nor among Arab philosophers, nor yet among the doctors of the Church, could this broad idea of the functions and province of knowledge have arisen except the Reason had first been freed by some such process as Twofold Truth.

The importance of the theory at the time when it originated is fully attested by its immense popularity and rapid diffusion. Throughout the chief universities of France and Italy it became the authoritative *lex credendi* of professors and students, while it was by no means unknown to advanced thinkers in England¹ and Germany. Nor again was it a mere transient episode in the history of mediæval Free-thought, for there are manifold traces of its widespread influence during the thirteenth and two following centuries. Hence whatever might be the inherent difficulties of the doctrine, it was undoubtedly well adapted to subserve intellectual wants at a particular period. Popes and bishops might rail at it, might point out its incongruity both theologically and philosophically, might insist on the indissoluble oneness of truth, but the doctrine itself grew and prospered until it might be said to have become absorbed and intensified by the more unequivocal assertion of the rights of Reason involved in Protestantism and modern science.

An interesting illustration of the growth and importance of double-truth is found in the promptness with which it seized upon all similar antinomies already in existence, and the modified forms it assumed in consequence. The antagonism, *e.g.* between dialectic and theology as opposite methods of mental training each independent of the other²—the recognized disparity between Aristotle and general Christianity, or between the doctrines of Averroes and certain dogmas of the Church, are all merely forms of the larger dualism between Faith and Reason or Religion and Philosophy.

¹ See the list of errors condemned by Robert Kilwardby, Archbishop of Canterbury, A.D. 1276, D'Argentré, *Coll. Jud.* vol. i. 185. In this list the first in the division of errors in logic is the following distinct enunciation of Twofold Truth, 'Quod contraria possunt simul esse vera in aliquâ materiâ.'

² Comp. Hauréau, *Hist. de la Phil. Scol.* p. 31: 'Il n'y a pas un logicien du XIII^e siècle qui paraissant en chaire, ne commence par déclarer que, cette chaire n'étant pas celle de Théologie, il laissera les mystères, les sacrements en dehors de sa controverse, pour traiter seulement les questions dont l'autorité n'interdit pas l'examen.'

The justification of this subsumption might be found in the fact that both Faith and Reason had their place in the economy of the human mind. For however much Ecclesiasticism might endeavour in its own selfish interests to obscure this truth and to pervert or render nugatory the functions of the Reason, it could not succeed in repressing it when once it had entered on a course of deliberate self-assertion. If only as a species of 'common sense'—a guidance in the secular concerns of life—the Church was compelled to allow some modicum of rationality as an attribute of humanity. Reason and Faith might be 'unequally yoked together,' a marriage, *e.g.* of angel and satyr, of the divine and human; still, that it was an actual marriage the Church—when challenged with the fact—durst not deny.

The *modus vivendi* of coequality, on which Reason insisted by the assertion of double-truth, came gradually to be allowed in terms, though in reality the recognition might be quite nullified by the exorbitant claims of Faith over Reason. Attempts were made to apportion quantitatively the respective amounts of Faith and Reason which could claim the sanction of the Church. These were founded on the theory that as representing different provinces and functions of the same human mind they were capable of being so blended in almost infinite variety. The theory was doubtless true, but it was capable of a different application than that which the Church thought fit to allow. For if the 'blend' in favour with ecclesiastics gave an immeasurable superiority to Faith, the combination most affected by philosophers gave a large precedence to Reason. Indeed, the Italian philosophers of the Renaissance seem to have given no small attention to ascertaining the minimum of faith which might be combined with a maximum of Reason so as to escape the imputation of confessed heresy. Not that their attempt was a whit more disingenuous than the conduct of theologians when they pretended a deference to the irresistible claims of philosophy far in excess of their real sentiments.

Further modifications of double-truth meet us in the writings of the Schoolmen. Thus in the different standpoints adopted by Anselm and Abelard, the former of whom asserted the relation of Faith to Reason in the formula 'Credo ut intelligam,' and the latter in the counter-proposition 'Intelligo ut credam,' the opposite poles of the dualism assumed a rivalry of priority rather than of downright antagonism. One was affirmed as the propædeutic of the other. The dualistic distinction of natural and revealed religion obscurely set forth by some of the earlier Fathers of the Church received a new impetus from the mediæval conflict of Faith and Reason, while a more pro-

found and altogether praiseworthy dichotomy was that avowed by Duns Scotus, who made Christianity consist entirely in ethical science and moral practice, and thus left the whole range of speculation absolutely free. Other varieties of 'double-truth' will again meet us when we glance at the Free-thought of Abelard and Aquinas.

There can be little doubt that 'Twofold Truth,' regarded as the deliberate utterance of propositions, or the simultaneous cultivation of mental functions more or less antagonistic, would never have had the effect we know it to have had were it not justified by certain dualistic phenomena manifest in the human consciousness. Indeed, the diverse provinces of Reason and Faith might with a little manipulation be made conterminous with the different ranges of intellection and emotion, or of experience and imagination. Let us glance for a moment at some of these dualisms, bearing in mind, however, that we are now entering upon 'double-truth' in its subjective aspects as implied in the psychological formation of the human intellect.

Regarded merely as mental states, there is an enormous difference in the attitude of a man who is engaged in demonstrating a problem of Euclid, and of the same man offering up prayer for the life of a beloved child. The contrast is not merely between the intellectual object gained and the emotional object sought for, but extends itself more particularly to the subjective mood involved in either case. On the one hand there is a consciousness of certitude, on the other hand a painful feeling of incertitude. Nor is this difference between intellection and emotion greatly modified even when both become equal states of certitude. The conviction, *e.g.* of a geometrical truth, is of a totally different kind from the emotional assurance which the father feels when he knows that the fever crisis is past, and that in all human probability his child will be spared to him. Now it is the characteristic of most religious beliefs that they professedly belong to the regions both of feeling and intellectual conviction. First imparted by authority parental or otherwise, they are confirmed by long association, and are protected and enhanced by the various sacred and subtle influences that invest all religious beliefs. With this peculiar prestige they take their places among the numberless unanalyzed concepts and opinions that form the general stock of human convictions. Ordinarily they never advance beyond this elementary stage, at least in reality, though in many cases the emotional basis of religious beliefs may be supplemented by a superficial intellection which is hardly more than a predetermination to support foregone conclusions. But in all cases

of genuine mental growth there is a progress from the stage of unverified emotion to that of critical ratiocination. Religious beliefs, in common with other contents of the mind, are subjected to a rigid scrutiny. The thinker feels compelled as a matter of intellectual honesty to give a reason for the hope that is in him. If tenets so treated are capable of sustaining the criticism directed to them, they reach their culminating stage of conviction. Frequently, however, the contrary takes place—beliefs received into the mind recklessly or on insufficient authority are found on investigation to be unworthy of that position; but nevertheless, possessing from long association a strong hold on the affections, they continue to maintain their place as tenets or persuasions of the emotions. We must not, however, suppose that such a transfer is made readily or easily. Every noteworthy record of mental progress proves how difficult it is to undermine, not to say eliminate, beliefs once fully accepted by the feelings. Probably no English writer has discussed with more subtlety or greater introspective penetration the various kinds and degrees of theological assent than Dr. Newman. His work on the subject, whatever might be thought of its conclusions, throws incidentally no small light on the complex nature of human beliefs from the point of view of their recipients. He often has occasion to dwell on the phenomenon we are now considering, and of which his own mental evolution supplied him with striking instances, of beliefs remaining in the feelings long after they have been discarded from the intellect.¹ Every such case must needs present an aspect of dual truth, though the extent of the dichotomy will depend on the amount of discordance actually existing between the older beliefs that retain their place in the emotions and the newer tenets that have supplanted them in the intellect. In any case the affirmation of one province of the mind is met by a denial of another. That such an incongruity might exist without assuming a forcible or definite form I am quite willing to admit; indeed, I am inclined to think that a large proportion of the religious convictions of even the thoughtful portion of mankind are precisely of this mixed kind. Especially is this the case during periods of intense mental activity and consequent transition, when older beliefs continue to linger in the affections and memory long after their former position in the intellect has been occupied by new and divergent convictions.² The Reformation, *e.g.* supplies us with numberless illustrations of this truth. The belief and usages of Romanism maintained their hold

¹ Comp. his *Apologia pro Vita Sua* and his *Grammar of Assent*, *passim*.

² See some interesting observations on the Decay of Dogmas in Theodore Jouffroy's *Mélanges philosophiques—Comment les Dogmes finissent*.

on the popular mind for some time after they were ejected as national creeds from the Protestant countries of Europe. So that double-truth as an antagonism of reason and sentiment holds good of societies as well as of individuals. In short, we may take it as a general rule that whenever old convictions are superseded by new, there will always be intervening standpoints, from whence both may seem to be equally true.

Nor is it only the religionist who is thus susceptible of a revulsion of opinion that may engender a species of double-truth. Recent English philosophy has supplied us with the instance of a Skeptical thinker who, having long held that all the reasons of the case militated against the doctrine of immortality, finally became persuaded of its probability by the loss of a beloved wife. Here we have the case of a doctrine deemed untrue by the intellect, yet held to be at least partially true by the feelings. We cannot suppose in this case that the intellectual reasons formerly held valid against the belief were of themselves really lessened by the event that suggested its acceptance. The death of the philosopher's wife could have contained nothing as bearing on the truth of immortality that might not have been found in numberless similar events. But the deep sentiment evoked by his personal loss sufficed to oppose an affirmative to the negative of his reason. As a philosophic thinker he disbelieved, as a bereaved husband he believed. We may in passing observe that this dualism of reason and sentiment is of a more moderate character than the twofold truth of Pomponazzi, who affirmed immortality as a Christian but denied it as a philosopher, for in that case both the conviction and non-conviction were equally based on grounds of intellection. The antagonism was made between the affirmative of a revelation, which to a thinker must be established on rational grounds, and the negative of a philosophy, which must be based to a great extent on the same grounds. Here therefore the dichotomy is extreme and suicidal. It introduces disparity into the selfsame functions and processes of the intellect, and for that reason must be held to be incompatible with truth.

The distinction now under consideration between intellect and feeling has been often pursued to an extent which I think exaggerated. In Schleiermacher's well-known scheme of theology, for instance, the emotions are made the sole province of religion, to the utter exclusion of the Reason. Such a theory, even granting its utility under certain contingencies for reasoning beings, seems to me mistaken. I am unable to conceive full assent without some proportion of rational demonstration. But though

this is my own conviction, I am quite aware of the incalculable power of emotion as the basis of a religious creed, and this not only when it is allied with intellection as supplementing its deficiencies, or changing the venue of its ratiocination, but even when it forms the whole and sole ground of its reception. For it is noteworthy that emotional beliefs, even when they are really only the ghosts of former tenets—when criticism and verification have evacuated them of all solid content—not only contrive to exist, but even to assert their right to a place among the substantiated convictions of the mind. Though they are only disembodied spirits, they continue to fill a place on the stage of a religious mind with as great an appearance of reality as if they were living bodies. I have known instances in which a whole regiment of convictions, discarded from the intellect, and their places occupied by reasoned tenets of an opposite kind, have still continued to exist in the feelings, and to be even regarded with something of the affection they possessed when they were based on supposed intellectual grounds. In other cases, in which Reason preponderates over feeling, they are no doubt recognised as the ghosts of defunct bodies, and their inauspicious presence is resented; but even this does not prevent an occasional intrusion on their own part, or do away with the feeling of being haunted on the part of their former possessors.

Somewhat akin to this dualism is another requiring notice as a possible foundation for double-truth. It may be described as the subjective form of the antinomy between the known and the unknown in the universe—I mean that which may occur between experience and imagination. To minds of a strongly idealizing character the least part of their general stock of convictions is that which is given in actual experience. Perpetually projecting themselves beyond the limits of the seen and felt, they live in a world of shadows and phantasies of their own creation. So much is this the case that their real environment seems quite to disappear, and an antinomy of more or less severity is created between their actual and imagined states.¹ The truth of the one becomes the falsehood of the other, or *vice versa*. The history of idealism swarms with instances in which this dichotomy finds expression, but I need not waste our time in their enumeration. Examples will readily occur to us of the existence of in-

¹ Comp. on this point the words of J. H. Newman: 'We may speak of assent in our Lord's Divinity as strong or feeble according as it is given to the *reality as impressed upon the imagination* or to the *notion* of it as entertained by the intellect.' (*Grammar of Assent*, p. 178.)

fluent and widespread schemes of philosophy which are pervaded by a persistent contradiction to human experience and history, in which actuality is engaged in an internecine war with ideality.

But in double-truth as in most other forms of mental eccentricity we must take some notice of 'the personal equation,' by which I mean the special differences and idiosyncrasies that exist between one man and another in respect of intellectual conformation. There are intellects, *e.g.* so intensely, I might say morbidly, synthetic, that they insist on acquiring demonstrated certitude at whatever cost. This type of mind must needs set itself to evolve unity from multiplicity, harmony from dissonance, light from a juxtaposition of shadows, without considering how far its self-imposed task is feasible or how far it is in agreement with the constitution of the universe. In the determination to acquire undoubted conviction, no labour is spared and no expense regarded. Subordinate convictions are ruthlessly thrust aside, objections are ignored, disingenuous methods resorted to, in order to obtain and definitively pronounce on certitude. Pascal is a striking example of this tendency.¹ When we come to discuss him we shall find what great paradoxes and unharmonized contradictions he waded through to attain what seemed to him infallible certainty. Dr. Newman's mental development is another illustration of the same truth.² His processes are irregular, inconsistent, self-contradictory, of impossible application to any other subject than that of mystical dogmatism. His conclusions, on the other hand, are brilliantly clear, vivid, unmistakable. His mental evolution stands forth like a mountain whose summit is lit up by a warm glow of sunshine, while the sides and base are enshrouded in darkness. Minds of this class appear to me dominated by a sort of religious or spiritual ambition which is just as selfish, audacious, unscrupulous, and unpitying as any other kind of ambition. A man who overturns all reasoning processes, who makes a chaos of human methods, who stultifies the lessons of history for the purpose of boasting a light which to his neighbours is only a deceptive *ignis fatuus*, is not unlike Napoleon, who forced his way through cruelty and bloodshed to attain a crown. Such men forget that the infallibility, the unity, and harmony they have achieved so recklessly suggest to the more cautious spectator division and dissonance. They forget that their

¹ Comp. *Essay on Pascal*, in the latter portion of this work.

² 'From the age of fifteen dogma has been the fundamental principle of my religion; I know no other religion; I cannot enter into the idea of any other sort of religion. Religion as a mere sentiment is to me a dream and a mockery.'—*Apologia pro Vita Sua*, p. 120.

shield has two sides, and if certainty is emblazoned on one, doubt is conspicuously legible on the other, and that the real Skepticism of their methods, the profound distrust of human reason which marks them, is only dimly veiled by the vaunted infallibility of their conclusions.

On the other hand, it must be granted that the 'double-truth' which manifests itself by a disparity of method and conviction belongs essentially to intellectual growth. Different stages of mental development will sometimes present themselves as Twofold Truth, though the effect of this duality is necessarily neutralized for its possessors by the continuity of their consciousness. In all such cases we must distinguish between those in which the progress is normal, gradual, and natural, and those in which it is reckless, violent, and unnatural; between the spurious instances in which the chief impelling agency is a predetermined volition, and when it is the Reason acting freely and spontaneously—moving onwards of its own sweet will.

But leaving those cases in which double-truth has been pressed into the service of dogma, there is another class of mind which manifests a similar duplicity in the service of unavowed uncertainty. I allude to those vacillating intellects of which we have numberless examples in political science, and of which in theology Justus Lipsius presents us with a striking instance. Here different convictions, notwithstanding their mutual hostility, are, from intellectual feebleness, alternating and recurrent. There is almost a perpetual oscillation between opposite poles of conviction. Such instances always remind me of the well-known chorus in 'Samson,' in which there is a remarkable antiphony of contradictions, 'Jehovah' and 'Great Dagon' being pronounced to 'reign' in regular and measured alternation. It is no unfair presumption in every such case that Skepticism is an operative agency in the mental changes. The contemporaries of Lipsius, for instance, were convinced of his Skepticism in spite of his protestations of final adhesion to Romanism, and even his friends the Jesuits showed by their continual distrust that they were inclined to share that opinion.

I come lastly to a third type of intellect, in which Twofold Truth presents itself in a moderate and altogether commendable shape; in which the disparity is not so much antagonistic as complementary, and the result of its functions is not disunion and hostility so much as a broad comprehensive solidarity. For our purpose we may call intellects of this class 'dual-sighted' or 'two-eyed.' You will perhaps remember the Greek term denoting the same quality which Timon applied to the Eleatic Zenon. This

'double-sighted man' is by no means the synonym of the nickname common in Puritan history, 'Mr. Facing-both-ways.' It rather implies the possession of faculties which enable the observer to see every object in the solid, substantial manner, in the full relief, and with the true perspective that pertain essentially to all double vision. It is the instinctive power and tendency to discern a specific object or a given truth not merely as it is in itself or in one of its *primâ facie* aspects, but in its completeness as a whole and relatively to all its surroundings. We see this quality in the artist who simultaneously with the perception of an object also sees all its different phases as well as its relations to surrounding objects; or again in the general who apprehends by a single glance of his mental vision all the characteristics, bad as well as good, of a given position or military movement. So the philosophers I speak of catch every truth or doctrine, not in its simple and uniform, but in its complex biform or multiform aspect. They are men to whom every affirmation suggests, if only as a possibility, a negative; who intuitively meet every dogmatic pronouncement with an objection, just as a painter infers shadow from light. These are the men who in my judgment have rendered the best service to the progress of knowledge by their comprehensive vision, their cautious Skeptical attitude, their fearless criticism. Examples of these two-eyed thinkers we have already met in the course of our investigation, and we shall continue to meet with similar cases as we proceed, for twofold vision is a frequent if not inseparable concomitant of Skepticism. Nor can we say that this combination of thorough search with caution is needless in the domain of religious speculation. We must remember that there are questions so closely allied with man's highest interests that for that reason alone no assertion respecting them, no matter what its nature, is likely to be accepted as final by a thoughtful mind. The questions, *e.g.* of man's origin and destiny, the origin of the universe, &c. are continually recurring problems which like uneasy ghosts refuse to be laid. In such cases of inherent difficulty the assertion of a dogmatic judgment by means of a creed imparts but little definitive assurance. The assertion may be provisional and imperfect—possibly the outcome of an inferior state of knowledge—but the problems themselves are eternal. Assent may be yielded as a matter of faith, but the question as an object of demonstration may not be a whit nearer solution. No sooner are the words spoken, the dogma avouched, than the after-process of reflection sets in. Thinkers of this kind treat their creeds like a ruminating animal treats its food. It is again masticated and once more swallowed, perhaps both processes being

more than once repeated, before final deglutition and assimilation take place, if indeed they ever do. So on the heels of creeds and dogmas pronouncing authoritatively on all the great matters of human concernment, treads, if not doubt, yet inquisitiveness and curiosity, an eagerness to scan what is beyond human vision.

Nor again does this Skeptical retrospection necessarily imply a disbelief of the dogmas to which it is directed; it may even coexist with an undoubting conviction of their truth. Just as we find men who evince the utmost resolution in all the practical matters of life, but whose determinations are followed by misgiving and a kind of theoretical uncertainty, so in speculation the assertion of an undoubted deliberately formed opinion may be accompanied or followed by after-criticism, which is no more than the spontaneous discharge of intellectual energy. Guicciardini, *e.g.* an essentially 'double-sighted' man, tells us that all his most important actions, even when performed with the utmost deliberation, were invariably followed by a sort of repentance and retrospective criticism.¹ The attitude of such men to asserted truth seems to be of this kind. Knowing by experience the infinite possibilities that beset all declared truth, they are apt to say of certain convictions, 'I believe this and will continue to believe it,' and yet *suppose* the other should be the truth. The reason is that in all subjects in which *pros* and *cons* are nearly balanced the deliberate adoption of one alternative does not annihilate the grounds of the other. The uncertainty banished from the subject still continues to exist in the object. Perhaps the discarded alternative will present itself to the consciousness in a more winning guise than before. It may appeal *ad misericordiam*, as a rejected conclusion when the grounds of such rejection were admittedly not overpowering. Thus the native hue of conviction as well as 'resolution' may be 'sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,' and, if I may be allowed a further paraphrase, it may happen that

Determinations of great pith and moment,
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the outward semblance of belief.

A singular feature in some minds of this class is that their doubt

¹ 'Io sono stato di natura molto risoluto e fermo nelle azioni mie; e nondimeno come ho fatto una risoluzione importante, mi accade spesso una certa quasi penitenza del partito che ho preso; il che procede non perchè io creda che se io avessi di nuovo a deliberare, io deliberassi altrimenti, ma perchè innanzi alla deliberazione avevo più presente agli occhi le difficoltà dell' una a l' altra parte,' &c.—*Opere Inedite*, i. 141; *Ricordi*, clvi. Comp. Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, pp. 210, 211.

is frequently caused not by a defect but by an excess of demonstration. They are repelled by what seems to them an abnormal and unnatural amount of proof. They are dazed and half blinded by the glare of sunshine. Men of this type are met in every department of thought where elaborate ratiocination and recondite speculation are as a rule necessary precursors to the formation of conviction. I have known, *e.g.* men in my own profession who invariably regard with suspicion a diagnosis in which all the conditions are unmistakably plain and obvious. They instinctively ask, May there not be some hidden cause, some obscure but most important symptom, that I have overlooked? The problem seems too easy, the conclusion too glaringly obvious, to be acceptable. We observe the same characteristic in lawyers, detectives, and others conversant with criminal procedure, and accustomed to disentangle long and intricate chains of evidence. Present to a man of this character a case of extreme simplicity, in which every part of the evidence is marked by undeniable cogency, and he is immediately offended. It is too clear and unmistakable to be natural. He does not perceive the obscure intimations, the indirect hints, on the elucidation of which he especially prides himself. With the cessation of perplexity ceases also his personal interest. Such men seem to value truth not by its plainness but by its obscurity, just as hieroglyphic and similar inscriptions are estimated by the difficulty of their decipherment.

The dramatic illustration of this type of character in the practical concerns of life, is, I need not say, Hamlet, who is frightened from the discharge of an acknowledged duty by the embarrassing excess of its obviousness. His feeling is well described in his admission—

Now, whether it be
 Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple
 Of thinking too precisely on the event,
 A thought which quarter'd, hath but one part wisdom
 And ever three parts coward, I do not know
 Why yet I live to say, 'This thing's to do;'
 Still I have cause and will and strength and means
 To do 't. Examples gross as earth exhort me.

He might have added, had he been more conscious of the source of the infirmity he deplored, that it was precisely the 'grossness' of the 'examples' that deterred him. The energizing principle in such characters is in the inverse ratio of their reflective power. Profound meditation on what is simple, obvious, and direct has an obscur- ing and distrustful effect. No doubt the tendency is much more common in speculation than in action. The directness of a belief

or conviction, while it equally deters him who thinks 'too precisely on the event,' has not that imperative, urgent character that an obvious duty presents. There is more scope for delay and reiterated consideration; in other words, for the indulgence of the thinker's favourite passion. For this reason the Skeptic in action such as Hamlet will always be a rare type of the genus to which he belongs.

The ludicrous excess to which this contempt for positive proof on account of its superabundant positiveness might conceivably be liable, is well illustrated in the story recorded by Plutarch and quoted with much relish by Montaigne. Demokritos eating figs found them taste of honey. He immediately began to speculate as to how the flavour was acquired, when his recondite investigation was peremptorily cut short by his servant, who admitted that she had placed them in a jar that had once contained honey. He indignantly rejected her too natural explanation, and avowed his intention of searching for the cause of the phenomenon as if it were quite independent of that which she had alleged. But the temper of mind of which this is an extravagant and probably imaginary illustration is capable of being defended by plausible reasons. 1. The general conditions of the problems of nature and humanity are as a rule complex and involved. Even existence itself to a reflective mind is a source of infinite puzzlement and speculation. Hence a problem of which the conditions are clear, simple and obvious seems on the face of it unnatural. 2. Intellects of the type now under consideration delight in the investigation of hidden and obscure causes for its own sake. Shunning the highways of truth and knowledge exploration, they prefer the byways, the unexplored tracks, and unknown short cuts to their possible goal. Difficulty and perplexity have inexpressible charms for them; and if these do not already exist in the task they undertake, they instinctively put forth their best efforts to create them.

I do not contend that every example of this intellectual perversity is also an instance of double-truth. But it is so whenever the doubt cast by the excess of demonstration—the depth of shadow being in direct ratio to the vividness of the light that creates it—is so far equal to its cause as to produce a persistent indecision, whether in belief or in action.

Such seem to me to be the chief types, causes, and varieties of double-truth. A more extended survey of the provinces of the human intellect would serve to show that I have by no means exhausted the catalogue of dualisms to which it is liable. I have confined myself mainly to those we find in religious thought. But even with that limitation we have seen that Twofold Truth signifies

much more than the customary antithesis of Faith and Reason—the imperative of Revelation opposed to that of intellectual coercion. The dichotomy which it asserts pertains to reasoning beings by virtue of their faculties and their place in the universe. Had no religion ever asserted on grounds of supernatural authority, power over humanity, there would still have been occasions of division and antagonism, still room for various forms and degrees of double-truth. Faith as ‘the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen,’ would still have conflicted with Reason. The unknown would still have been *ex vi termini* divergent from the known. The antinomies of dual thinkers, from the Greek Skeptics to Kant, would in short have emerged in philosophy, if the Christian Revelation had never been heard of. No doubt the development of ecclesiastical Christianity, with its dogmatic extravagance and arbitrary temper, imparted an acerbity into the relations of faith and reason which they need not otherwise have had. Jealously excluding, ruthlessly condemning, even the most elementary exercise of reason as an autocratic faculty, the Church is mainly responsible for the implacable hostility that has on the whole marked her intercourse with human knowledge and progress. Had it not been for this there would have been no necessity for mediæval thinkers to demarcate so rigidly between Reason and Faith, to divide their allegiance between religion and philosophy, to offer alternate worship first to one, then to the other. In its extreme form of irreconcilable antagonism, Twofold Truth is therefore a sacrifice at the shrine of excessive dogma.

We are now, I think, in a position to approach our main question—how far Twofold Truth in any of its forms is clearly Skeptical. That the general tendency of Twofold Truth is in the direction of suspense or intellectual hesitancy it would be impossible to deny. That it may be so manipulated and applied as to sanction insincere assent to unpalatable doctrines is equally true; but that it is in all its stages incompatible with a definite persuasion of truth is by no means so certain. Most of the dualisms we have considered are reconcilable with an ultimate conviction of truth. The human mind, even when most inclined to twofoldedness, yet acts like a pair of scales—no adjustment of rival balances can be established so accurately that one will not preponderate over the other. The chief question for our decision seems, therefore, to be this—we must determine that precise point where the dichotomy becomes irreconcilable, where Faith and Reason, the Known and the Unknown—individual man and collective humanity—Intellect and Emotion, are so placed in diametrical opposition that the antagonism

is permanent and indestructible. No doubt it will be alleged that truth under all aspects must be one and indivisible. I grant it must be so theoretically; it would not otherwise harmonize with the conceptions we seem compelled to form concerning it. There are certain truths physical and ethical which we seem obliged to regard as absolute and unconditional. But this obligation is individual and subjective. It must agree with and be limited by the great fact of the relativity of all knowledge. Hence the form of double-truth which I should alone pronounce to be distinctly Skeptical is *that which destroys the unity of the individual consciousness*. Regarding consciousness as in ultimate scrutiny the abode of truth, and its processes as the ordinary methods of truth, it is clear that discrepancies in truth must be finally determined as to their nature and extent by their presentation in consciousness. It would be absurd to suppose that two contradictory deliverances of consciousness, both being recognised as equally true, could coexist in a sane and healthy mind at the same time. Twofold Truth is therefore not so destructive to objective truth *per se* as to the subjective consciousness of knowledge. It creates division and contrariety in the indissoluble oneness of the human mind. Objectively and apart from our cognition, aspects of truth may, for aught we know, be diverse and multiform; in the infinity of space and time we have no adequate reason for affirming that they are not; but we cannot without the most gratuitous mental suicide allow the subjective co-existence of antagonistic convictions both claiming to be true at the same time. We must maintain, I think, the indivisibility of consciousness not only as an ultimate postulate of truth, but as a *sine quâ non* of all affirmation and ratiocination of whatever kind. I am aware that this position—the ultimate veracity of consciousness, has been questioned; indeed, in a dialectical mood I have frequently questioned it myself, and in my own opinion not unsuccessfully so far as formal ratiocination is concerned. For that matter, I have had too long an experience of the subtleties and multiform aspects of logic not to know that there is no principle which can be formulated as an axiom of truth which unscrupulous dialectic cannot undermine. Even the '*Cogito, ergo sum,*' of Descartes may be shown to be open to innumerable objections both as to form and substance. But while I think those extreme exertations not only harmless in themselves but useful as intellectual gymnastics—just as the paradoxes of the higher mathematics may be useful—I nevertheless regard them as mere *brutem fulmen* when employed seriously to destroy consciousness: at most they can only result in setting reason to destroy reason—a mere self-stultifying and utterly ineffective operation.

Reason and the direct deliverances of consciousness have a vitality much too inherent to succumb to attacks of formal logic, no matter how adroitly planned or how skilfully conducted. The dialectician who in earnest undertakes such a task is engaged in an enterprise much more fruitless than the ancient battle with the Hydra: the heads he amputates replace themselves with greater facility—the life he supposes himself to take is but the precursor of renewed vitality. From this standpoint of reason and consciousness we must, then, pronounce against all extreme forms of double-truth.

As an additional plea for this vindication of consciousness we may remember that its veracity has never been impugned even by extreme Skeptics. All attempts made in that direction, whether by ancient or modern thinkers, resolve themselves into the free spontaneous exercise on the part of the Reason of her own exuberant vitality and her superabundant energies. They no more impair or render questionable her ultimate self-assurance than the playful gambols of a young animal result in doing itself mischief. The most advanced of Greek Skeptics were always ready when challenged to defer to consciousness, notwithstanding their repeated attempts to dethrone her from her place and power considered as a source or attestation of Dogma or Universal Truth.

But though in principle we feel bound to maintain the oneness and veracity of consciousness, the application of that test to any given case of double-truth is attended with difficulty. We cannot too persistently remember that divergent beliefs assume a different form and operate in a different manner according to the intellectual conformations of their recipients. For my own part, and regarding the matter from my personal standpoint, I should be inclined to pronounce Pomponazzi's assent to the doctrine of immortality imperfect; but it is evident that it did not appear so to him. Similarly, I should prefer the identity which Erigena tried to establish between religion and philosophy to the extreme disparity between the two which the Paduan and Parisian professors in the fourteenth century were wont to assert; but I have no difficulty in believing that the conviction of the latter was just as serious and marked by *bona fides* as that of the former. So I should not myself regard assent to a given dogma on purely emotional grounds as altogether satisfactory; but I have no reason to doubt that doctrines thus based are fully credited by numbers of religious thinkers. Indeed, I think there is an increasing tendency in the religious world to make this the only foundation of all the more difficult dogmas of Christianity, those *credenda* which Boileau describes:

De la Foi des Chrétiens les mystères terribles.

I do not know that I need add anything as to the present aspect of double-truth—I mean the antagonism existing between Christianity and modern science. There are undoubtedly men in the scientific world—of whom Faraday was an illustration—who combine advanced opinions on science with retrograde and superstitious ideas of Christianity. Probably they are more in number than is generally thought, for on the subject of such a dichotomy, though they feel no repugnance to it, men are apt to be reticent. On the other hand, there are religious men imbued with a full belief in Christianity and yet prepared to embrace all well-attested discoveries in science, possibly being even unconscious of any insuperable antagonism between their dual standpoints. These relations may exist in modes infinitely varied both in kind and in degree. But the general subject is so intimately allied with Free-thought that we shall have many future opportunities of discussing it. At present I will only avow my own persuasion that this latest form of the antinomy between Faith and Reason exists, not between the religion of Christ and genuine, *i.e.* modest and cautious, science; but between the ecclesiastical development of the former and the excessive dogmatism of the latter.

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ARUNDEL. Although your admission that consciousness must not be sundered may be considered as something saved from the omnivorous maw of Skepticism, it nevertheless seems to me that your restricting this solidarity and sense of veracity to the individual consciousness really does away with objective truth almost as much as if you had allowed the consciousness to be broken up into discordant sections. For if truth exists for me only in my individual consciousness—if I cannot regard it in any sense as the common property of all beings similarly organized and instructed—it is really equivalent to saying there can be no truth at all. As to making such a position a protection against ‘double-truth,’ it is only by proving it to be multiple, in accordance with the maxim, ‘*Quot homines, tot sententiae,*’ or ‘*veritates.*’

HARRINGTON. Your argument, Arundel, strikes at the root of every system of idealism, and urges a point which has again and again been discussed in philosophy. In maintaining that the consciousness cannot be dualized, Dr. Trevor has

conceded all that an idealist could fairly claim. Grant that there can be no disruption of the thinking subject, at least normally and properly, and the undividedness of the object thought is, *ipso facto*, admitted. The indivisibility of all external truth to you is involved in your subjective conception, and in the solidarity which is its natural condition. You appear to think that, besides the view you possess of truth as related to your cognition, you can from a position external to your own consciousness, contemplate it as related to other intelligences and as unrelated to yourself. If you try the experiment, its failure will soon demonstrate the fallacy of your opinion. No doubt the definition of all truth as entirely individual seems at first sight to detract from its position as being the common possession of humanity, but the appearance is deceptive. The common unbroken consciousness of each is a guarantee of the objective truth of which they are all joint partakers. To illustrate my meaning, suppose, *e.g.* that twelve men, two of whom were suffering from defective vision, were scanning a distant object. The ten whose eyesight was healthy would probably all agree as to the form and nature of the object inspected—in other words, in the objective truth; and only the two whose sight was impaired—that is, whose consciousness was feeble or disturbed—would have reason to question the true discernment of the rest. Hence subjective unity and uniformity, in the case of all individuals organized alike, necessarily implies objective unity as well; and I agree with Trevor that Twofold Truth can only be truly Skeptical when it involves a disruption of the individual consciousness.

ARUNDEL. I understand your standpoint, but am still of opinion that its tendency is to weaken objective truth. Your ratiocination makes all truth dependent on the individual recognition of it. Now, in my humble opinion, I have some power of apprehending truth as existing absolutely. I know, *e.g.* what unconditional morality means, and I think I possess some idea of intellectual truths with which I have never come into personal relation. Besides, if you limit the Skepticism of double-truth to the individual consciousness, you ought in consistency to go a step further and to affirm that

all Skepticism consists not in the disruption of the general mass of verities acknowledged by mankind, nor in any disparity between the individual and the community of which he forms a part, so much as in a subjective dualism in his own consciousness.

TREVOR. We are discussing the point at which double-truth becomes indubitably Skeptical. We maintain it is so when it dissolves the unity of the individual consciousness, and that it is only by effecting this that it can impair the common stock of human beliefs—what you term objective truth. You reply that you can conceive absolute objective truth. Well, so can I. I conceded so much in my paper. But in what way? Only through the medium of my intellect, and by means of its tendency to determine truths as absolutely necessary of which I cannot conceive the negation. What you are really contending against, and what Harrington and I are defending, is the relativity of all knowledge. Your absolute knowledge, if you analyze it, can be nothing else than the extension, amplification, intensification, and the absolu-faction (if I may coin a word) of your own personal knowledge, unless indeed you were to maintain—which I know you do not—that knowledge may be intuitive and supernatural. As to Twofold Truth in others, we can only judge of a man's belief by his overt profession of faith. If, on that profession being produced, we find it disparate, revealing clear incompatibilities, we may characterize the man as a Skeptic. Let us turn, *e.g.* once more to Pomponazzi and his biform belief in immortality. If we try to realize the state of mind implied by a scientific dissent, and a religious assent on the same subject and at the same time, we must admit—such at least is my own opinion—that it involves on that issue a disruption of consciousness, though I do not say that he must necessarily have recognised it as such.

MISS LEYCESTER. It does not appear to me that the dualism of Pomponazzi must needs have been of that incompatible character you suppose. Why may not his standpoint have been this: what he could not yield to the demonstrations of philosophy he yielded to the *ipse dixit* of Revelation? Indeed, I wanted to suggest how far that kind of dualism

may be called double-truth. Now, I happen to know not a few thoughtful people who certainly would be greatly scandalized to find themselves called Skeptics in the sense of dual-thinkers, and yet who distinctly acknowledge the irreconcilable antagonism between the dictates of reason and the claims of ecclesiastical Christianity, but who yield an assent to the latter as *dicta* of Revelation.

TREVOR. An assent to a mere *ipse dixit*, especially when employed to override ordinary experience, the ethical instincts of humanity, or the general laws of the universe, is always a rash proceeding, totally unworthy of any man who calls himself a philosopher. Indeed, an adherence to a mere *ipse dixit* is an act of intellectual suicide impossible to a reasoning being, for he must needs reason on the claims of the *dictum* before he yields his assent.

ARUNDEL. An argument which might be called the Roman Catholic pervert's *cul-de-sac*, admitting neither egress nor regress. Nevertheless, part of your paper, Doctor, reminded me unpleasantly of Dr. Newman's 'Grammar of Assent'—or, as I have heard it called, 'Grammar of Dissent.' There was something approaching to Jesuitical casuistry in your discrimination of intellectual and emotional beliefs. For my part, I do not think we can insist too strongly on ingenuousness, simplicity, and directness where our beliefs are concerned. Belief is assent to a truth as truth. It can be no more than that, and it should be no less. I don't say that religious beliefs ought not to have an element of emotion in them, but I demur to the possibility of belief in the sense of assured conviction being exclusively emotional.

TREVOR. In the discrimination I made between intellectual and emotional conviction, I was treating of minds constituted somewhat differently from yours and mine. That conviction may exist based entirely on grounds of feeling, sentiment, devout intuition, general fitness, adaptation to personal needs whether real or imaginary, no student of mental phenomena could, I think, well deny. But I agree with you that an assent to a belief on pure grounds of feeling is imperfect.

MISS LEYCESTER. Well, if you will allow me to say so,

I think you are both wrong. I maintain that a man may possess knowledge or conviction, and that, too, of a most valuable kind, based entirely on the feelings, and even refusing the alliance or co-operation of the Reason as an incongruous and embarrassing intrusion. At least, I claim to know certain truths entirely by feeling and instinct, and in point of conscious certitude I can discern no difference between these and others which I have attained by ratiocination.

HARRINGTON. In that case you should modify your terminology. 'To know' is one thing, 'to feel' another; and if your assurance is based on sentiment, it is, I contend, no more than a feeling, and should be so described. I agree with Trevor that Schleiermacher's relegation of all religious belief to the region of the sentiment and emotion is a mischievous exaggeration of an undoubted truth. Reason and Faith have often been termed the two supports of a wise man's creed; amputate either, and you make locomotion impossible.

MISS LEYCESTER. I wish, Charles, that of the two supports you speak of, one were not so often a wooden leg. I mean Reason, whenever it proves itself to be arrogant, hard, insensate, and unbending, allowing little or no play to devotional needs, instincts, and feelings.

ARUNDEL. But do I understand you to maintain, Miss Leycester, that there may exist purely emotional creeds, so that it should be open to a man to allege: I believe in such dogmas emotionally, but not intellectually? In that case, whenever a man was confronted by intellectual difficulties, instead of trying to solve them reasonably he might incontinently flee to emotion.

MISS LEYCESTER. Supposing his intellect to be unequal to the solution, why should he not? Why might not the man who has vainly attempted by reason to find out God affirm His existence by simple intuition or feeling? Does not Christianity itself appeal to feeling in preference to intellect? What else is the meaning of the oft-quoted words, 'We walk by faith, and not by sight'?

ARUNDEL. No doubt there is a religious conviction which is generated and sustained by spiritual apperception, to use

Coleridge's terminology; but even that is inferior, in my opinion, to rational certitude. The faith which is destitute of all intellectual bases of assurance cannot be said to possess the attributes of solidarity and permanence, and my interpretation of the words you have quoted would incorporate among the constituents of Faith the ratiocination needed to give it body and substance. Moreover, Faith in its relation to sight includes, I take it, *all* metaphysical grounds of belief as opposed to physical sensations.

HARRINGTON. We must not confound intuition with emotion. The former we may define as an unconditional postulate, made by the intellect to satisfy needs which are mainly intellectual, or to affirm a conclusion partly established by ratiocination. With feeling it has only in common the attribute of being a direct deliverance of consciousness. The scope of emotion in religion it would, of course, be absurd to deny; but it is clear to me that both its scope and influence may easily become exaggerated and mischievous, especially in certain conjunctures in the history of human thought. Most sections of Christians seem in theory to place all their dogmas upon that foundation. The contemptuous use of the word Rationalism by all classes of orthodox Christians, as indicating a mode of thought which they both fear and despise, is a sufficing proof of that. One division of the Christian world has erected subjective emotion into a personal infallibility as arbitrary and dictatorial as the *ex cathedra* pronouncements of the Papacy. Another has petrified it into ritual on Selden's principle of 'Rhetoric turned into Logic,' but in both cases there is a similar distrust of ratiocination. As a result, we witness the gradual sundering of religion and science—the dualism of the present day—which theologians affect to deplore, but for which they are primarily responsible. They seem as loth as ever to believe that reasoning beings must have a rational basis for their convictions, if the latter are expected to be stable and permanent.

TREVOR. I remember once seeing the outlines of an essay on the effect which the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith has had in retarding the growth of modern

science and philosophy in Europe, by the exaggerated impulse which it gave to emotional religion. That it had such a result is shown by the distrust of secular knowledge of every kind evinced by those sects of Christians that have laid especial stress upon that dogma, *e.g.* the Herrnhüter in Germany, the Jansenists in France, the Methodists and Evangelicals in England. Of course, the doctrine has also its beneficent aspects. The individualism which is its necessary outcome has powerfully co-operated in the cause of religious liberty.

ARUNDEL. I observed, Doctor, what appeared to be a remarkable inconsistency in your paper. You inveighed vehemently against the unison and solidarity of the mind when it was determinedly dogmatic, as, *e.g.* in the case of Pascal; but yet you made the indivisibility of the consciousness the standpoint whence you condemned Twofold Truth. Are we to take this divergency as an involuntary homage to the subject of your paper?

TREVOR. The divergency is only apparent. The solidarity of the intellect against which I protested is that which claims to be based on and to realize objective truth; which assumes, generally in some violent manner, that because a man has attained assured convictions he must needs be in harmony with all ultimate truth, that his position is a convergency of all dogmatic infallibilities. It is also mainly volitional—a predetermination to arrive at a foregone conclusion. The synthesis is thus vitiated by dogmatic prejudice, either extraneous or inherent. But the synthesis which suffices to condemn double-truth is the ordinary static harmonious condition of a well-balanced intellect, conscious of no antagonism which may not be wisely left to its own natural incertitude, and pledged to no dogmatic finality of any kind.

ARUNDEL. But may we not have, as Miss Leycester once suggested, an 'instability of the homogeneous' in intellectual formations? And have you not often remarked that all mental movement begins with Skeptical distrust, which is clearly a disruption of the intellect?

TREVOR. No doubt I have often said so; nor do I grant

that there is any inconsistency between that standpoint and the truth I am now urging. The disruption of Skeptical minds may be only temporary, but in every case its logical sequence is suspense or at least non-affirmation, whereas double-truth affirms two contradictory propositions, and is *ipso facto* doubly dogmatic. The Skeptical character of such a position is indirectly derived from the fact that it is inconceivable, and that one of the poles of the antagonism may always be employed in controverting the other.

MISS LEYCESTER. I came across the other day an interesting example of that peculiar intellectual mobility which delights in transition from one extreme of conviction to its opposite. I noted it down at the time as bearing directly on our subject. Here is the self-diagnosis of the thinker in question [reading from her pocket-book]: 'I don't quite know whether to esteem it a blessing or a curse, but whenever an opinion to which I am a recent convert, or which I do not hold with the entire force of my intellect, is forced too strongly upon me, or driven home to its logical conclusion, or over-praised or extended beyond its proper limits, I recoil instinctively and begin to gravitate towards the other extreme, sure to be in time repelled by it also.'¹ I suppose, Dr. Trevor, you would class such a thinker among minds constitutionally vacillating, as, *e.g.* Justus Lipsius.

TREVOR. Without knowing more of the thinker in question I could hardly tell you. His intellect seems to have close affinities with the 'double-eyed' minds who, distrustful of finality, are perpetually occupied in revising their beliefs; but in any case the instance is one strictly belonging to our subject, and showing in what multiform variety dualism exists in the human mind.

ARUNDEL. We may have 'double-truth,' I suppose, both in philosophy and in ethics, but I should be glad if you would tell me, Harrington, as an admirer of John Stuart Mill, why the same rule that applies to philosophical dualism is not also applicable to ethical. Mill, *e.g.* thought it possible that geometrical axioms might be different in other parts of the universe from what we know them to be here.

¹ *Stray Studies*, by T. R. Green, p. 8, à propos of Mr. Edward Denison.

Now, why should he have insisted on that, and yet been so angry with Mr. Mansel for saying that God's view of morality might be different from our own? If the known cannot be made the measure of the unknown, should not the rule be applied to subjects of thought and conduct alike?

HARRINGTON. Not necessarily. Mill's object, I take it, in denying that our experience should be the ultimate standard of all knowledge, was to avoid finality in speculation and philosophy. But no man recognised more fully than he did, that finality in moral practice has long been attained by civilized humanity. He also recognised the fact that a determination of the limits of knowledge, however remote, was just as mischievous for genuine truth-search as indeterminate ethical practice was hurtful to the interests of social and political well-being. His reasoning is based upon and, in my judgment, amply justified by utilitarian principles, though I myself should have endeavoured to incorporate with them, perhaps inconsistently, the higher standpoint furnished by unconditional morality. Either is equally destructive of Mr. Mansel's immoral antinomy.

TREVOR. I would go further, and say that Mr. Mansel's adoption of such a theory in ethics is an *à fortiori* proof that he was also a believer in speculative 'double-truth,' however much he might have sought to disguise it. Indeed, I would undertake to prove—due space and time being granted—that this represents his general philosophical standpoint. We may in passing note it as a remarkable fact that the keenest thinker among modern English theologians found himself obliged, in view of the rivalry of faith and reason, to take up an antinomical position, which, as we have seen, is only indirect Skepticism.

HARRINGTON. Incidentally, Doctor, you have just touched upon a subject with which your paper did not sufficiently deal, but which I regard as one of its principal lessons—I mean the unconquerable aversion of all original minds to excessive dogma, especially in matters as to which human knowledge is impossible. It might tend to moderate the zeal of dogmatists of all kinds, religious, philosophical, and scientific, if they were to ponder the fact that rather than be

compelled, physically or morally, to accept untenable theories, thinkers will take refuge in such transparent evasions and self-delusive hypotheses as are furnished by extreme forms of double-truth. Curiously, the position taken by Mill as to intellectual and moral double-truth has been exactly reversed by the Church of Rome, for she has as often affirmed the unity of intellectual as denied that of practical and ethical truth. The casuistry of Jesuits supplies us with the most outrageous applications of double-truth that we have in history.¹ The mischiefs that have resulted from this ethical antinomy, for which the term Jesuitism has become a synonym, fully justify Mill's distinction. It is, however, a little curious to find intellectual vindicated against moral truth by the greatest Christian Church in Europe, while the assertion of the superior claims of morality is left to a Skeptical philosopher.

MRS. HARRINGTON. You have not noticed the mention of Hamlet that occurred in the paper as a morbidly constituted mind, who would feel repelled at an excess of demonstration. What an infinite vista of possibilities of dissidence is offered us by the reflection that men might reasonably take offence, not at a lack, but a superfluity of demonstration.

MISS LEYCESTER. I don't know why Hamlet should be termed morbidly constituted on that account. To me the tendency appears quite normal and usual. I should be inclined to say that in half the cases in which dissent from dogma becomes established, the initiatory stage is repugnance to its assumed omniscience, its exuberant infallibility. Take any largely received account of matters inherently beyond human quest, *e.g.* the articles of the Westminster Confession, and what is most repellent in these dogmas is their portentous magnitude of knowledge. We are staggered by the too assertory character of the belief, as Hamlet was by the plain directness of the duty. I think the secret ground of such dissatisfaction, both of speculative and practical

¹ Comp. the fifth and sixth letters of Pascal's *Provincials*; and on Pascal's own standpoint in this matter see Reuchlin's *Pascal's Leben*, pp. 206-208, and the Pascal chapter in this work.

doubters, is a persuasion that these intrusive truths, these too simple explanations of profound mysteries, are anomalous. They are pictures made up of all light and no shadow, and we resent their intrusion and demand for recognition as imputations on our knowledge of a world in which shadows are necessary concomitants of light.

ARUNDEL. In other words, Miss Leycester, a man may decline to receive as a truth the proposition $2 + 2$ are 4, because of its excess of demonstration. Certainly, if we are to allow this as an operative cause of Skepticism, there will never be a dearth of Skeptics in the world.

TREVOR. But the very point you mention has itself been denied by thinkers as illustrious as Sokrates. For that matter, it would be difficult to name any proposition or fact so obvious that it has never encountered either doubt or denial.

HARRINGTON. I should account for the phenomena we are discussing, not by supposing that there is any real antipathy to demonstration in any sane mind, but by remembering that in certain men the volitional interest preponderates over the intellectual. What such persons dislike is the irresistible coercion of the will *ab extra*, without allowing due scope for ratiocination or discussion. Hamlet, *e.g.* would have liked to debate on his duty for ever, and he is angry with the peremptoriness that refuses to concede this right of interminable discussion.

TREVOR. Your explanation will serve for practical Skeptics—the class to which Hamlet belongs. Intellectual doubters seem to me determined by other considerations—*e.g.* the infinity of speculation. Men of this type dislike finality above everything, and the moment you propound to them an indisputable truth, they seek either to evade it or to imagine a condition of things in which it would not be true; or, failing every other expedient, they ask why it should be true. To many persons existence itself is the profoundest and most inexplicable of riddles.

ARUNDEL. You have just admitted a truth on which I have often insisted—that Skeptics are the irreconcilables of philosophy, and most unreasonably demand ‘better bread than

can be made of wheat.' . . . But what is to be our final conclusion respecting the connection of double-truth with the Christian Revelation, and its permissibility in that connection as a mode of Skepticism?

TREVOR. With the simple teaching of Jesus Christ human reason can have little or no quarrel. The dichotomy of Faith and Reason presents itself to us in the gradual development of Ecclesiasticism, and in its speculative departure from the original ethical and spiritual impulse given it by Christ. The outcome of this truth consists in the fact that for most of the double-truth emanating from the irreconcilable antagonism of Reason and Faith, for its excesses, its equivocations, its ambiguities, its contradictions, dogma is primarily responsible.

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EVENING VII.

**RELATION OF CHRISTIANITY TO
FREE-THOUGHT.**

‘To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto Him, What is truth?’

JOHN xviii. 37, 38.

‘The complete self-surrender of the reason is a partially impossible and *wholly* self-deceptive operation. In this endeavour men act unconsciously on the principle of Ananias. Pretending to resign their whole intellect to a creed or dogma, they still by an uncontrollable instinct “keep back part of the price.”’

ANON.

‘Granting that Christianity is the pure truth, who will answer for it that the orthodoxy which prevails at any one time is equivalent with pure Christianity?’

CHALYBAUS, *Speculative Philosophy* (Eng. trans.), p. 419.

‘If schisms and heresies were traced up to their original causes, it would be found that they have sprung chiefly from the multiplying articles of faith and narrowing the bottom of religion by clogging it with creeds and catechisms and endless niceties about the essences, properties, and attributes of God.’

LOCKE, *Life by Fox-Bourne*, i. p. 149.

EVENING VII.

THE RELATION OF CHRISTIANITY TO FREE-THOUGHT.

THE next meeting of our Literary Society was held in the middle of October. The day appointed fell on a Wednesday, and on the Sunday before the Harringtons, with Miss Leicester, came to spend the day with the Trevors, and accompanied the Doctor and Miss Trevor to Hilderton Church.

The Sunday was the eighteenth after Trinity, and Mr. Arundel, whose invariable custom was to choose for his text some portion of the epistle or gospel, chanced that morning to take as his subject the words, 'On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.' His sermon turned mainly on the simplicity of the gospel as laid down by Christ, in contradistinction (1) to the minute elaboration of religious and human duty on the part of the Pharisees, against whom these words were directed; (2) as related to needless and abstruse refinements of doctrine and ritual which unhappily characterized some Christian Churches.

These preliminary remarks will enable the reader to understand the discussion on the Wednesday.

When the company were assembled on that day, in Harrington's study, the host began:

I don't suppose you intended it, Arundel, but your sermon last Sunday morning was an appropriate introduction to our subject to-night—'The relation of Christianity to Free-Thought.'

ARUNDEL. I certainly did not intend it. The sermon you heard was written some years ago, and you are aware of my custom of choosing my subject from the epistle or gospel, at least in the morning.

MISS LEYCESTER. Oh, we all liked the sermon very

much, as we told you last Sunday; but there was one point in it to which I myself should have taken exception.

ARUNDEL. Only one, Miss Leycester? Then I consider myself singularly fortunate. I can imagine few sermons to which more than one exception might not fairly be taken by critical and cultured hearers. But may I ask what the inculcated point was?

MISS LEYCESTER. Well, I thought you insisted too much on the literal meaning of 'This is the first and greatest commandment,' as if the priority thus indicated by Christ were intrinsic and unconditional instead of being, as I take it, the numerical precedence which it has in virtue of its being the summary of the first four of the Ten Commandments; the result being a stress on religious as above moral duty, which, I think, is not sanctioned by Christ's teaching, taking it altogether. Indeed, I consider such an inference disproved by the remarkable clause in the same passage, 'The second is like unto it,' of which the meaning, I suppose, is, whatever sanctions and obligations the first commandment may have, those of the second are in no wise inferior to them.

ARUNDEL. I frankly acknowledge the substantial justice of your criticism, the more so because I agree with you that Christ distinctly subordinated religious to ethical duties. Indeed, I have always regarded that fact, provided it is not overstrained or exaggerated, as the crowning glory of Christianity. At the same time you must bear in mind that a preacher has to consider, not the bearings of his sermon on a select few among his hearers who may happen to be educated and thoughtful, but on the great majority of his congregation; and I tried to impress upon my poor people their duty to God so as to quicken in some degree their spiritual life. This appeal to emotion is precisely the ground in a rustic congregation which best rewards cultivation. I need not remind you of the truism that the uneducated are better led by their feelings than their reason, and I cannot find, taking the country labourers as a class, that they are so deficient in ethical insight or so regardless of moral obligation as to warrant the continual urging of the superiority

of ethical over religious duty. Indeed, considering their temptations and circumstances, I think their betters might often take example from them.

HARRINGTON. I am inclined to think you are right, Arundel. I should never be afraid of your appeal to the emotional faculty becoming excessive, or that you could, even if you tried, leave the reason and intellect long out of consideration. The point in your sermon which I noted as falling in with the paper I am about to read was the emphasis you laid on the two commandments considered as the chief foundations of Christian belief and practice, and the bearing which Jesus Christ's selection of those two points from the old Jewish Law has on the question, 'What is Revelation?'

MISS TREVOR. I must defend Mr. Arundel from any charge of ignoring moral duties as the prime conditions of a Christian life. But his preaching, I may add, is considered deficient in its completely ignoring 'Church principles;' at least such is the opinion of some lady friends of mine.

ARUNDEL. Long may my poor sermons labour under a defect so meritorious! 'Church principles' have an awkward way—like other things and persons attached to churches—of ignoring Christ Himself, their ostensible Founder. The deficiency you mention, and to which I am proud to plead guilty, reminds me of an incident which occurred to me not long since. . . . I went to the opening of — Church, when the Bishop of — preached. His sermon, as you may suppose, was emphatically liberal and Christian, dwelling on the fewness and simplicity of those dogmas which are really essential to Christianity. Going out of church I asked a clerical acquaintance how he liked the bishop's sermon. 'Not bad,' was the reply; 'but it might have been preached anywhere and by anybody. It did not contain a single distinctive Church principle from beginning to end; in fact,' he added in a tone which clearly evinced his opinion that the contingency propounded was the severest possible condemnation of the sermon, 'Cicero might have preached it.' 'So, for that matter,' was my reply, 'he might the Sermon on the Mount or the Parable of the Good Samaritan.'

MISS LEYCESTER. Charles has told us that he considers Mr. Arundel's sermon as having thrown light on Christ's own answer to the question, What is Revelation? I want him to tell us what he thinks that answer would be.

HARRINGTON. On its Divine side Christ would, I think, define it as 'the Perpetual Revealing of the Father's mind,' which, on its human side and in its largest acceptation, we might interpret as 'The Discovery of Truth.' I meant that by insisting on that succinct epitome of the Law of Moses as constituting the basis of His own teaching, He clearly proclaimed that He did not consider that teaching so thoroughly novel as to differ in kind from every other exposition of truth which had been presented to mankind. Every religion that taught duty to God and love to man He would no doubt have called Divine and true, and would have regarded it as essentially Christian. One of the noblest attributes in Christ's character was His preference of principles over forms, persons, and externalities of every kind.

ARUNDEL. I agree with your definition, which I do not understand to imply that Christ added nothing to the Judaism which existed before Him. That, I think, would be false. The Fatherhood of God, the impartiality of His providential dealings, the duty of love to men irrespective of creed or nationality, were certainly new elements in Semitic religious thought. I say this with a full recollection of the teachings of such men as Hillel and others who preceded Him.

TREVOR. The idea of Revelation as a continuous communication of God's will is indigenious to all Semitic races. But it was just these new elements of a universalist cosmopolitan nature which Christ superadded to the old Mosaism, that adapted His faith to become, as it has, the religion of the cold, keen, inquiring intellects of our Western Indo-European races. Hence, for my own part I have always regarded Christianity, by reason of the simplicity of its doctrines, the sublime humanitarianism of its ethics, and its generally comprehensive character, as peculiarly qualified to become the creed of all races and individuals who are bent on intellectual progress, and are yet not unmindful that such progress does not include all the true interests of

humanity. I have always thought it not the least among 'Evidences of Christianity,' albeit not included in popular text-books on the subject, that it is the only form of Semitic religion which has commended itself to the feelings and understandings of the most cultivated sections of the Aryan race. The influence of the two remaining forms of Semitic religion—Judaism and Islamism—on our Western races has been comparatively little. Hence we have the mission of the Semitic races as laid down by Bunsen and others, viz. they are the divinely appointed purveyors of religion for their Aryan fellow-men. To translate the Semitic into the Japhetic—the precise operation which Jesus Christ commenced—constitutes, as Baron Bunsen said, one great religious need of our time: I do not say it is the only one.

MISS LEYCESTER. If I were a great painter I should like to represent Semiticism, with its religious enthusiasm, its attitude of devotion, its childlike simplicity and trust, by Mary of Bethany, with her absorbed concentration on the words of the great Teacher; while the restless, dissatisfied, inquiring Skeptical nature of Aryan speculation would be appropriately represented by Martha, 'careful and troubled about many things.'

ARUNDEL. We may add, I think, that the Master's decision of one thing being needful has an application to philosophy as well as to practical religion; I mean the categorical imperative of simple faith and obvious duty which is left after the intellect has exercised all its disintegrating and destructive influences.

TREVOR. You have a still more striking example of the contrast between Semitic faith and Indo-Germanic unfaith in the well-known scene of Christ before Pilate. The Jew's devout belief in the sanctity and vitality of truth, his single-hearted and heroic determination to pursue it at all costs, compared with the Roman's cynical and indifferent 'What is truth?' has always appeared to me very remarkable. The scene is the typical confronting of two diverse races, each with its own peculiar instincts, ideals, and destinies.

HARRINGTON. On the other hand, Doctor, if you make

that scene so typically important, Pilate's interrogation must signify not the cynical disdain but the eager inquiry for truth which we have agreed is the characteristic of the cultivated Indo-Germanic intellect. Nor must we forget that the teaching of Christ stands midway between the devout though narrow religiousness of the older Judaism and the broader and more comprehensive spirit of the newer Gentile world destined to succeed it. The very stress on truth in that passage as an ideal object of pursuit and of a martyr's testimony, is a notion the old Jewish prophet would hardly have understood, for with him truth was a purely Jewish, Palestinian, and theological quality descriptive of his worship as contrasted with the falsity and vanity of idols. . . . Our present subject, however, is not Judaism but Christianity.

MISS LEYCESTER. True; and the bare mention of it conjures up as with a magician's wand the host of difficulties that surround it. For what, among the fluctuations and changes of the eighteen centuries of its existence, and among the hundreds of sects which style themselves by the common name of Christian, shall we say is Christianity? As to the relation of dominant systems of Christianity to Free-thought, it has generally been the unhappy one between a despot and a slave.

HARRINGTON. There can be no question to any thoughtful and independent intellect as to the true definition of Christianity. It is—the Life and Words of Christ. In this first simple and pure form, as you will find when I come to read my paper, Christianity is so far from opposing itself to rational freedom of thought that it may be said to be founded on it. It was a distinct declaration of liberty both intellectual and spiritual. Such is its first and best form. Afterwards, as we noticed in our last discussion, it came to assume a very different aspect when it developed into an elaborate system of speculative dogma and imperious ecclesiasticism.

ARUNDEL. I deprecate as strongly as any man dogmatic tyranny and intolerance. Still, there is something to be said for the undoubted need of doctrinal development. Religious feelings, for example, are uncertain in origin and

evanescent in operation if left entirely to themselves without a prescribed track or direction being assigned them. Besides, they must perforce find some mode of visible expression if they are to be made the motive forces or the connecting links of any ecclesiastical or other community. A Church without a creed is as inconceivable as a nationality without laws; but the ecclesiastical as well as the civil ruler should remember that his object is best attained when the personal liberty of the individual is most respected. There must always be, so long as creeds are words and men are reasoning beings, a variety of interpretation and opinion as to the essentials or non-essentials of any religious faith. The frequently quoted maxim attributed to Augustine is epigrammatic and pretty: *In necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas, in omnibus charitas*, but it leaves the main difficulty unsolved. What are *necessaria*, and why? and what is the boundary line between *dubia* and *necessaria*? Certainly the *necessaria* which can be gathered from the direct utterances of Jesus Christ may be packed in a very small dogmatic parcel.

MISS LEYCESTER. I have often thought what a different answer—different in spirit and in form—would have been given to the question, ‘What shall I do to inherit eternal life?’ by Hildebrand on the one hand or Calvin on the other, compared with the simple injunction of clear duty to God and man, and the noble inculcation of unsectarian charity which it elicited from Jesus Christ. On the other hand, I have sometimes reversed the process, *i.e.* I have tried to extract from the developed form of one of the most dogmatic sections of Christianity—I mean the Church of Rome—what the logical and consistent idea of the founder of such a system could be; in other words, I tried to conceive the Teacher of whom Hildebrand, Alexander VI., Leo X., and Julius II. could claim to be the legitimate and worthy vicars. I need not say that in the attempt Jesus of Nazareth, with His wise, gentle, loving teachings, quite disappeared, and what seemed to occupy His place was a hideous compound of Jewish High Priest, a Grand Inquisitor, and an Oriental despot.

ARUNDEL. In other words, Miss Leycester, you tried to

discover the acorn in the oak of some centuries' growth. I don't think you can feel surprised that you did not find it.

MISS LEYCESTER. At least I had a right to expect that 'the oak of some centuries' growth' was actually bearing acorns, and not some gaudy-looking but poisonous berry. I could not have anticipated that the acorn would have produced a Upas Tree, or as Dante expressed the metamorphosis which befell—

La buona pianta :
Che fu già vite, ed ora è fatta pruno.¹

The spirit of Christianity may doubtless exist in a variety of forms, just as you may have a jewel in a variety of settings. What I complain of is the wilful abstraction of the precious stone of Christ's own teaching, and the substitution of the base imitation of hierarchical pride and ambition.

MRS. ARUNDEL. But agreeing, as we all do, that the Revelation of Jesus Christ is Divine, does not every criticism and examination of it become by the very fact profane?

TREVOR. Your query, Mrs. Arundel, is important, because it bears immediately on our subject. It is equivalent to asking what right have Christians to be Skeptical, *i.e.* inquiring. Now, however great be the proofs and sanctions of any given Revelation considered as an unveiling of Divine Truth, there clearly can be none so great or so obvious as to render a searching scrutiny of those proofs impertinent or needless. The power we possess of doing this—the irresistible impulse implanted in most men of employing this power, not to mention the unworthy superstitions held in every age of the world by those who have neglected to use it, constitute sufficing proofs of this necessity. Regarding Revelation as light, we might, without venturing far into the teleological aspect of the question, say that light presupposes the faculty of seeing. Sight is, at least, a correlative of light, and together with the power of apprehending light there must exist the faculty of apprehending its different degrees, kinds, and qualities. Similarly the very idea of Revelation presupposes the power not only of acknowledging but of testing and

¹ *Paradiso*, canto xxiv.

analyzing it. The truth disclosed and unveiled must be of such a kind as we are able to apprehend, else it is no truth at all. Indeed, the duty of being able to give a reason for our faith is increased and enhanced in the direct ratio of its ostensible importance, so that the greater the magnitude of its claims the more imperative on our part becomes the need of an inquiring, cautious, and, if necessary, suspensive attitude.

ARUNDEL. Pardon me, Doctor: your last proposition is something astounding. It is tantamount to saying, the brighter the sun shines the more evidence do I require of its brilliancy.

TREVOR. Nay, Arundel, you mistake my meaning. Let us suppose, *e.g.* that the sun required or was supposed to require the acknowledgment of every rational being living here or elsewhere in sight of its rays, that it was the only creative agency or source of vital energy in our own system. Should not we require some undeniable attestation of such a claim? What I meant by the magnitude of the *claims* of any Revelation was not the greatness of its light, but the degree of its general insistency on our submission and concurrence, which is quite another matter. I say, and deliberately maintain, that the more reverence and obedience a Revelation claims, the more complete and authentic should be the evidence that it merits it. Revelation, you must acknowledge, has rarely conceded so much to human weakness as to say, Believe in direct proportion to the light you enjoy. If it did this, Skepticism—or the aggressive or suspicious human reason—could have had no quarrel with it.

HARRINGTON. I quite agree with you. The claim generally made on behalf of Revelation to the unconditional assent of the Reason fully justifies a searching inquiry into its validity. From our own point of view such a claim professes to be a title-deed to the most sacred territory in the possession of humanity. It demands, or is held to demand, the surrender of our greatest wealth. It could hardly be expected that men who have realized the value of their mental possessions should quietly yield them up without an attempt to ascertain the validity of such a demand, or to examine the

basis on which it is founded. On this subject I should like to read to you a few sentences I came across the other day in Bailey's 'Essay on the Pursuit of Truth.'¹ After speaking of the need of full inquiry in other classes of truths, he proceeds: 'Not less imperative reasons exist why we should diligently apply ourselves to the examination of the authenticity and import of any alleged communication from God to mankind that wears the least semblance of credibility. To neglect inquiry under these circumstances would not only be a breach of the manifest duty arising out of the relation of a creature to his Creator, but it would plunge ourselves into those evils which an unacquaintance with accessible knowledge, and much more any positive errors on so momentous a subject, would be sure to bring, as well as to sacrifice all those benefits which would necessarily flow from the possession of the truth.' With this noble and high-minded standpoint I emphatically agree. In greater or less proportion a moral culpability seems to me to attach in every case to neglect of independent and impartial inquiry into whatsoever doctrine asserts a claim to our belief and adherence; in St. Paul's words, 'Whatsoever is not of faith,' *i.e.* personal conviction, 'is sin.'

MISS LEYCESTER. There is, moreover, another reason why the utmost liberty should be granted to the intellect to examine into and decide upon the merits of any given Revelation, *i.e.* its transmission necessarily through human agencies, therefore with all the liability to self-interest and error which such conditions imply.

TREVOR. Very true; but I was about to add to what I said just now that although in idea Revelation does not render needless or impertinent the fullest exercise of the Reason, yet in actuality, and (speaking especially of Christianity) by means of the erroneous construction put upon it by its teachers, it has undoubtedly exercised such a repressive influence, and that to a most mischievous extent. The various shifts to which the human intellect has been compelled to resort by means of such repression we have already considered, and further examples of the same truth will meet

us as we proceed in our task. Moreover, we shall find that the intolerance of the Christian Church in the Middle Ages was by no means exclusively confined to theological subjects. It was an unfortunate outcome of the position it assumed as comprehending all the intellectual culture and speculation of the time that the *animus* of the theologian should be found to affect in a certain measure even the philosopher and the man of science, nurtured and dieted as these were in a theological atmosphere and on theological food. Indeed, it is not the least of the many ill qualities of religious dogma that it makes all other dogmas which come in contact with it more 'dogged,' so to speak. For example, nothing could at first sight seem less calculated to provoke angry recriminations than some of the issues between Realists and Nominalists in the twelfth century. Questions of a similar kind had been debated by Greek philosophers without an approach to rancour or bitterness; but so violent in the schools of Paris was the feeling on these abstruse points that the partisans of Abelard and William of Champeaux actually came to blows.

MISS LEYCESTER. The thought has often occurred to me whether the excess of dogmatism which we find occasionally in contemporary scientists may not be ascribed in some cases to the theological training of those who are guilty of it. If this could be proved to be the case, it would be another illustration of the truth of your remarks.

ARUNDEL. But assuming that Skeptics, so far from being inimical to Revelation, as is generally supposed, are precisely the persons who treat its credentials as they ought to be treated—for that seems the point to which we are steering—is such Skepticism to pursue its course without let or hindrance? Suppose a Skeptic should be so advanced as to deny or hold in suspense the cardinal truths of Christ's own teaching, *e.g.* the existence of God—the providential government of the world—the obligation of moral duty—a future life—would it not be absurd to say that his Skepticism was compatible with Christianity, and an impious mockery to affirm that such conclusions could be based upon it?

HARRINGTON. Your objection, Arundel, is easily answered:

1. As we saw in the case of Sokrates, sincere and inquiring unbelief is better than insincere and ignorant belief. 2. Of the thousands who, starting from Skepticism (for every free and independent inquiry begins with doubt), have submitted Christianity to a rigid examination, how many, may we suppose, have proceeded in the path of negative criticism till they were landed in Atheism or Immorality—the denial of the two great commandments of the Gospel? If we could arrive at reliable statistics on the point, we should find, I suspect, a very small percentage of such extreme Skeptics. Free-inquiry, like religious faith, must trust to a certain extent to human prudence and discretion—attributes unluckily not innate in every child of Adam. If therefore inquiry degenerates into irrational libertinism, or faith finds congenial repose in crass ignorance or degrading superstition, we must accept both extremes as so far proof of the value and truthfulness of the golden mean.

TREVOR. Another answer might not unfairly be suggested to Arundel, though after his recent declarations on the point he is not likely to avail himself of it, *i.e.* the similarity between the Probabilism of the Academic Skeptic and the persuasion of likelihood which most rational divines (Bishop Butler, *e.g.*) hold is the most that can be urged for articles of faith. . . . Some relation might even be pleaded between the probability of divines as an imperfect certainty and the complete uncertainty which belongs to Pyrrhonism.

ARUNDEL. You are right in supposing that I utterly refuse to put faith and Pyrrhonism on the same level, even interpreting faith as equivalent only to probability, which I cannot accede to until I know the degree of probability of which this equivalence is maintained. There is a considerable difference, as you have already allowed, between probability and suspense. Probability of any degree is a distinct inclination of one side of the balance, while suspense implies a fixed and rigid equilibrium.

HARRINGTON. The Doctor has, however, just suggested a point of some importance—I mean the connection between the usual theological definition of faith as a condition of imperfect certitude and some states of Skepticism. Consider-

able ignorance and misconception seem to me to exist upon this subject; for while theologians discriminate in theory between faith and knowledge, in reality they regard objects of faith as demonstrable and infallible. 'We walk by faith, not by sight,' is a text often on their lips, but the moment you dare to impute the smallest degree of blindness or imperfect vision as to the objects of their belief you immediately arouse their indignation. Le-Vayer, one of our Skeptics, thought the words 'The just shall live by his faith' might signify that Skeptical philosophers, animated by disinterested regard for truth, should guide themselves by considerations of likelihood while distinctly acknowledging perfect certitude to be impossible. We have already touched upon this subject in our last discussion as a common meeting point of faith and Skepticism. I hope we may be able to discuss it more fully in the course of our future researches; meanwhile I will ask your attention to my paper on the Relation of Christianity to Free-thought.

In commencing my essay it seems expedient to define the object I propose to myself, the best means of attaining that object, and the limits within which our inquiry should be kept. In a preceding chapter we considered some varieties of Free-thought, which were, however, either ancient or foreign products, at least in origin. What we endeavour to do in the last and present discussion is to consider the general bearings of what may be called Christian Skepticism, for all of the distinguished names remaining on our list are, if not Christians in the usual acceptance of the term, products of a condition of thought into which Christianity very largely enters. It seems right, therefore, that we should inquire into the relation of that factor with different forms of Free-thought. The question must be answered, Does Christianity, properly defined, forbid freedom of inquiry, or does it allow it? In either case, is the prohibition or permission absolute or relative, unlimited or strictly defined? What was the relation of Jesus Christ's teaching to the ordinary beliefs and convictions of those to whom it was first addressed? Had it a solvent or hardening tendency? Was it regarded as dogmatic or undogmatic, as tending to confirm existing beliefs, or to question, criticize, and destroy them? What effect had Jesus Christ's teaching on His reputation while He lived, and on the

causes which contributed, humanly speaking, to His premature death? An impartial answer to these questions will, it seems to me, enable us to define the relation of Christianity to Free-thought, and will help us to determine, when we come to consider diverse manifestations of Skepticism, how far they diverge from the latitude of speculation permitted in the first conception of Christianity by its founder.

But I must first preface a few observations on the method I intend to pursue in this inquiry. We have already agreed that Christianity is most properly defined as consisting of the life and words of Christ. It is necessary to insist *in limine* on this as the only true and satisfactory definition. As we well know, the term covers in ordinary acceptation an enormous extent of ground, historical and doctrinal. Few general definitions of religious or thought-movements include a greater variety of manifestation. The historical growth of eighteen centuries, each of them may claim not one but many various phases and modes of presentation. The doctrinal development from a few simple precepts to several overgrown and elaborate systems of dogmatic teaching, each stage of growth of every such evolution presents us with a distinct phase or aspect, differing more or less from all the rest. Like Nature, Christianity is a term which includes a vast number of diverse phenomena, and is generally interpreted from the point of view or particular aspect it presents to each individual beholder.

That the ultimate fact of Christianity, considered as a distinct Revelation, is Christ Himself, may at first sight seem a truism, but it cannot be so deemed by those who are conversant with the modes of thought and speech common to Christian Churches and sects. In all these cases the authority claimed by Christ for His teaching, not on personal grounds, but as the embodiment of truth, is assumed to be delegated to different creeds and ecclesiastical communities, each of which claims to dogmatize and decree articles of faith with His sanction and in His name. As, however, their mutual differences are both profound and manifold, and as they all more or less evince no anxiety to assimilate their respective dogmas with the doctrines most pointedly insisted on by Christ, their claim to authority delegated from Him needs no refutation.

Years ago I found myself obliged to adopt Pascal's rule,¹ and to appeal on the question of Christian truth to the 'Tribunal of Jesus Christ'—for I may tell you that the inquiry I am now prosecuting is not altogether new to me. In early manhood, when freshly awakened thought and intellectual unrest first suggested to me

¹ See chapter on Pascal, in this work.

doubts respecting some points of the Christian faith, I determined to satisfy myself as to the real essentials of that faith. In those days I was fresh from reading the Dialogues of Plato and Descartes' 'Treatise on Method.' I began to ask myself, why not apply the same method to other subjects in which synthesis and evolution might seem to have been carried to excess? What Descartes effected for his philosophical, why might I not attempt for my religious, creed? And if, as in the case of Christianity, religious belief has also an historical development, why not apply the same analysis to its history as well? The ultimate point of the historical inquiry might perhaps be found to coincide with the final irreducible principles—the *minimum quid inconcussum*—which my conscience assured me ought to distinguish every true belief. Thus I might also discover a religious '*cogito, ergo sum*'—a distinct foundation in consciousness for my faith as a Christian, and an indubitable point of departure for the doubtful and fluctuating development of Christianity in history. Accordingly, I set to work. The most salient presentations of Christianity to a thinker of the present day are no doubt the highly elaborated creeds and the complex and involved services of the Greek and Latin Churches, while next to these are the various divergences of Protestant and Dissident sects. I began my researches with the latest developments of Romanism—the dogmas promulgated by Pius IX. There could be no difficulty with such extreme tenets as the Immaculate Conception and Papal Infallibility. On every ground of religion, culture, and morality they were clearly inadmissible. In the words which Giordano Bruno applied to the Romanist dogmas of his time—

Humanam turbant pacem, sæclique quietem;
Extinguunt mentis lucem, neque moribus prosunt.

Tracing the stream upward, I soon came to the decrees of the Council of Trent, and the Catechism of Pius V. The dogmas embodied in these elaborate formulæ I quickly put aside. To say nothing of their mischievous and degrading tendency as positive injunctions, they were utterly devoid of the principle of rational and immediate obligation which I thought must characterize every truthful Revelation, without which I at least felt they could have no power over me. Step by step I plodded on my way, backward as to time, forward as to truth and genuine Christianity. Arriving at the Reformation, I came on the track of illustrious thinkers who, three centuries ago, adopted the course I was now pursuing; in other words, they had also attempted to trace the stream of

Christianity backward, in order to arrive at its true source. I could not but be alive to the fact that the influence of such men as Luther, Calvin, Melancthon, and Zwingli, especially of the two latter, was primarily of an undogmatizing kind. Still I found ample reason for thinking that, with all their merits, and the services they rendered to Free-thought, they themselves suffered from the besetting sin of theology—I mean excessive dogma. They laid too much stress on speculative beliefs and elaborate formularies of faith as distinct from Christian practice. Nay, the very corner-stone of the Reformation—I mean the doctrine of justification by faith—they sometimes insisted on to an extent which was clearly subversive of all ethical conduct. The result was seen in the attempts both of Calvin and Luther to limit intellectual research, liberty of thought, and tolerance of alien beliefs within the bounds they chose to prescribe, and which they dignified by the name of orthodoxy. Nor were they above imitating the anti-Christian Church from which they had seceded in coercing, anathematizing, and occasionally putting to death those who were impervious to their reasoning and persuasion. I easily detected the error that had affected their study of Christian antiquity. In their search for pure, uncorrupted Christianity they had stopped considerably short of the fountain-head. This error I determined to avoid. So, leaving the Reformation, I pursued my historical course backwards, as if borne along by one of the mythical *ἀνοροταμῶν* of the Greeks, through the Dialectics and puerilities of the Middle Ages, and the deeper darkness that preceded them, until at length I found myself among the early centuries of the history of the Church, and the Councils which had most contributed to the actual shaping the ecclesiastical creed of Christianity. In my summary sketch of my regressive progress I have not mentioned the phenomena I met on my route—the many outrages offered in the holy name of Christ to every form of intellectual liberty, and the disappearance one by one of the later dogmas of Papal Christianity. When I had, *e.g.* arrived at 400 A.D., almost half of the current beliefs of Roman Catholicism had vanished, while of many of those still left there was a distinctly marked advance from induration and stratification to a more soluble and semi-fluid condition. It was like watching the different stages of the same geological formation, tracing, *e.g.* coal-beds from their completely stratified condition to the tropical vegetation which gave them being; or, were it possible, piercing successive beds of chalk of lessening degrees of hardness, until we arrived at the Globigerina ooze which formed their primary condition. So the petrification of

feeling into dogma, imagination into fact, rhetoric into logic, was distinctly manifested in each of their various stages. I cannot say that the lengthened study I thought it my duty to devote to the General Councils had at all the effect of predisposing me to accept their deliverances. On the other hand, the more I considered the questions they were convened to decide, the character of the personages lay and clerical who took part in them, the circumstances of their meeting, the disgraceful scenes enacted at many of them, the spirit which seemed to preside over their discussions and to dictate their decrees and conclusions, the less regard I seemed to have for the sanctity of their assemblages, or for the superior prudence or wisdom of their deliverances, while the plea of their inspiration by the Holy Spirit appeared either blasphemous or ironical. I therefore had no scruple in leaving them behind, and penetrating still further back to Apostolic times. Here I first began to see light. Christianity now assumed a distinctly different appearance. With the diminution of speculative beliefs there was more room for Christian duty, for Christian love, and for Christian freedom. With a lesser stress on unity of form there was more elasticity and simplicity in modes of worship. With the decrease of pride and hierarchical ambition in the rulers of the Church there was a greater approach to the humane spirit of its founder. At last a few stages further back brought me to the fountain-head. I was among the hearers of Jesus Christ at His first preaching in Galilee, and, lo! dogmatism as I had always understood it had quite disappeared. There was no longer a terrible insistency as a matter of life and death on a series of difficult speculative propositions; no longer an authoritative pronunciamiento of tenets on the most recondite of all subjects, to be received on pain of eternal punishment. The Church as a theocratic and dogmatic system had not only ceased to exist, but, from the standpoint of its founder, no room was left for the sacerdotalism which could develop into a theocracy, or for the abstruse speculation and sectarian exclusiveness which would needs ripen into a harsh system of dogma. The root-thought of Christ's system was virtue and morality. 'Love God and man. Do unto all men as you would have them do unto you. Show your love and duty to God by manifesting your love to His children and your brethren. Shun pride, ambition, selfishness, and follow humility and charity.' Such was the Christianity of Christ; and, for my part, I immediately assented. Bowing my head before the Divine truth of His teaching, I had no difficulty in admitting the Divinity of His person. I thus found the historical foundation of Christianity, its highest authoritative attestation, in

the instincts of conscience. The external truth coincided and harmonized with its internal demonstration. No doubt I had heard those precepts of Christianity often before. Ostensibly they formed the practical teaching of most Christian Churches, but in those cases they were mostly so intermingled with other teachings of a speculative and formal kind as to present an entirely different appearance. The truth and excellence of Christ's ethical injunctions were assumed to be qualities not inherent in themselves, but dependent on other collateral conditions, formal, external, and ceremonial. The Confession of Faith was set so clearly above the practice of holiness that the latter could not but acquire by the mere juxtaposition a subordinate and inferior value, whereas in Christ's teaching it is moral practice, not the speculative belief, still less the religious observance, that is placed highest. 'Not every one that saith Lord, Lord, but he that doeth the will of my Father.' The conclusion I then arrived at, and which subsequent reflection, so far from weakening, has immeasurably strengthened, was, in brief, that the first form of Christianity was practical not speculative; broad and comprehensive, not narrow and dogmatic; popular in its aims and instincts, not theocratic and hierarchical; simple in its observances, not elaborate and ritualistic. I cannot, however, pretend that these convictions were attained without some sacrifice of prior prepossessions and opinions. Beliefs long cherished, like habits strengthened by long usage, are not easily eradicated, or even modified. Nor can I say that my inquiry was accomplished in a short time, or that every step in the retrogression was taken consecutively. On the contrary, there were various delays, impediments, hesitations, before I came to the definitive conclusion that the best representative of Christianity is Christ Himself.

There is in the 'Nouveaux Mélanges' of Theodore Jouffroy a strikingly dramatic passage, in which he describes the conflict he once sustained with doubt, and in which the latter came off victorious. He narrates with much pathos and with evident sincerity how he had felt compelled in the imperious interests of truth to divest himself one after another of most of his long-cherished dogmas. But the dramatic interest of the passage, which reads as if the author in writing it had attempted to imitate the Apollyon and Christian conflict of the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' seems to me sustained by a departure from probability, for the conflict is carried on from beginning to end during the long hours of a single night! I am far from supposing that the duration of such struggles will in every instance be the same; still I cannot help thinking that when long-cherished and authoritatively prescribed dogmas are thus

tried, found wanting, and discarded between sleeping and waking, the hold that they could have formerly possessed on the convictions must have been very slight, or else they could not have had a fair trial. The time I took to eliminate the multifarious accretions which ecclesiasticism had at various times and in divers manners introduced into my conception of Christianity I do not rightly know; I only know it took some years and no inconsiderable amount of reflection to arrive at the conclusion I have just mentioned.

What was then my terminus is, on the present occasion, my starting-point. In investigating the relation of Christianity to Free-thought I purpose to define it as 'the life and words of Christ,' *i.e.* those direct teachings which He set before His hearers with a distinct intimation of their complete sufficiency as rules of human conduct, *e.g.* the emphatic words found at the end of the Sermon on the Mount: 'Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them is like unto a man who built his house upon a rock.' And this leads me to observe that without very extensive acquaintance with the many questions that have arisen concerning the Gospels, the most elementary criticism would suffice to impress on us the necessity of remembering the circumstances under which they were composed. They were products of a time when the Church as an ecclesiastical system was beginning to consolidate its teachings and its policy, and therefore when a hierarchical or exclusive spirit began to manifest itself. Traces of that spirit on the part of the Apostles are found, as might have been anticipated, in the Gospels, and are diligently repressed by Jesus Christ (Matt. xx. 25-28; Luke ix. 46, 49, 55, 56). This fact cannot but render the few passages in which Christ Himself is made the medium of a harsh Judaic expression of intolerance—*e.g.* Matt. x. 5, xvi. 19; John iv. 22—or the consignment to the Apostles of any other than the moral and persuasive power He claimed for Himself, exceedingly suspicious, so much so that I have not the least doubt of their being interpolations, which found a ready and natural reception into the utterances of Christ when the sacerdotal powers of the Church began to be consolidated, *i.e.* about the end of the second century.

Having thus laid down what seems the true starting-point of our inquiry, and at the same time secured a definition of Christianity, I will briefly indicate the method I propose to follow.

Christianity, we all admit, is a doctrine, and whatever other functions Jesus Christ fulfils, He is first of all a teacher of men.

Now to determine what Jesus taught, the obvious course to pursue is to go directly to Himself and ascertain as far as possible what His words were, their meanings for those who heard them, and through them for others. . . . I therefore take my stand at the precise moment of time when Christ begins His teaching in Galilee, with some such discourse, let us say, as the well-known Sermon on the Mount. I consider the teacher and the persons to be taught. Every teacher will insist especially on what he deems of most importance, and will, moreover, adapt his instruction to the circumstances and ideas of his hearers. Hence, in considering the question how far Jesus Christ's teaching was dogmatic, for that is the main point involved in our question of its relation to freedom of thought, I propose to ask—

I. What dogmas and convictions He found in His hearers.

II. How He dealt with those convictions by way of approval or disapproval.

As to the first point. I do not think we need investigate the peculiarities of creed, race, or physical environment which in many respects distinguished the people of Northern Palestine from those of the South. Recent writers of an imaginative turn of mind have dilated on this subject to an extravagant extent, so much so as to make Christianity a kind of inevitable product, a doctrinal concentration of the influences and feelings inspired by the high mountains, blue skies, clear atmosphere, and imposing scenery of Northern Palestine; or else, in the same alembic of imagination, they have tried to distil it from the mutual combination of its mixed races—Greek, Arabic, Syriac, Phœnician, and Jewish. The single fact may suffice for our purpose that the inhabitants of a district so far removed from the capital—the centre of rabbinic and theocratic tendencies—would probably be somewhat freer from dogmatic prejudices than their brethren of the South, though a small acquaintance with the Gospel narrative will suffice to assure us that this freedom was itself of a partial and limited nature.

Nor, again, need we push our inquiries very far into the prior history of the Jews, and the various fluctuations of their creed. That such fluctuations exist, and that Judaism is not, as was formerly thought, a supremely pure and simple faith, uncontaminated by foreign and Gentile elements, may now be regarded as one of the best-attested conclusions of modern Biblical criticism. We may content ourselves with the undisputed fact that about two centuries or so previous to the commencement of Christ's mission a gradual advance in rabbinical and Mosaic dogmatism had set in—an advance which seems sufficiently marked for our purpose

by the rise and rapid growth in power and popularity of the Pharisees—the great dogmatic party among the Jews.

I. The chief compact body of Jewish belief and worship with which the new teaching of Christ had to reckon was of course Mosaism, *i.e.* the law of the great Jewish legislator regarded not so much as an ethical as a ceremonial and sacrificial code. On the supernatural origin and undoubted pre-eminence of this law all parties among the Jews were substantially united. The Pharisee and the Sadducee both agreed to accept it as the divine basis of their religious polity, and the former extended its influence further by making it the principle of the national polity as well. Now Mosaism in the time of Christ was not a dead or effete creed. In the popular estimation, and by means of the propagandist activity of the Scribes and Pharisees, it was not only living but growing. In no two centuries since its origin had its development been so great, its influence so extensive, as in those immediately preceding the birth of Christ. The great Teacher therefore came in contact with it in the full tide of its development, at the moment when national misfortunes and theocratic jealousy imparted a zest to its minutest prescriptions, and a warm glow to its most extravagant hopes and promises they had never hitherto possessed. The attitude of Christ to this great body of Mosaic belief and current religious practice is instructive. He is far from attempting to oppose the law of Moses, taking it as a whole. On the contrary, He appeals to its ethics as emanating from God and as containing the sum of human duty together with the complete conditions of salvability. He allows to Scribes and Pharisees a certain official authority in virtue of their sitting in Moses' seat. He announces that He is come not to destroy but to fulfil the law, meaning, however, as the context and other teachings clearly establish, not the fulfilment of strict observance, but that of spiritual completion and consequent abrogation. But while maintaining the ethical and religious continuity of His doctrine with that of Moses, which may possibly be one interpretation of the words, 'Before [even] Abraham was, I am,' He nevertheless proclaims distinctly the insufficiency of the law, and insists on the imperfect righteousness which the Pharisees hoped to achieve by its means. Nor is He less severe on some of its ethical precepts—'Love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy,' 'An eye for an eye,' and other maxims of a like kind, which He not only opposes in the interests of His own humane and refined teaching, but absolutely inverts. The ceremonial aspect of the law He also repudiates both by word and deed. The love of God He proclaims to be more than whole

burnt-offerings and sacrifices. The worship of the Temple He subordinates to the worship of the Father in spirit and in truth. To the puerile distinctions between pure and impure meats, holy and unholy days, ceremonial cleanness and uncleanness, in a word, to all ritualistic and external observances, He is either supremely indifferent or else attempts to impart an ethical and religious significance. It would be difficult to set bounds to the derogation of mere ritual and formal rites implied in such precepts as 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath,' 'Not that which entereth, but that which proceedeth forth from the mouth defileth a man,' 'Leave thy gift before the altar and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift,' and His repeated injunctions of absolute secrecy and isolation in prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, are not less significant. Moreover, He openly ridicules the literal observance of prescriptions which were intended to bear a moral and spiritual meaning, *e.g.* the wearing phylacteries and text-bordered garments as an easy mode of obeying the command which enjoined attention to the written law. And whereas the Scribes fondly cherished the persuasion that their law was destined for all future time, Christ emphatically declared the temporary and incidental nature of its enactments, *e.g.* on the subject of divorce, and appeals from the law of Moses to the law of Nature—'From the beginning it was not so.'

We thus perceive that Christ dealt with Mosaism in the spirit of the religious reformer and—if I may venture to employ reverently a term which has suffered from unmerited suspicion—of the Free-thinker. So far from receiving *en bloc* the national creed and popular convictions of His time, surrounded though they were with high sanctions and venerable prescriptions, He proceeded deliberately to analyze, criticize, and in most cases to repudiate and reject. The national, local, particular aspects of Mosaism—in other words, its most distinctive features—He endeavoured to eliminate. There is no appeal to the Jew as Jew, no reference to the wonderful events in his history in virtue of which he claimed to be the particular favourite of heaven—no allusion at least of a complimentary kind to the ceremonies, usages, and beliefs which were nearest to the Jewish heart. Like His predecessor, John the Baptist, Christ regarded the boasted descent from Abraham as a matter of very trifling moment. It is to man as man, irrespective of race, religion, and nationality, that Christ appeals. The relation of man to God as a reasoning being to his Maker provides the basis of His religion, while the equally imperative fact of every

man sharing with his fellows common feelings and duties supplies the foundation of His ethics. A greater departure from the genius of Mosaism it is impossible to conceive—a greater advance in freedom, contrasting it with Jewish dogma, it is difficult to imagine. In every case the legitimate outcome of dogmatic teaching and usage is exclusiveness. All privileged creeds and systems of belief partake of the nature of close fences and high walls of separation, marking off clearly and definitively the chosen race from all other people in the world. With unimportant exceptions this was the aim of all Jewish teaching prior to Christ. No doubt in some cases this theocratic exclusiveness was the natural form which zeal for monotheism assumed. But in general it was more than this, it was a kind of caste-feeling based on the double ground of national descent and religious privilege. The development it attained in Mosaism, and the fact that of all intolerant religions Judaism yields to none in savage bigotry and fanaticism, is easily explicable, for the whole of its teaching, political and religious, was centred on this object. Its enemies were *ipso facto* the enemies of Jahve, and hence were denied the most ordinary and indisputable rights of humanity. Of this feeling the pages of Old Testament history supply abundant proofs. Few records of national life are more stained by bloodshed and inhumanity, while some of the prescriptions in their law, *e.g.* parts of the Book of Deuteronomy, are not to be exceeded for heartless cruelty by the maxims even of the Spanish Inquisition. The measure of this heavy yoke of religious dogma and political intolerance suggests the magnitude of the deliverance from it which was effected by Christ. His contemporaries, from their point of view, were right in regarding Him as a neologian and an unbeliever—a despiser of the law and religion they ascribed to Moses, and it was with that conviction that they put Him to death. Our subject, relating as it does to some of the great *Bahnbrecher* (Path-makers), to use an expressive German word, of the world, will confront us again and again with attempts in religion and philosophy similar in aim and method to Christ's opposition to Mosaism, endeavours to supplant sacerdotal domination by liberty, and dogmatic intolerance by comprehensive charity. So far, and speaking from a human point of view, Christ stands on the same platform with Sokrates, Sakya-Muni, Descartes, Luther, Wicliff, Bacon, and Locke, as an opposer of a tyrannical and narrow creed, and a preacher of religious and intellectual freedom.

II. In connection with Mosaism we must notice the effect of Christ's teaching on the conceptions it inculcated as to the nature

and providential dealings of God. Voltaire has ridiculed with well-deserved pleasantry the opinion that the stars, planets, satellites, &c. of remotest space were called into being for the especial and exclusive behoof of the denizens of our own little earth. In its ordinary form, I need not tell you, the notion is derived from Judaism. To the Jew God was, as has been observed,¹ 'a kind of upper rabbi of the heavens.' The end and aim of His existence was the material welfare of the chosen people. His creation, His government, His laws, were adapted for their sole advantage; the confusion and discomfiture of their enemies forming a necessary part of this Divine design. Not that the Jew regarded the Divine government as moral in any broad sense of the term, as that his nationality and religion were conceived by him in the light of ethical claims on God's bounty. To be a Jew was to be the possessor inherently of qualities not only equivalent to but far surpassing any combination of moral excellences in a Gentile. Cherishing this belief, it is hardly wonderful that he should have regarded all the operations of Nature as intended to promote his own welfare. The prosperity of the Gentile was a direct insult to the circumcised child of Abraham, and a reproach to the Jahve of the Jews; while national defeat or calamity was regarded as a forfeiture of pledges made by God to their fathers. Numerous are the appeals in the Old Testament writings to the exclusively Jewish sympathies by which Jahve was supposed to be animated, while attempts are perpetually made to arouse His anger and jealousy against their enemies, by adducing the satirical reflections these might make on the incapacity and worthlessness of the Jewish Deity—'Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God?' I am far from supposing that some of the more thoughtful minds among the nation did not occasionally break through this unworthy prejudice, that the startling incongruity of a Ruler of the Universe whose administration was directed solely to the well-being of that infinitesimal portion of its inhabitants that dwelt between Dan and Beersheba, did not sometimes make itself felt. In a preceding chapter we saw that this belief had been called into question by some of the Psalmists, and that the suggestion had presented itself of a Divine government not exclusively dominated by Jewish, or, so far as temporal rewards and punishments, the only ones known by the Jews, were concerned, even by ethical considerations. 'For he seeth that wise men also die as well as the ignorant and foolish,' &c. Still, as a popular

¹ Gfrörer, *Jahrhundert des Heils*, i. p. 123.

conviction—a dogma which lay at the root of all Jewish theology and patriotism, it had survived the attacks of embryo Skeptics, and the more potent suggestions of doubt that a long course of national calamities and sufferings could not but have inspired. At the time of Christ, and through the influence and teaching of Scribes and Pharisees, no belief was more fervently cherished than that which made the operations of Nature and the destinies of humanity dependent upon Palestinian and Jewish considerations. Against this dogma—this petty, unworthy conception of the Divine dealings—Jesus Christ set Himself with unmistakable distinctness. It was wrong as a law of Nature, wrong as a principle assumed to regulate the fates of nations. The stress the Jew placed on his nationality Jesus Christ laid upon moral and spiritual qualities, irrespective of birth or race. The Jewish emphasis on religious observances Christ tried to divert to human duties. So far from the operations of Nature being determined by ethical merit or demerit, they were clearly governed by general and impartial considerations. The idea of God which He promulgated was the universal Father, who caused His ‘sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and sent rain on the just and on the unjust.’ That the laws of Nature, though subordinated to the creative will, are in their operation immutable, general, and impartial, is affirmed with as great force and distinctness as could have been expected from a doctrine so novel and so opposed to popular ideas. When the Jews asked of the man born blind, ‘Who hath sinned, this man or his parents?’ Christ’s answer was, ‘Neither hath this man sinned nor his parents, but that the works of God might be manifested in him.’ The Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices in some popular *émeute*—those on whom the Tower of Siloam fell—the victims, *i.e.* of human and political as well as of natural accidents, are equally declared not to have been sinners above all others for that they suffered such things. The immutability of Nature’s processes is urged as illustrating an analogous congruity and necessary sequence in moral actions. ‘By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?’ The law of cause and effect, or the usual order discernible in natural phenomena, which was recognised by the Jews in respect of the weather, He bids them apply to the spiritual and moral order of the universe. So far from the Divine government being limited to the well-being of the Jews, there was no part of Nature where its operation might not be discerned. It was God who fed the birds of the air, who painted the lily in splendour rivalling the glory of Solomon, and

it was solely by the operation of His laws that a sparrow fell to the ground.

The doctrine of Christ as to the persistency and immutability of the laws that govern the universe found expression also in His devotional language and the terms in which He described His mission. To the ordinary Jew the will of God was a personal anthropomorphic volition, having for its object the material prosperity of himself and his nation. All the wonderful events in the history of his race were assumed to be so many proofs and illustrations of this fact. The Jew would have had no scruple in trying to divert this stream of omnipotent energy to his own private purposes as often as he thought fit, were it not for his firm persuasion that God had already pledged Himself to exercise it on his sole behalf. As it was, he had no compunction in invoking supernatural interposition in all the great emergencies of his life. The genius of ordinary Jewish piety was, therefore, 'Let my will, or the will of my nation, the chosen people, be done.' With Christ, on the other hand, God's will, directed by wisdom and goodness, is supreme, immutable, and eternal. No thought was dearer to the Jew than the repeated and authoritative manifestations of Divine power which distinguished the national history, and which so clearly marked his people out as the prime favourites of Heaven; but on all these points Christ maintains a remarkable and significant silence. The law of God is not to be limited by distinctions of race, or the boundaries of a single territory. It must needs be done not in Palestine only, but on earth. Hence the highest aim of every man's religion is not to thwart, but in due reverence and fealty to submit himself to that will. Christ proclaimed His mission as not to do His own will, but the will of Him who sent Him, and the simple form of devotion He commended to His disciples was but an elaborate, manifold rendering of the main petition of His life, 'Not my will, but Thine be done.' I am aware of the similarity of this acquiescent mood with the passive fatalistic character of Orientals in general. What the Western Aryan ascribes to the irreversible laws and processes of Nature, the Eastern assigns to Fate, a predetermined and irresistible destiny. But the conception of Christ is based on other foundations; it is the inherent supremacy of the Divine will, which limits without destroying the freedom of human action. Moreover, the idea, regarded as a principle of indolence and abject fatalism, is one which has mainly emerged in the Semitic character since the time of Christ, and is due in no small measure to the spread of Moham-medanism. The Jew of the Old Testament, as I have said,

esteemed the supreme law or volitional energy of the universe, together with its manifold applications, as adapted for himself, and for that very reason was continually desirous of witnessing some of the supernatural occurrences which he regarded as its highest mode of manifestation. No event was so insignificant, no phenomenon of nature so trivial, that the Jew could not find in it traces of such personal or national application. When, therefore, Christ established the Divine will as a general law infinitely superior to individual or national interests, when He asserted it as automatic, omniscient, and supreme, He distinctly contravened the popular dogma; while He stigmatized the national eagerness of the Jews to witness miracles—the signs of Divine power—as the mark of unbelievers, an evil and adulterous generation.

Nor is Christ's teaching less explicit on the relation of the Divine government to the Jews considered as a Church and nation. This relation forms the subject-matter of some three-fourths of His parables; indeed, the fact that it is never put forth in a distinct form, but conveyed in the indirect, suggestive, half-ironical¹ manner which teachers of all ages employ for the inculcation of unwelcome truth, is a significant token of its divergency from current Jewish belief. Conceding from the ordinary standpoint a priority in respect of the religious teaching of the chosen people, Christ nevertheless maintains that such prior claim cannot be understood as impugning the justice or impartiality of God. To all nations and races He stands in an equally close, if not identical, relation, and judges them all from the same moral and spiritual standpoint. Hence the last labourers sent into the vineyard receive the same wages as those first employed; indeed, the last may turn out to be first and the first last. So, the younger son who has squandered his equal original moiety of the paternal inheritance in riotous living, is not only assigned filial rights, but his subsequent return is welcomed by the father and made an occasion of joy and festivity. Thus did Christ oppose Himself to current Jewish theology considered as an interpretation of nature and of Jewish history. In each case the teaching He inculcated was free, broad, and expansive. It was a veritable protest against Jewish dogmatism, exclusiveness, and fanaticism. Being thus anti-dogmatic, it was *ipso facto* anti-Jewish, and His narrow-minded countrymen were undoubtedly correct in regarding it as free-thinking, incredulous, unpatriotic, and destructive.

¹ This appears to be the character of the reason assigned by Christ for His persistent teaching by parables, 'that hearing they might hear and not understand, and seeing they might see and not perceive.'

III. But there was one popular conviction of the Jews exceeding all the rest in the passionate intensity with which it was held—I mean, belief in the Messiah and the approach of a Messianic kingdom. Though indistinctly foreshadowed in patriotic hymns and prophetic oracles prior to the Captivity, that event imparted a new and vivid significance to the national expectation. At the time of Christ it had become the leading conviction of the Jews.¹ Nor is it difficult to see why it should have thus come to attain such importance. It appealed at once to their patriotism and religion—the motive influences by which they had ever been most powerfully dominated. It was the event needed to fulfil the promises made to the fathers—the triumphant realization of centuries of pious expectation—the climax of the life both of the nation and the theocracy. Now, without examining in detail the various forms which this belief assumed at different epochs, and by various schools and parties at the same epoch, its general and popular characteristics in the time of Christ may be thus briefly summarized:²

1. The belief referred primarily to temporal and national blessings.

2. When it specifically included religious advantages, these were interpreted as the diffusion of Judaism among the countries of the world.

3. The Messiah was to be a prince of a certain royal dynasty.

4. The Messianic conquest was to be effected by force of arms and material prowess, not by persuasion and moral influences.

5. The Messianic kingdom was to be earthly, including, according to some authorities, all the kingdoms of the world.³

6. The Messianic worship was to be mainly sacrificial and ceremonial.

Such was the faith—I might say the Messianic creed—which, though dreamy and unsubstantial in its origin, constituted the chief dogmatic teaching of the nation in the time of Christ. Although prospective in its scope, and possessing little adequate foundation in the past experiences of the nation, few creeds have ever wielded a more potent influence, or manifested a more exuberant vitality. Probably none ever equalled it in popularity,

¹ Cf. Keim, *Jesus of Nazara*, Eng. trans. i. 322.

² It will readily be understood that no attempt is here made to do more than to adduce the salient features of the doctrine considered in their bearing on the teaching of Christ. Comp. *Il Messia secondo Gli Ebrei di D. Castelli*, pp. 248-77, for a fuller treatment of the Messianic period.

³ Castelli, *op. cit.* pp. 254, 275.

in the largest sense of the term, or in the power of generating a sublime fanaticism, against which excessive tortures and a martyr's death were utterly powerless. In the time we are speaking of, the expectation of the Christ, the circumstances attending His coming, His royal descent, His personal characteristics, the ultimate success after terrible calamities of His half-warlike, half-prophetic mission, the discomfiture and disgrace of the national foes, the complete triumph and indefinite extension of the Messianic power—these were ordinary topics of conversation in most Jewish households from one end of the land to the other. A religious movement or reformation which refused to take account of this immense body of national faith and expectation must clearly have been stillborn. There is at least no doubt that this belief forms a powerful element in the teaching of Christ. Humanly speaking, it contributed to mould and direct it, though I have no wish to call it the only, or even the chief, initiatory motive of His mission. Moreover, it presented a soil in which every germ of Messianic teaching must needs have fructified to a greater or less extent. Hence we find Christ appealing from the beginning to the end of His mission to certain aspects of Messianic faith. On the first occasion of His teaching, *e.g.* in the synagogue of Nazareth, He called the attention of His audience to the moral and spiritual work of the Messiah as it was described by the 2nd Isaias, and claimed those qualities for His own mission. The general theme of His earliest preaching was, 'Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.' He adopted the designations by which the Messiah should be known; but, it is significant, only the most general and humanitarian of them—I mean 'the Son of Man.' The titles of the kingdom of Heaven, the kingdom of God, which He applied to the community He purposed to found, were also recognized names of the Messianic kingdom. And on one particular occasion, He distinctly termed the acknowledgment of His Messianic claims on the part of Peter as a revelation from God. There is so far no doubt of Jesus Christ claiming to be regarded as the Messiah, and His social and religious polity to be defined as 'the kingdom of God.' What is noteworthy is that the claim is nowhere made openly or in express terms. On the contrary, the Apostles present at the confession of Peter are strictly charged to tell no man that He was the Christ. However, when accused of having set up a claim to be King of the Jews, He repudiated the accusation in the remarkable words, 'My kingdom is not of this world,' &c. The reason of this apparent inconsistency is the point on which I lay stress. His reluctance to assume the Messianic

character, as conceived by the popular expectation of the Jews, proceeds from the feeling that the conception He had formed of it differed materially from that which His countrymen generally cherished. In other words, instead of opposing the dogma, He attempts to modify it. Preserving the names, titles, and definitions so long connected with the Messianic faith, He assigns them new significations. He endeavours to direct the ancient hopes into fresh channels, and to suggest new realizations. He tries to divest ancient Judaism of all its most dogmatic, exclusive, and intolerant features, and to give it a freedom, expansiveness, and spirituality of meaning which was just as much a virtual abrogation of the old belief as His interpretation of Mosaism was a tacit abrogation of the old law. Thus, preserving the title of 'kingdom of Heaven' as the name of the society He came to form, He declares that the object of His kingdom was not territorial conquest and national aggrandizement, but peace, virtue, and truth. The methods of its propagation were not force and compulsion, but reason and persuasion. The scope of its operation was not Palestinian and Judaic, but cosmopolitan and universal. Its principle of authority was not a written law, but the human conscience. Its worship was not ceremonial and sacrificial, but moral and spiritual. Its requirements, claims to admission, &c. were all ethical. There was thus hardly one single phase of current Messianic hopes which did not suffer a complete change, if not inversion, from Jesus Christ's teaching. And the changes, be it observed, are all in the same direction; the aim is clearly enfranchisement and spiritual freedom. The object is to construe a belief in its most inclusive not exclusive, acceptance—to formulate a creed in its widest and most comprehensive terms—to denationalize a purely local faith by making it as universal as the limits of the world and of humanity.

Moreover, Christ's purely spiritual conception of the Messianic kingdom and its ruler is further shown by the slight value He placed on some of the material qualifications His countrymen thought inseparable from it. No point in the personal history of Messiah was deemed of more importance than His actual descent from the family of David. But not only was Christ insensible to any claims He might have had on this score, but He distinctly subordinates the physical ties of family to spiritual kinship. Indeed, in His argument with the Pharisees, He seems to throw a doubt on the necessity of the Messiah's descent from David. His genealogy, on which two of the Evangelists lay such stress, is nowhere alluded to by Himself. His birth at Bethlehem, 'David's

royal city,' unknown as it was to His immediate followers,¹ is so far from being noticed by Himself that He continually speaks of the district round the Sea of Galilee as His own country; while instead of claiming homage and honour on account of His Messianic office, He says, 'He came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.' So far was He also from cherishing the national pride becoming the 'Hope of Israel,' that He included Gentiles as equal sharers of God's promises, placing them even above Jews in point of spiritual merit. Indeed, His frequent commendations of aliens and heretics, as, *e.g.* the Samaritans, and His sitting down to meat with publicans and sinners—outcasts from the nation and the theocracy—gave continual umbrage to the Scribes and Pharisees.

It would be unreasonable to expect that Christ's neologianism as to the central belief of His nation would not be recognised and bitterly resented. Even His immediate followers failed utterly to perceive the scope, spirituality, and grandeur of the new faith. There is, indeed, a profound disparity between the conceptions of Christ and His Apostles as to the attributes of the Messianic kingdom. While the teacher contemplated a spiritual sovereignty—a kingdom in the hearts of men—His sensuously-minded followers were debating questions of precedence in a visible and terrestrial dominion. While the accessories of Christ's reign were heavenly and spiritual, the Apostles contemplated the splendour and magnificence of an Oriental Court. While they strained their gaze watching for the premonitory signs of its advent, Christ repressed their curiosity, asserting that it came not by observation, and proclaiming its actual existence within them. Similarly, the lessons taught by the parables of the kingdom are religious and moral truths already in existence, and have rarely an exclusively prospective signification. I do not mean to say that Christ never expressed Himself in the eschatological language which occupies so prominent a part of the utterances assigned Him in the Gospels; but, to my mind, every principle of consistency, both of character and teaching, would tend to make the meaning He Himself would have attributed to every such genuine apocalypse spiritual and ethical rather than material and Jewishly Messianic. And if His own disciples failed to recognise in their Master's teachings the views generally held by their nation; if the kingdom of Heaven of which He spake seemed to them to lack the gorgeous colouring with which national hopes and enthusiasm had invested it, we could hardly expect more insight or a greater degree of enlighten-

¹ Cf. John vii. 41, 42.

ment from casual hearers. Nor can we feel surprised at the doubt which expressed itself in the question, 'Art Thou He that should come, or look we for another?' The Scribes and Pharisees were fully cognizant of the discrepancy between the popular Messianic creed and the spiritual teaching of Christ. An ideal Messiah after the national mind must needs have sided with the great theocratic and national party, whereas the teaching of Christ ran directly counter to all its religious and political preconceptions, as I shall soon have to notice. Still there was enough material in the overt utterances and parables of Christ, in perpetual allusions to the 'kingdom of Heaven,' to enable them to base such an accusation as would be likely to awaken the jealousy of the Roman power, and so to procure His death. This they accordingly accomplished. Christ suffered ostensibly as 'King of the Jews;' in reality, however, He was as much the victim of sacerdotal fanaticism and dogmatic prejudice as Sokrates, Bruno, Servetus, or any other martyr to Free-thought.

IV. The relation of Christ to the dogmatic teaching of His time is further exhibited in His behaviour to the two great Jewish sects. Indeed, for the purposes of our inquiry, the main tenets, principles, and tendencies of these rival parties are admirably adapted to represent the real character of Christ's teaching; for while the one is dogmatic, sectarian, and rigidly exclusive, the other is negative, indifferent, and Skeptical. It is clear, therefore, that when we find Christ in distinct antagonism to the former rather than the latter; when He impugns in the strongest terms their ideas of religion and morality; when He departs somewhat from His mild and gentle demeanour in addressing them; when, moreover, the avowed reasons for the severity of His language are the natural but immoral fruits of their dogmatic tendencies, we may accept it as a fair presumption that the spirit of Pharisaism, *i.e.* of sectarianism, bigotry, and exclusiveness, is that to which Christ was most opposed, and against which His teaching is chiefly directed. Nor is Christ's behaviour to this party less significant when we bear in mind the enormous ascendancy, in religion and in politics, it had acquired at the Christian era, and which in some respects is not unlike the sway of the Puritans during the Commonwealth. Such a supremacy is explicable on grounds partly general, partly Jewish. Among most races and in most religious communities excessive austerity and scrupulosity are accepted as decisive proofs of real spiritual superiority, unaffected sincerity, and moral purity, which may or may not coexist with them. The pretensions of the Pharisees in this

respect are set forth clearly in the New Testament, and are well canvassed by Christ. Moreover, their most characteristic doctrines were only developments of principles peculiarly belonging to Judaism, and hence were naturally grateful to the national and religious predilections of the chosen people. In opposing Himself, therefore, to Pharisaism, Jesus Christ may be said to have placed Himself in conflict with Judaism itself; with the national creed as it was then popularly understood, and with the general fabric—the prepossessions and interests—of the whole Jewish polity.

To the Pharisee and Scribe the main object of belief and life was the fulfilment of the law;¹ but not in its moral and spiritual, so much as in its dogmatic and ceremonial, aspect. Nor in the time of Christ was it simply the precepts of the Pentateuch, to which the Pharisee confessed his allegiance, so much as the large body of traditional accretion which had gradually grown round it. The Pharisees, like some religionists among ourselves, were persuaded of the truth of the 'doctrine of development;' but, as in the Romish Church, the newer outgrowths of their creed threatened to supersede and annihilate the earlier stages of which they were said to be natural developments.² These 'traditions of the elders' consisted of multifarious extensions and wire-drawn refinements of the ceremonial law,³ and constituted an enormous addition to the dogmatic superstructure of simple Mosaism. As Wellhausen remarks,⁴ 'the 613 commands of the written, and the thousand others of the unwritten, law left no room for the conscience.' Pharisaism in short manifested the inevitable tendency of all sacerdotalism, excessive ritual and dogma, to relegate ethical and human duties to a subordinate and inferior position. Now it was just this mischievous and immoral result of their teaching, veiled as it was under the specious pretext of religion, that roused the righteous indignation of Christ; for not only was it that natural and human obligations were postponed to the requirements of religious rites, but the postponement was deliberately made and authenticated by technical terms and authoritative formulæ. The word 'Korban,' *e.g.* which was assumed to free the unfilial child from the discharge of ordinary duties to his parents, is one of a whole class of terms employed by rabbinical authorities in the same sense, and which bear a striking similarity to the technicalities of Jesuit casuistry. And as new terms were devised to sanction clear infringements of

¹ Wellhausen, *Pharisäer und Sadducäer*, p. 21.

² Keim, *Jesus of Nazara*, Eng. trans. i. p. 335.

³ Keim, *ibid.* pp. 340, 341.

⁴ *Op. cit.* p. 19.

the moral law, so were old ones perverted to a similar unworthy purpose. The word 'righteousness,' *e.g.* among whose meanings as employed by the Hebrew prophets ethical excellence was always preponderant, was now referred to actions having a strictly religious bearing; thus 'making,' to use the words of Christ, 'the commandments of God of none effect by their tradition.'

Another chief principle of Pharisaic belief was stress upon authority—*i.e.* mere human extrinsic authority—the traditions of the elders, or the dicta of particular rabbis. We have seen what small respect Christ manifested for the revered authority of Moses when his precepts came into conflict with prescriptions and sanctities of a higher nature. He was hardly likely to show more deference to the leaders of rabbinical schools and parties; indeed, He does not scruple to turn both themselves and their pretensions into ridicule. No doubt one result of this perpetual appeal to party names and maxims on the part of the Pharisees was the production of a wonderfully disciplined *esprit de corps*, which manifested itself in times of national danger by deeds of the sublimest heroism. But the religious fanaticism which is meritorious in the battle-field is apt to prove an undesirable quality in times of peace; for those who are ready to fight to the death against foes whom they regard as enemies of God will be just as ready to denounce as hostile to God every imperfect acquiescence in their own fanaticism at other times. The leaders of the Pharisees were fully aware of the secret of success of all factions and parties, whether political or religious, *i.e.* suppressing the individual, his intellect, his conscience—in a word, his humanity, and rendering him the passive and servile agent of those who claim to prescribe his belief and direct his actions. The vehement efforts of the Pharisees to add to the strength of their party by making proselytes are noticed by Christ in terms of severe reprehension, which those who compass sea and land for a similar purpose in our own day would do well to call to mind. And as their zeal to extend the bounds of their sect thus assumed a harsh and intolerant aspect, so did their efforts to preserve what they were pleased to regard the orthodox purity of their faith. 'No characteristic of the Pharisees,' says Wellhausen, 'is more prominent in the New Testament than their inquisitorial conduct, their perpetual attempts to dominate and control, the effect of which was the more repellent because it was justified by no official authority, and was not extorted by prophetic enthusiasm.'¹ Christ and His disciples were frequently the victims of this zealotry and espionage; indeed, the normal

¹ Wellhausen, *op. cit.* p. 20.

attitude of the party to Himself is sufficiently indicated by the oft-recurring expression, 'They watched Him.' With a keenness and persistency only acquired in the school of religious intolerance, they canvassed every act and word of the great Teacher whose pure doctrine and practice formed such a complete contrast to theirs. 'This man,' said they, 'is not of God because He keepeth not the Sabbath-day'—a principle which, making ceremonial observance the sole test of religious worth, may be regarded as a distinctive feature of religious dogma everywhere. His sitting down to meat with publicans and sinners was a misdemeanour of the highest kind, protesting, as it did, against both their theocratic and national exclusiveness. They were careful to note other departures, whether from the law of Moses or from the tradition of the Elders. So they expostulated with Christ on His neglect to wash before eating, on His refusal to fast, His non-observance of the Sabbath, His neglect in the matter of meats and drinks, and His general indifference to formal rites and ceremonies of the same kind. In a word, they treated Christ as the Inquisition would have treated Him, or any disciple of His who was careful to imitate His life and words. They first persecuted and watched Him, and then they put Him to death.

With the Sadducees Jesus Christ, as a popular teacher, does not come so immediately into contact as He does with the Pharisees. While the latter were popular and influential, the former were a small and unpopular section of the Jews, though making up in wealth and culture for their lack of numbers. I have termed the Sadducees rationalistic and semi-Skeptical; such, at least, seems their general character. To the Pharisees they stood somewhat in the relation of Protestants and Free-thinkers. They opposed themselves to the traditions and amplifications which the Scribes added to the old law, just as the Reformers opposed the additions which Romanism had made to an earlier and purer Christianity. They refused to allow a development-theory of religious faith, and rejected all the dogmas which the Pharisees for some centuries had been superadding to the ancient creed. Thus they declared their disbelief in a future life, in a resurrection and final judgment, in angels, spirits—in a word, in an immaterial existence. For this reason they have been likened to the Epikoureans, and no doubt they possess several characteristics in common with that sect, especially as to their mode of life, and their indifference to all interests except such as were personal and terrestrial. If, however, in comparison with the Pharisees the range of their belief was narrow, their stress on the dogma that remained was proportionably greater; for just as the

Protestants of the Reformation compensated for their rejection of Catholic dogma by a more stringent attention to the written Word, thus exchanging their ecclesiolatry for bibliolatry, so, as a consequence of greater stress on the written law, the Sadducees were less inclined than the Pharisees to relax the severity of its prescriptions. Hence they refused to sanction any modification of the old law of retaliation, 'An eye for an eye,' &c.

There is no doubt that Christ in His teaching contravenes indirectly the tenets and opinions of the Sadducees, though it is observable that He hardly ever mentions them by name, and never speaks of them in the bitterly hostile tone He employs of the Pharisees. Thus, in opposing the law of Moses, in advocating a human interpretation of its precepts, in preferring the spirit to the letter of Mosaism, in declaring the temporary and accidental nature of certain portions of the law, Christ clearly stood in a directly polemical relation to the Sadducees; while in His argument with them on the subject of the resurrection He reproaches them with ignorance of the meaning of their own law and a Skeptical forgetfulness of the power of God. Still, as I have remarked, His relation to them was of a less hostile kind than was His attitude to the Pharisees. What He would probably have found most worthy of reprehension had His connection with them been more intimate, would have been their selfish, cynical indifference to the real welfare of the people,¹ and their want of spirituality and devotion; in a word, the unsympathetic coldness and listlessness of their feelings, and their consequent negligence of obvious affections and duties both towards God and man.

What, then, it is time to ask, were the ultimate principles to which Christ appealed? We have seen that the authority His countrymen based on the written law of Moses was not only ignored but disputed by Him. Not only was it *said* by them of old time but it was *written*, so that the newer commandment quite superseded the old. Besides, the written law being thus partially abrogated, the personal authority of its interpreters, the Scribes and Pharisees, was necessarily jeopardized. Nor was the newer tradition of the elders treated with more deference. In short, the whole fabric of Jewish dogma was completely shattered by the purer and more spiritual teaching of Christ. Now the newer principles, viz. those to which Christ appealed in opposition to Judaism, seem to have been, in the order of their importance, the following :

1. Personal conviction, or the human conscience.
2. Experience, when the laws of nature are in question.

¹ Wellhausen, p. 73, and Comp. on the Sadducees, vol. i. p. 405.

3. Himself, not as superior to, but as the embodiment of, truth.

1. Nothing is more noteworthy in the teaching of Christ than the noble fearlessness with which He appealed to the feelings and instincts of His hearers. The main object of Judaism, exaggerated by its later development of Pharisaism, had been to establish a spiritual despotism in which the consciousness—mental and emotional—of each individual was merged in the general interests and policy of the theocracy. Christ, on the contrary, appealed to the Jew as a constitutive portion of humanity, as possessing intellect, feelings, and judgment of his own, as endowed with the power and privilege of employing them on his own behalf, and as owing no responsibility for such employment save only to God and his own conscience. Hence there are few of Christ's teachings which are not adapted for men of all creeds and all races, few so saturated by local and Jewish colouring that they might not have emanated from any comprehensive teacher of humanity. In the place of creed and dogma Christ proclaimed the sanctity of the individual conscience. Instead of outward ceremonies—badges of conformity to an externally imposed faith—He required purity of heart, holiness and self-denial in life. Instead of a local deity, conceived under local and national forms, Christ appealed to the deity within; for with Him God was spirit, and required to be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Christ therefore sets the moral conscience against Jewish dogma and formalism¹—the individual against the theocratic community; and so doing proclaims His teaching as a gospel of liberty, and indicates the inalienable independence and supremacy of the human conscience. Nor, in truth, was any other course possible; there was no other authority to which, from His own point of view, He could appeal. Even allowing that His mission may have been authenticated to the sensuous minds of His hearers by His wonderful cures, it is clear that this attestation was disapproved by Himself, partly, perhaps, for the reason that similar thaumaturgic deeds were performed by other Jews, but chiefly, no doubt, from the fact that no miracle *can* be a satisfactory test of religious and moral truth. Here the conscience, the moral instincts of man, must stand alone. What, *e.g.* but the instinctive perception of the true scope of moral injunctions could decide between the letter of the old command—'Ye have heard it said by them of old time'—and the spirit of the newer precept—'I say unto you'? What but the instinctive sense of veracity could have determined in the clash of rival teachings between Himself and the Scribes that the inherent

¹ Cf. Volkmar, *Die Religion Jesu*, p. 71.

truth of His words was superior to the borrowed authority of His adversaries? On what, again, could the injunction to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees have rested if not on the natural conviction of His hearers that hypocrisy and disingenuousness could only render unworthy service to the God of truth? But I need not adduce further examples of a truth so generally allowed. Every man who has examined for himself the ultimate basis on which Christ places His religion must see that it rests on the free and undogmatic foundation of the individual conscience.¹ This is further confirmed by the appeals He makes to His hearers to exercise their own understanding and judgment on the truths He lays before them. The oft-recurring 'He that hath ears to hear let him hear' is only another mode of appealing to the individual understanding of each of His auditors. 'If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness,' &c. is a clear assertion of such a 'verifying faculty,' and the possibility of perverting its decisions. So He asks His followers, 'Are ye also yet without understanding?' while of the multitude who exercised foresight as to the weather, but were unable to extend it to other subjects, He demands, 'Why do ye not of your own selves judge what is right?'

Thus, in His appeal to the personal consciousness as the final test of truth, Christ, humanly speaking, stands on the same footing as Sokrates, Descartes, and many other reformers, both in religion and philosophy. The commencement of human freedom, considered as a protest against the intellectual or religious slavery of dogma, consists in individualism. Liberty begins by a declaration of independence for every thinking, reasonable being. I am of course far from saying that there is not a point where the individual, for his own best interests, becomes merged in the community; and I maintain that Skeptics have sometimes carried their independence to an extravagant and libertine excess. Still, in the general interests of humanity, the mischiefs accruing from the abuse of freedom seem to me less than those which have obtained from its excessive limitation. Nor is Christ's position as a preacher of human freedom affected by the fact that He touches the question exclusively on its religious side; for it was just on this side that the tyranny of Judaism was most oppressive. Besides which, the innate freedom of the human conscience, once it is fully declared in the region of religious faith, will have no difficulty in avowing itself in other directions, where there is a danger of mental slavery. It is this truth which seems asserted by the remarkable words of

¹ Comp. on this subject A. Coquerel, *Le Christianisme Expérimental*, p. 265 and *passim*.

St. Paul, 'He that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet himself is judged of no man.' Indeed, it is in religion that excessive dogma is at once most easily engendered, most hard to be dislodged, and consequently where its influence when evil is most likely to be especially pernicious. Certainly no man who has achieved, to a greater or less extent, freedom from this form of dogma, will ever be likely to submit in servile and blind acquiescence to the authoritative dicta of another mode of thought, or the mere *ipse dixit* of any philosopher. In freeing, therefore, the religious conscience, Christ virtually proclaimed the freedom of the intellect as well. In this sense Christianity may be said to have been a propædeutic for modern thought, and its founder standing relatively to us between the old world of Judaism and the modern world of science and Free-thought—initiated, in reality, the process which has been termed 'Japhetizing the Semitic.' It would take us much too long to consider any of the various interesting directions of thought of which I have here indicated the starting-point, *e.g.* the extent to which the spirit of Christianity, operating even in the chains of sacerdotalism and ecclesiastical tyranny, has indirectly aided in various ways the sacred cause of human freedom. . . . I will therefore proceed to notice the second principle to which Christ appealed, I mean the operations of nature. I have, however, already dwelt on Christ's affirmation of the continuity of natural laws as antagonistic to Jewish belief. Here, therefore, I need only insist, as a general fact, on the beneficial effect of nature-studies in counteracting extreme speculative dogma. How this has been verified in modern history is a truth needing neither statement nor proof. When, therefore, it is urged, as it is sometimes, that an inherent and irreconcilable antagonism exists between Christianity and the most assured results of scientific research, it is important to remember that the discrepancy does not exist between modern science and the teachings of Christ. It is true, science and natural philosophy, as we understand them, were subjects lying far outside the horizon of the general Semitic intellect. If, therefore, we possess in the words of Christ, as I maintain we do, direct appeals, few in number but explicit in meaning, to natural phenomena, this is as much as we have any reasonable right to expect; enough, and more than enough, to warrant the opinion that Christianity as taught by Him does not place a barrier to scientific research. For my own part, I would go a step further. Even if Christ had never appealed to nature at all, if He had not once drawn men's attention to the unchangeable attributes of nature's laws, if He had never suggested analogies between natural and spiritual processes, if He

had never pointed out the equable and impartial character of God's dealings; yet, if He had only insisted, as He did insist, on the primary importance of truth; if truth was for Him the basis of freedom and sanctification; if it was the object of His mission and the witness of His death, that single fact hallows and consecrates all search after it, no matter in what department of knowledge. For that reason alone we may say with Augustine and some others of the Fathers, 'Whatever is true is Christian,' as well as, 'Whatever is Christian is true,' or, employing Erigena's method of putting it, 'True philosophy is true religion, and, conversely, true religion is true philosophy.'¹

3. That Christ claimed for Himself distinct authority as a teacher of truth is an undoubted fact, but it is important to observe that the grounds of His claim were derivative and extrinsic rather than personal and inherent. He makes no attempt, *e.g.* as a defender of Christianity would make in our own day, to infer the truth of His words from the wondrous events of His life. He does not even adopt the 'evidential' mode of proving His religion. He displays a marked carelessness in meeting ordinary objections to the truth of His teaching, as if its essentials were too direct, immediate, and intuitive to need elaborate ratiocination. The bases on which He founds His appeal are—1st, its own truth; 2nd, its harmony with the will of His Father. Now when a teacher appeals to truth as the justification and sanction of his doctrines, it is clear that he intends these doctrines to be received only so far as they are compatible with truth. That this was Christ's own view, and that He regarded His claim to belief as based upon His hearers' perception of His veracity, is fully shown by the passage, 'Which of you convicteth Me of error? and if I say the truth, why do ye not believe Me?' where the implication clearly is that the faith of the hearer is commensurate only with the credibility of the speaker. So far is He also from arrogating for Himself, or for His words, an immunity from criticism, so far from attempting to coerce His hearers' minds with arbitrary dicta, possessing no other principle of authority but the fact of being His own utterances, that He is careful to disclaim this personal ascendancy. 'If I bear witness of Myself,' He says, with an emphasis which shows He had never consciously done so, 'My witness is not true.' Again, 'If I honour Myself, My honour is nothing; it is My Father that honoureth Me.' 'He that is of the truth,' He said before Pilate, 'heareth My voice.'

If the objection be made that Christ assumes necessarily the position of a dogmatic teacher in professing to deliver the words of

¹ Scotus, *De Prædest.* chap. i.

God, I reply, such is no doubt the case. He reveals the will of His Father, the only source of truth; and whatever assumption of dogmatic authority belongs to such a high position pertains unquestionably to Christ. Nevertheless, we must remember: 1. That every teacher, no matter on what subject, assumes *ex officio* a position of superiority over his hearers. The bare fact that he has truth to communicate posits a deficiency in them and the power of satisfying it in him. It would be absurd to suppose that Christ, any more than any other teacher, had the least doubt of the truth He came to deliver; so that the most that can be said of His dogmatic position is that it differs from that of ordinary teachers in the pre-eminently high sanction on which it is based. But: 2. Even this necessarily dogmatic attitude is deprived of imperious or tyrannical insistency by Christ's own appeal to the conscience of His hearers. Spiritual like intellectual truth presupposes, not a passive receptivity, which is only an intellectual paralysis unable to discern between truth and error, but a power of discrimination, a verifying faculty, which gives to truth whatever sanctity it can possess, without which, indeed, no truth as such could be communicable any more than light could be manifested to a blind man. When, therefore, Christ appeals to the consciousness of His hearers for an attestation of His truth, as, *e.g.* 'If I do not the works of the Father, believe Me not; but if I do, though ye believe not Me, believe the works,' &c., the verification demanded clearly implies the power of testing the divine nature of the Revelation He communicated to men. Hence even in asserting His doctrine as the truth of God there really is no dogmatism, in the common sense of the word; the final decision is left to the supreme arbitrament of the human conscience.

A further proof of the undogmatic character of Christ's teaching is found in the fact that He left behind Him no writing of any kind, no authoritative formula which might be accepted as a basis of speculative belief; and this omission is the more remarkable because it is not supplied, so far as the evangelists state, by His oral teaching. We have nothing, *e.g.* which stands in the same relation to Christian faith as the Lord's Prayer does to Christian devotion, or the two great commandments to Christian practice. Now, on the hypothesis that besides the faith He asked for Himself, *i.e.* in those truths of His teaching which approved themselves to the consciences of His hearers, He also insisted, or intended to insist, on a declaration of belief in a series of difficult metaphysical propositions, such an omission is quite unaccountable. Nor is it easier to understand why, assuming the society Christ endeavoured to

establish to have been designed by Him after the model of an earthly sovereignty, administered by an hierarchy, held together by an elaborate system of dogma and ritual, He left no verbal or written code of regulations for its constitution and government. Whereas, on the theory I hold to be true, that Christ's prospective community—His Messianic kingdom—was intended to be purely spiritual, independent of local boundaries and political powers, and yet by the simplicity of its creed and worship capable of assuming any organization that might be best adapted to the habits and instincts of its adherents, and that left room for the exercise of the piety and humanitarianism which formed its elementary principles—these omissions on the part of its founder, this plasticity in the original constitution of the Christian Church, is readily understood.

Nor is the stress laid by Christ on ethical conduct unimportant as indicating His opinion of dogma. The history of individuals and of ecclesiastical communities supplies us with ample proof, not only of the deterioration of moral character, the religious selfishness, the lack of comprehensiveness and human sympathy, produced by excessive dogma, but also of the diminished regard for practical human duty which is its inevitable accompaniment. In the history of Christianity, *e.g.* the periods when articles of faith have been most exacting, when the attention of the Church has been especially concentrated on theological speculation, doctrinal systematizing, and dogmatic insistency, have been precisely the periods when human virtues and duties, charity, kindness, and sympathy, have been most defective. Hence, if it is true that too great emphasis on the performance of ethical duties tends to secularize the conscience, it is equally true, and the results are infinitely more mischievous, that too great stress on assumed divine obligations in the matter of creed and ritual—an exuberant other-worldliness, in short—renders it narrow, inhuman, and intolerably selfish. The Pharisaism against which Christ contended was suffering from this very defect. Religionism and assumed service to God had completely ousted morality and duty to man. Christ protested vigorously against this inversion of the true relations of human and divine obligations, disguised as it was under the specious plea of religious zeal. He distinctly declared that human obligation was not only equal to, in practice it was higher than, religious, *i.e.* ritual, service. The aim of all Christian effort He asserted to consist, not in theory and speculation, but in action. He was the genuine Christian, who, above all things, did the will of His Father. All His precepts were in a word concerned, not with creeds and formularies, but with unselfish deeds and holy lives.

Nor is it of less importance to note that though Christ's utterances comprise many and bitter reproaches of the hypocrisy, immorality, &c., of the Pharisees, there is no word which reprehends exclusively any irregularity in their speculative belief as such. Nor do we find that, although Christ is exhibited in relation to all the diversities of faith or non-faith then existing in Palestine—the irreligiousness of the Roman, the idolatry of the Syro-Phœnician, the dissent of the Samaritan, the unbelief of the Sadducee, as well as the rigid orthodoxy of which Pharisaism claimed the exclusive monopoly—He considered those differences in themselves as morally culpable, or displayed the least wish to resent them. His argument with the Sadducees as to their disbelief in the resurrection might at first sight seem an exception to this rule, but it is observable that their dilemma was suggested by themselves, and that the utmost that Christ says in reply is that they ignored their scripture, and the Divine Omnipotence. As an illustration of the difference in treatment of the same shortcoming, contrast Christ's mild expostulation with the Sadducees for their absolute denial of the resurrection, and the attitude of St. Paul to Hymenæus, who did not deny the resurrection, but said that it was passed. The apostle did not hesitate to anathematize and excommunicate, to deliver him over to Satan, that he might learn not to blaspheme.¹ Moreover, the Messianic judgment of Christ, perhaps the eschatological passage of all those attributed to Him which bears the closest affinity to the spirit of His teaching, is based not upon speculative but upon practical merits and demerits. Not because they have refused belief in this or the other religious tenet, but because they have neglected the Christian rule of charity, is retribution awarded to the unrighteous.

What, then, we are now in a position to ask, is the relation of Christianity in its first pure form—the teaching of Christ Himself—to Free-thought and impatience of dogma? Clearly, so far from prohibiting, it distinctly sanctions both one and the other. To the dogmatism of Scribes and Pharisees it opposes the freedom of the gospel. Against the heavy yoke of traditionalism and ceremonial religion it places the light yoke of the Saviour. To external authority it prefers the human conscience. To ritualism it opposes

¹ On the other hand, Dr. Donaldson quotes, as an instance of the extraordinary liberty enjoyed by the early Church, the way in which St. Paul dealt with those in the Corinthian Church who denied the resurrection. He does not once threaten expulsion.—*Apostolical Fathers*, Introd. p. 65, note 9. But St. Paul's tolerance of theological adversaries is not always to be relied on. Comp. *e.g.* Gal. v. 12.

simplicity and spirituality of worship. Instead of a theocracy it attempts to found a Divine democracy. Against acts exclusively done for God it arrays services to be rendered to men. In short, there is hardly a single department of faith or practice on which Christ's teaching does not place the distinct and ineffaceable mark of freedom. With the ill-connotations which have in my opinion causelessly surrounded the term Skeptic, it would no doubt sound impious to confer that or any similar designation on Jesus Christ. Still this need not make us forget that had we lived in Palestine when He taught, and especially if we had been brought up in the prevailing traditions of Scribes and Pharisees, this is precisely the aspect His teaching would have borne to us. We should have felt that whatever the intrinsic merits of His doctrine, however excellent and sublime His ethical teaching, however pure, gentle, and humane His life, yet as regards the convictions then held by the Jews, His utterances had a distinctly solvent and subversive character. This was the very charge brought against Him, as it was against His apostles, as against Sokrates, as against Free-thinkers in every age, and without any exception. One result of our researches has been to show us the nature of the ideal community or Church founded by Christ. It consisted, as we have seen, rather of a certain spirit than any definite form. As St. Peter well described it, 'In every nation he that feareth God and doeth righteousness is accepted of Him.' The question remains, How far was this simple broad foundation of Christianity intended by its founder to be definitive? That question I, for my part, would deliberately answer in the affirmative. The opinion of most Christian Churches, that Christ's teaching was intentionally rudimentary and imperfect, that He came merely to lay the foundation of a formal hierarchical, dogma-making community, for whose evolution in doctrine and worship He gave *carte blanche*, I regard as not only unsubstantiated by any show of proof, but as mischievous in itself, and derogatory to the Great Teacher. Under no circumstances could it be admitted that the position, *e.g.* of the observer of the sayings of Christ, whom He compared to a man who had built his house upon the rock, was one which needed rectifying. Nor could it be acknowledged that the life of the earnest doer of the two great commandments, of which Christ affirmed 'This do and thou shalt live,' was an imperfect life, needing stimulation and modification by a corrupt and ambitious ecclesiasticism. To me it has always been an interesting speculation how far Christ, from His ideal standpoint, foresaw, humanly speaking, the subsequent development of the Church. What, *e.g.*

were His reflections in the hours preceding His death as to the future constitution of the society He had endeavoured to form—the Divine Messianic kingdom of love, truth, righteousness, and peace? The net result He had achieved, which He was about to confirm by His death, was the distinct assertion of new principles of religious freedom and moral duty, of love, truth, and holiness before God and man. With these He had endeavoured to imbue His disciples. Their extension through Judaism into the Gentile world, without much regard to system, organization, or external form, was probably the main end and purpose of His mission.¹ Can we therefore conceive, according to the common theory, that He contemplated in the long vista of coming centuries the necessity of the transmutation of His few principles of Christian thought and life into an elaborate organization, based on the model, and administered by the method, of the kingdoms of this world? Did He foresee that His practical precepts were destined to be supplanted by speculative dogmas binding the thoughts and consciences of men in chains harder and more unyielding than adamant? Did He conceive that the two great commandments would become transformed and amplified into confessions, creeds, and dogmatic systems of portentous length and proportionate difficulty? Did He, further, foresee that these pretended developments of His own simple precepts would be employed to subserve human greed, ambition, and lust? that His gospel of liberty would be degraded into an instrument of tyranny and oppression? that His easy yoke and light burden would be changed into heavy sacerdotal impositions, precisely like those Pharisaic burdens which He reprobated as grievous to be borne? Did His Divine forecast also embrace other heterogeneous products of His gospel—general councils, *e.g.* claiming the inspiration of His own spirit, but dominated in reality by corrupt motives, and made to subserve unworthy and un-Christian objects? Did He prospect as His self-designated vicar such a debauchee as a Borgia, such a tyrant as Hildebrand? Did He contemplate the feuds of orthodox and heretics in which the streets of Constantinople and Alexandria flowed with blood? Did He forecast the massacres of the Albigenses, the St. Bartho-

¹ Comp. the similar speculations of Bishop Thirlwall as to the reasonable anticipations of Christians who lived in the time of Christ, and their frustration by the actual history of the Church. 'One who heard,' he says, 'the last words of comfort addressed by Christ to His disciples might well be led to believe that the borders of the Church were to be enlarged by a series of pacific conquests, and herself to be constantly growing in faith, hope, and charity. Such expectations, however, were, as we know, doomed to disappointment.'—*Remains*, vol. iii. p. 491.

lomew, the foul deeds of the Holy Office, the martyrdom of so many eminent men whose main fault was sharing His own spirit of religious freedom and reverence for truth? In a word, did He imagine as the result of His efforts to found a kingdom of peace and virtue such a collection of infamous and loathsome crimes as are furnished us by Church history? That to some extent He anticipated war and dissension as an inevitable effect of His mission is shown by His own words, 'Think not that I am come to send peace on earth. . . . I came not to send peace, but a sword.' No doubt He trusted in the inherent and eternal vitality of His truth—that in the course of ages, and notwithstanding every opposition, it would prove superior to all adverse influences and malign perversities. Meanwhile we may, as I have suggested, take our position at the fountain-head of Christian history and doctrine. Whatever formularies and confessions Churches have evolved in the course of eighteen centuries, they cannot be supposed to override the primary teachings of the Master. On those, at least, I am content to take my stand. The words of Christ, divested of the Jewish prepossessions and hierarchical aspirations of the gospel writers, provide me with aliment sufficient for any reasonable exercise of pious imagination and devout feeling, and they suggest, not a secular and temporary, but a sacred and immutable basis for ethical duty. Furthermore, this Christianity of Christ leaves the future advances of the human mind, its researches into nature, physical science and philosophy, perfectly free. Few thinkers uninfluenced by prejudice and self-will have ever contemplated a godless universe as the sole logical outcome of human investigation, or have conceived themselves to stand in no relation of love, of reverence, or of fealty to the Author of nature. Fewer still have deemed themselves exonerated from the discharge of ordinary obligations towards their fellow-men. And on these two commandments hang not only the law and prophets of the Old, but the gospel of the New Testament. It can be no more a reproach to Christianity that its evidence was not designed to convince a vain and bigoted atheist, or some sanguinary communist, than it can be urged against human law that it refuses to take cognizance of strange, inhuman, and portentous crimes. Every law, whether civil or religious, postulates a certain amount of rationality, susceptibility of being governed, and common sense in those to whom it appeals; and, for my part, I despair of ever finding a speculative creed or a regulative code so comprehensive as to include and provide for all conceivable aberrations of belief and practice.

So far as my acquaintance with *Free-thinkers*—emphasizing the

second half of the word—extends, and with especial reference to those we propose to discuss, we shall find, if I mistake not, that however much they may have opposed themselves to the excessive ecclesiasticism or system-mongering of this or that Church, there are none who have attempted to contravene the simple maxims of religious and moral duty enunciated by Christ to the Galilæan peasantry.

I have before now had to defend this estimate of genuine Christianity before ecclesiastics of varying grades of dogmatism. Some have objected, 'In ignoring the teaching of the Church you are rejecting Christ,' &c. To this my reply has always been, Either Christ preached the truth, or He did not; either His preaching was sufficient for His hearers, or it was not. If Christ preached the truth, and that truth was sufficient, I am content to accept it, especially as it appeals immediately to my sense of what should be fundamental maxims of religion and morality. Hence I am willing to put off the accidents of time and space which have made me an Englishman of the nineteenth century, instead of a native of Northern Palestine in the time of Christ. I take my place retrospectively among the Galilæan crowd, and listen to the Sermon on the Mount. There is an anecdote told of Cardinal Perron, who was suspected of divers shortcomings from the orthodox creed of his Church, that when on his deathbed the Eucharist was administered to him, he said 'he received it as the apostles received it,'¹ a significant protest against the portentous development the simple rite had subsequently undergone. So I say of Christianity, 'I accept it as they did who first received it.' To those thinkers, and there are many such, who are wearied with the elaborate creeds, the anti-Christian intolerance, the dogmatic tyranny, the sectarian strife of our present-day religion, to whom the air of many of our Churches is vapid, noisome, and debilitating, like that of an overcrowded thoroughfare, the atmosphere of the Galilæan mountain has all the crisp freshness and exhilarating virtues of that of an Alpine pass. There, in the very cradle of Christianity, you perceive its simple, unaffected greatness, its nobility of spirit, its dignified calmness, its gentle and unselfish refinement, its spotless purity. It is like watching the pure, pellucid spring, in some solitary mountain recess, of a river whose mouth, turbid by human contact and commerce, discharges an enormous efflux of water into the ocean. Standing thus on the Galilæan Mount, and listening to the calm, majestic utterances of

¹ *Tallement des Réaux*, éd. Bruxelles, i. p. 79.

the Saviour, one forgets the many troubled pages in the history of the Church. The contentions of rival sectaries about rival dogmas, the different creeds, articles, and confessions of Christian sects, pale away into comparative insignificance. One forgets, at least for the moment, the scandals and atrocities of Christian dogmatism: the brutal murder of Hypatia, the robber-synod of Ephesus, the cruel sufferings of Nestorius, the subordination of moral to doctrinal purity on the part of the Church, and all the countless anti-Christian and inhuman deeds which, perpetrated in the name of Christ, have disgraced our common humanity.

But though I have found some who have objected to my process as partial and unfair, I have discovered by private interchange of thought among men of my own profession not a few who have adopted a precisely similar method; while of names holding a high place in literature and politics some of the most eminent have similarly fled from dogmatic Christianity to Christ. This, as we shall discover, was the method adopted by some thoughtful Skeptics in our list, *e.g.* Pascal, Huet, Cornelius Agrippa, Montaigne, Charron, and Hirnhaym. It was also the method adopted by the more enlightened of the Reformers, *e.g.* Zwingli, Wiclif, and Melancthon,¹ as well as by such modern thinkers, &c. as Lord Bacon, Locke, Berkeley, Shelley, John Stuart Mill, George Cornwall Lewis, Abraham Lincoln, Emerson—not to mention all the liberal divines of the English and other Protestant Churches.

This tendency seems to me to be on the increase, and I regard the fact as a happy augury for the future of Christendom. It is only on the broad catholic basis of the simple teaching of Christ that any future extension of Christianity can be expected. Already has scientific Skepticism established a state of irreconcilable hostility between its own conclusions and many of the speculative doctrines of different Christian Churches. But with the two great bases of belief in God and moral duty to man it neither has, nor can have, so long as it occupies its rightful position, any quarrel. The constitution of the universe is an eternal guarantee for belief in God. Humanity,² its needs and instincts, constitute a pledge

¹ Zwingli's definition of a Christian was, 'Christiani hominis est non de dogmatis magnifice loqui, sed cum Deo ardua semper et magna facere.' Wiclif's principle in relation to all ecclesiastical dogmas was, 'Utile foret ecclesie poni in pristina libertate;' while Melancthon's dislike to harsh and excessive dogma was the ruling principle of his life.

² See some pertinent remarks on this subject of the general uniformity upon moral questions which prevails throughout the civilized world in G. C. Lewis's *Influence of Authority in Matters of Opinion*, pp. 50, 51.

hardly less permanent and universal for the obligatory character of pure disinterested ethical action.

No idea of the work of Christ has taken firmer hold of Christendom than that implied in His titles Redcemer, Saviour, &c. While I do not in the least wish to detract from the value of the more exclusively theological applications of these titles, I think they possess other senses of at least equal importance. Indeed, the variety of modes in which the idea of Christ as liberator, and the emancipating tendency of His gospel, has been conceived, seems to me very noteworthy, and to attest in the strongest manner that view of Christianity which, I submit, was set forth by Himself. With St. Paul, *e.g.* He is the deliverer from the curse of the law—the vindicator of the free human conscience from the slavery of Jewish belief and ritual. With the fathers and theologians generally He is the deliverer from immoral bondage. With Luther He delivers from the Roman Antichrist. Servetus calls Him ‘liberator clementissime qui toties populum ab angustis liberasti.’¹ To Cornelius Agrippa, Campanella, Pascal, and other Free-thinkers He is the deliverer from ecclesiastical dogma; while with Savonarola and Lamennais He is the emancipator from political thralldom. It is remarkable that the well-known invitation, ‘Come unto Me, ye that travail, &c. . . . for My yoke is easy and My burden is light,’ has a primary reference, not as commonly understood to consciousness of sin, but to the dogmatic and ceremonial burdens of the Pharisees. Hence the words may well be applied to those who find their intellect and conscience oppressed by the elaborate creeds and ritual requirements of some modern developments of Christianity. It is Christ’s own proclamation of liberty—His protest against extreme dogma in belief or in rite.

Having thus described the teaching of Christ, the primary *regula fidei*, or rather *regula vivendi*, by which all divergences from Christianity must be estimated, we must cast a passing glance at a few of its after-developments. Both the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles agree in asserting the existence of various parties in the early Christian Church. We have now no means of determining with any approach to accuracy the different beliefs and usages which separated them one from the other. Taking, *e.g.* the enumeration of those which divided the Corinthian Church (1 Cor. i. 12), it would be interesting to know wherein the party

¹ Allwoerden, *Historia Michaelis Serveti*, p. 230. For some interesting remarks on what has been called the *Christism* of Servetus, see an able article in the *Theological Review*, July 1878.

of Apollos differed from those of Paul and Cephas, and of special importance to learn the characteristics of the party of Christ. For my part, I think it not impossible that the last may have held to the simple ethical teaching of Christ without any regard to current controversial questions. No doubt the two great parties are the Petrine and Pauline, or the Jewish and Anti-Jewish. These carry on the conflict between Judaic narrowness and Christian freedom we have already noticed in the teaching of Christ. Hence Paul is, as you know, the direct heir of the liberty which Christ came to announce; to whom, more than any other leader of early Christian thought, the Christian Church is indebted for not relapsing into a mere sect or party of Judaism, though, as we shall see, his presentation of Christian truth is not on all points so free as that set forth by his Master.

The freer aspects of St. Paul's teaching are so well known that the briefest summary of them will serve our present purpose. With him, as with Christ, one main purpose of Christianity is to liberate men from the bondage of Mosaism, and from all thraldoms of a similar kind by whomsoever imposed. But this object, though tending to liberty, assumes with St. Paul a more amplified and dogmatic form than it does in the Gospels. For St. Paul's 'law' is enlarged to 'sin;' and the deliverance from it, which Christ asserts to be virtue and righteousness, is by His Apostle said to be effected by His expiatory death on the cross. As Christ delivers from intellectual and ceremonial bondage, so He does also from that of literalism. This superiority of spirit to letter was a declaration of vast importance for the interests of Christian freedom, and though, like other wholesome principles, liable to abuse, has exercised a beneficent influence on Christian thought and history. Paul also resembles Christ in insisting on the absolute supremacy of conscience. This is the authority which decides for every man the measure of observance he may render both to external acts, *e.g.* as circumcision, keeping the Sabbath, eating prohibited meats, &c., and to more general views of Christian truths. Such directions, as *e.g.* 'Let every man be persuaded in his own mind,' 'Whatsoever is not of faith (*i.e.* conscience) is sin,' are precepts which, with a number of others of the same kind, assert that individualism which within due limits is the only possible guarantee of complete liberty of thought. Nor in harmony with these tendencies must we overlook the many exhortations to peace, forbearance, and love which are found scattered up and down in his Epistles, especially the glowing eulogium of charity and its superiority to faith and hope which we have in 1 Cor. xiii.—

a passage which, forming part of the authoritative writings of early Christianity, ought to have made intolerance and every approach to it impossible throughout its after-history. This is the spirit by which St. Paul was animated, particularly in the latter portion of his life. Even his animosity to Judaizers ceased directly he found that the principles of universalism for which he contended began to be accepted by the Church.¹ He describes his own tolerant attitude to the different religions and races with which his missionary enterprise brought him in contact in times which savour almost of an indifference to dogmatic truth: 'Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law. To them that are without law as without law, that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak. I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.' Like his Divine Master also he was not over-scrupulous as to the particular persons or modes by which the gospel was promulgated. 'Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached, and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice,' is his catholic sentiment on this subject. We have interesting exemplifications of his tolerant and persuasive argumentation in portions of his Epistles, and in his dissuasion from idolatry contained in his sermon at Athens.

But by the side of those freer teachings of the Apostle of the Gentiles, a less promising phenomenon discloses itself. In St. Paul's Epistles we have the earliest example of a systematization of Christian truth, the first interpretation of it as an elaborate and involved plan that had employed the Divine counsels from the beginning of the creation. The fall of man and his restoration by the vicarious merits of Christ's death become the two bases of a dogmatic system of which we find no trace in the teachings of Christ. Now with the excellences or defects of this system I as a layman do not profess to meddle. I only avow my opinion that the tendency to a schematic presentation of Christianity, however natural to thinkers who must needs 'philosophize' every subject brought before them, is and must ever be mischievous. The insight it assumes into the counsels of the Eternal; the anxiety it naturally evokes to make every part fit in the complex whole; the tendency it produces to give subordinate and accidental features a preponderance they have no right to claim; the dogmatic and intolerant spirit which the defence of the completed scheme almost

¹ Cf. Pfeiderer, *Paulinism*, Eng. trans. ii. p. 38, &c.

necessarily entails : all these are so many grave objections to every such formal and inflexible conception of Christianity. I have remarked that this view of Christianity is unwarranted by the teaching of its founder ; it is scarcely too much to say that in its main features it is even opposed to that teaching. The love of God represented in the Gospels as a spontaneous, eternally energizing influence, comprehending all men in its embrace, becomes in this scheme a cut-and-dried sentiment, artificially dependent on specified and unnatural conditions which, on various accounts, must remain unfulfilled by the bulk of humanity. An elaborate scheme of redemption or predestination was as far from Christ's simple intuitive teachings as a complicated theory of philosophy or natural science. To St. Paul, therefore, must be ascribed the earliest attempt at solidifying the speculative elements of Christianity, the fruits of which we shall see in Augustine and Calvin, though I cannot suppose that the great apostle of Christian freedom could have foreseen the exaggerated stress which his successors placed upon his dogmatic scheme, or the baneful effects it has produced in the history of Christianity.

Passing over other phases of Christian thought indicated with more or less distinctness in the writings of the New Testament, *e.g.* the metaphysical Christianity of John's Gospel and Epistles, it may suffice to note two especially important facts : (1) the single dogma of the Church of the apostles is Christ. Belief in Him is the sole prerequisite of admission into the Christian community ; love to man is the only Christian duty. It is noteworthy that St. John lays especial stress on human sentiments and duties as transcending those that are exclusively religious, in proportion to the greater vividness, tangibility, and practical scope of their objects. In entire unison with the teaching of Christ he proclaims love to man the single proof of love to God, and humanitarianism the highest religious duty. Speculative theology was as yet unknown to the early disciples of Christ. They believed in Him without curiously prying into the how, why, or whence of His Divine authority. His words and His life appealed to their conscience, satisfied their religious needs, and that was enough for them. Whether they conceived His Divine truth as the result of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the man Jesus of Nazareth, or ascribed it to the fact that He was the miraculously incarnated *λόγος*, was a point of little importance. His eternal veracity attested by their own conscience was in either case the same. Practical Christianity, love and duty to God and man, rose above all such speculative considerations. Moreover, we find that this

informal, undogmatic structure of primitive Christianity constitutes its main characteristic during the first two centuries of its existence. This truth has been set forth so clearly and forcibly by an eminent patristic authority of our day that I cannot do better than borrow a few of his sentences. In his summary of the theology of the apostolical Fathers, Dr. Donaldson thus writes :¹ ' In respect to theology there is not the slightest attempt to systematize ; there is the most absolute belief of certain great truths ; there is a determined, unwavering confidence in Christ as the author and finisher of their faith. But there is not the remotest desire to unravel the puzzles which afterwards beset the theological world. There is in their childlike faith an utter unconsciousness of them. Thus they speak of Christ invariably as one individual being. They knew He was the Son of God. They knew He was real man. . . . How this took place, whether He had two natures or wills, in what metaphysical relation He stood to the God and Father of all, these and many such questions never occupied their minds. . . . And again in regard to Christ's death . . . how it could effect such a grand revolution in the souls of men and in the relations of the universe to man, this was a question which did not occupy their minds. And, indeed, it might be easy to show that they had a strong disinclination to any such speculations.

' This unspeculative character of the apostolic teaching the modern Church has to a considerable extent lost sight of, simply because dogmatic theology has now taken the place of practical in many respects. Still those who have deeply considered the subject have been all but unanimous. . . . With regard to outward forms the apostles verged towards indifference. They did not look on baptism as of great consequence ; they came to view the observance of Judaistic rites as a matter of convenience and taste, and they regarded the observance of the Eucharist as binding on them because it was a memorial instituted by Him who was their life and the object of intensest love. In the administration of their communities it seems to me that there ruled one great principle, viz. that each Christian man was a king and a priest ; that by the indwelling of Christ's Spirit within him he had become a free man in the highest sense of the word. . . . The opinion that there was originally only a broad basis of great truths, not too closely defined, and conceived in a purely practical shape, can alone harmonize with many of the circumstances which will present themselves to us, such as the coexistence of a true Christianity

¹ *The Apostolical Fathers*, Introd. p. 62, &c.

with materialism, the frequent discussions of the nature of Christ, and the rejection by some of the doctrine of the Divinity of the Spirit. And this broad basis is also the explanation of the extraordinary liberality of the early Church. For I think it will appear that the Church received all who expressed their confidence in Christ, and their willingness to obey Him. They might speculate as they liked. They might even believe Christ their great leader to be of merely human origin. But so long as they were willing to follow Him, and keep in the goodly fellowship of Christians, the Church welcomed them. And I think it will also appear that the early heretics were not expelled from the Church, but that they (the Gnostics among them) first set up certain dogmas, and would fain have confined Christianity to those only who believed these. *They went out from the Church because the Church was too liberal for them.*¹ The Church, however, gradually came to adopt the same course; and we then find an agreement, not in faith in Christ but in belief in certain dogmas, insisted on as the essential characteristic of a Christian.'

In these remarks of Dr. Donaldson, supported as he is by the best Continental authorities² who have investigated this subject, I fully concur. Especially noteworthy is his account of the dogmatic tendencies of the early Christian heretics. With every sympathy for Free-thought, and reluctance to limit its fullest expression, we must remember that dissent from a civil or religious community does not necessarily imply a greater appreciation of freedom. It may easily mean a proclivity for system and dogma, a distaste for liberality and comprehension, the attitude of the Petrine party to Paul, 'who came in privily,' as he said, 'to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus that they might bring us into bondage.' At the same time, there are other elements in the history of the early Christian heretics deserving remark and also commendation. They not only testify to the irresistible proneness of men to speculate on all subjects in which they are interested, but they are the outcome of a desire to reconcile conflicting modes of thought. So far as motive is concerned, they are animated by

¹ Dr. Donaldson might have put the same truth in another aspect. They left the Church because the Church was too Skeptical for them, at least in profession. The principle of faith, *i.e.* imperfect certitude, as opposed to knowledge was the stumbling-block which early Christianity presented not only to the Gnostics (the knowers), but to other heresies, *e.g.* the Manichæans.

Comp. *e.g.* Gieseler, *Dogmengeschichte*, p. 39. Neander's *History of Christian Dogmas and Church History*; Moehler, *Literär-geschichte*, pp. 49 and 50.

the selfsame desire for comprehension which produced the universalist tendencies of Christ and Paul. Unhappily, however, like other shortsighted theological legislators, they sought their object not by abstention from assertion, but by definitive affirmation; not by razing the old party walls and fences to the ground, but by taking their materials and building up new boundaries still more formidable than the old; not by large and broad rules of Christian faith and duty, but by precision and exactness of definition. Gnosticism, *e.g.* is not only the common meeting-point of the opposite currents of Pauline and Petrine tendencies, as Baur said, but it is a vague many-sided movement of thought based upon a desire to amalgamate Christianity into a philosophic whole with Jewish and heathen elements. So Ebionitism was a crude attempt to combine selected elements of Christianity with certain features of Judaism. The system of Basilides represented the junction of Christianity with the philosophy of Aristotle and the Stoics. That of Valentinian was an attempt to interfuse a few aspects of Christian faith into a vast and complicated system of Neo-Platonism and Oriental mysticism. It must be granted that the effect of most of these systems, had they been adopted by the Church, would have been seriously detrimental to the simple faith of Christ and His apostles. They either possessed tendencies to idealization which would have undermined the historical position of Christianity,¹ or their dogmatic proclivities would have destroyed the unartificial character of its teaching. The leaders of primitive Christianity saw the danger, but unhappily took wrong steps to avert it. Instead of insisting on the unspeculative nature of Christ's teaching, instead of firmly determining not to add to His twofold basis of Christian thought and life, instead of asserting the importance of ethical action above all doctrinal teaching, they after a time eagerly followed their beguilers into the thorny-labyrinth of religious metaphysics. For every exploration into the abstrusities of theology they attempted another still more rashly enterprising. To every definition of the hidden things of God they opposed another still more definitive, for every exactness of dogmatic phraseology they supplied one still more precise, until between orthodox and heretics there grew up in course of time a formidable rivalry of creeds, definitions, abstruse dogmas, and recondite researches, of which it would be difficult to say which diverged furthest from the teaching of the gospel. This state of things grew worse when the Church obtained from her union with the State the power to persecute, though the heretics so treated, supposing them really inimical to Christianity, appear to me to have exacted the fullest revenge,

¹ Neander, *History of Christian Dogmas*, i. p. 208, Bohn's edition.

not only in the compassion which a future of religious liberty was destined to extend to them, but in the legacy of dogma and tyranny they left the Church, to the retardation of its free progress and to its lasting disgrace and infamy.

But I am anticipating. Summing up our investigation into the condition of Christianity till the middle or end of the second century A.D., we have seen that no religion could have been as a whole freer and more catholic in its earliest development than that of Christ. Partly because its chief teachers had rightly apprehended the spirit and method of its founder, partly from the necessities of its position, its policy was mild, conciliatory, and comprehensive. Its dogmas were few, simple, and obvious, such as commended themselves to the feelings and intellect of the pro-founder thinkers both among Jews and Gentiles. Its rites also were simple and easily intelligible. As yet there was no central authority to which the whole of nascent Christendom could appeal. Each Church possessed its own traditions, the legacy of the apostle who first taught it, and no feature in the early history of Christianity is more marked than the diversity of custom and teaching in different Churches, and the freedom and independence which prevailed generally in consequence of such decentralization. For its parent Judaism, Christianity had come to manifest a genial half-depreciatory, half-sympathetic feeling, like that which a child grown to maturity and independence evinces for the fond and foolish fancies of an elderly parent. It neither forbade nor insisted on any of the rites of Mosaism, and its sole demand—no small one, however, for the enthusiastic Jew—was that Christ should be regarded as the Messiah, and the Church as the true realization of His kingdom. With heathendom too the attitude of early Christianity was one of peace, recognition, and in a certain measure comprehension. Christianity was not then regarded as the sole Revelation of the Divine Mind that had ever been made to mankind. The influence of the Holy Spirit discernible in the religions both of Judaism and Christianity was also accepted as the inspired source of Gentile wisdom. In this sense Tatian maintained that Christian wisdom was older than Greek philosophy,¹ while other teachers asserted that the doctrines of the Greeks were really derived from Moses. This tendency may be said to have found its climax in the doctrine of Justin Martyr, who maintained that the Logos animated all the best and wisest of the heathen. Similar views occur in the works of Origen,

¹ Cf. Dr. J. Hüber's *Philosophie der Kirchenväter*, a most admirable compendium of patristic thought, well deserving translation into English, p. 20.

Irenæus,¹ and Clemens Alexandrinus, and they found occasionally a broad generalization even at the hands of such born dogmatists as Tertullian and Augustine, the former of whom said that whatsoever is reasonable is true, and the latter avowed his opinion that Christianity and truth were synonymous terms. This unifying conception is more readily understood when we remember the points of contact which Christianity presented to Gentile modes of thought. The simplicity of its first conception, the spontaneity of its origin, its free undogmatizing character, the fact that its author had left no written requisition of articles of belief to be exacted of all Christians—in a word, the unpositive elements in its structure, adapted it for reconciliation with various modes of speculative thought. But besides these negative conditions of assimilation with other general types of thought, it possessed distinct positive features of similarity with certain specific types of Gentile speculation, and those too which had acquired most ascendancy over the human mind at the Christian era. Its message of universal freedom and equality before God, the sacredness of humanity in all its relations, commended it to those who had long craved political, social, and individual freedom, and who were unable to find a basis for it either in the philosophy of the Greek or the instincts of law and order of the Roman. Its practical tendency, its elevation of morality to the highest sphere of religious duty, its inculcation of self-denial, its making the ethical value of an act consist in the intention of the doer, were all points of contact between itself and Stoicism. It possessed numerous points of affinity with the writings of Plato, and its supernatural and inspired character as a Revelation was a special ground of sympathy between it and Neo-Platonism. Its sacred and sacramental rites commended it to those who still revered the ancient mysteries.² The purity of its family life, its stress upon chastity, could not fail to be appreciated by many who were conscious of the disastrous effects of laxity in such matters among Greeks and Romans. Its inculcation of obedience to secular authorities was in harmony with the law-abiding and orderly instincts of the average Roman citizen, while to those who were wearied with the conflicting theories and conclusions of Greek philosophy it offered a Revelation of religious and moral truth sufficiently obvious to claim recogni-

¹ On the latitude of opinion enjoyed by the Church in Gaul in the time of Irenæus, comp. Ampère, *Hist. Lit. de la France avant Charlemagne*, vol. i. pp. 194, 195.

² Comp. Ebert, *Geschichte der Christlich-Lateinischen Literatur*, vol. i. p. 18.

tion, as well as harmonizing with the best teachings of their foremost thinkers.

For many reasons, however, this conciliatory aspect of Christianity to Gentile thought was only an evanescent phenomenon. Every religion must by the necessity of its existence adopt measures of self-assertion, even if it does not set on foot an active propaganda. It must adopt defensive precautions, even if it does not assume the offensive. Jesus Christ, as we have seen, was not careful to insist on the exclusive superiority of His teaching in such a sense as to oppose it to every form of religious thought in the world, and the small missionary enterprises of the apostles in His lifetime were directed more to the inculcation of a certain spirit than to making proselytes to a creed. The same mild spirit animated the early Christians, with unimportant exceptions, for about a century and a half after the Christian era. Then we perceive symptoms of a new and harsher temper. The growth of Christianity began to be attacked by a corresponding growth of precision in dogmatic statement, and an advance of hierarchical and sacerdotal claims. The gospel of Christ was entering upon the preliminary stages of that ecclesiasticism in which it was finally submerged and lost. The idea of Revelation now began to assume a domineering and exclusive aspect, utterly different from the suggestive appeal to the conscience and the intellect which was its main import in the Gospels. The character of Christ lost much of its meekness and human sympathy in proportion as its supernatural elements were seized, isolated, and exaggerated by the rising dogmatism. The growing contrast between Christianity and heathendom was intensified by the mutual suspicion and hatred produced by persecution. Hence the aim of the apologists of the second century was no longer to prove that many from the east and west should sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; or, with St. Paul, to argue that God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth; or, with Justin Martyr, to pronounce Gentiles sharers of the Divine Logos. They now laid down a sharp line of demarcation between Christianity and all other modes of thought and life. Heathendom, with its philosophy and its culture, was regarded as the appanage of the devil, while Christianity asserted its exclusive claim to the favour of God as arrogantly as the elder Jewish Church. Now appeared the haughty maxim, '*Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*'—a dictum whose anti-Christian implication might not unfairly be expressed by the modified reading, '*In ecclesia nullus Christus.*' The earliest exponent of this dogmatic hostility to philosophical Free-thought is Tertullian. In the true

spirit of religious obscurantism he opposes all inquiry except into things permitted.¹ He asserts that all heterodox beliefs have been engendered by philosophy, calls the philosophers the 'patriarchs of heretics,' of whom he considers Plato the most prolific. The philosopher pursues his own fame only, whereas the Christian strives for truth. What can, he asks, the philosopher and the Christian have in common? the disciple of Greece with that of heaven? the contender for fame with the striver for life? the word-maker with the doer of deeds? the destroyer with the builder of things? the friend with the enemy of error? the falsifier of truth with its restorer, its thief with its guard? Even the wisdom of Sokrates, he thinks, is not to be highly rated. For 'who has known the truth without God? and to whom is God known without Christ? By whom is Christ understood without the Holy Ghost, and to whom is He imparted without the sacrament of baptism?'² It is true that in others of his works he speaks in a more conciliatory tone of the relations between reason and Revelation, but the extracts just given show clearly the rising spirit of dogma which was then making inroads into the Church, and which was destined to grow to such an overweening and pernicious extent. Nor is this influence much diminished by the fact that Tertullian's dogma is based upon a pious nescience, and hence upon Skepticism. The opponent of Gnosticism in all its forms must needs rely upon the human ignorance which made a supernatural Revelation a necessity and science a braggart imposition. The doctrine of implicit and uninquiring faith was here opposed to the dogma of a proud self-sufficient knowledge. We shall frequently have to notice how the extremes of Skepticism and of superstitious faith both meet in the defiant utterance of blind and petulant credulity first enunciated by Tertullian, 'Credo quia impossibile.' But in deprecating the rapid dogma-growth of the Church of the second century, I do not of course understand by excessive dogma the mere assertion of the superiority of Christianity over every other form of religious belief. Such a boast was both natural and inevitable, from the point of view of Christians. They could not help seeing that Revelation in its primary acceptation as a communication from God supplied a centre of fixity and certainty which the conflicting tenets of Greek philosophy were very far from affording. The bare idea of a safe harbour after being so long tossed on the waves of human opinion was so delightful that we may pardon an occasional neglect of preliminary soundings. We have thus a double point of contact

¹ Comp. on this point Hüber's *Philosophie der Kirchenväter*, p. 104, &c.

² Hüber, pp. 108, 109.

between Greek Skepticism and Christianity. 1. Christian teachers seized the confessed inability to discover truth which underlies all Skepticism as a plea for a Divine Revelation. 2. And conversely, those who were dissatisfied with the results of Greek thought were the more eager to embrace a system which claimed to be Divine, authoritative, and final.¹ A remarkable example of the effect of Skepticism and despair of philosophical truth in urging men of deep feeling to embrace Christianity we have in the author of the Clementine Homilies. Nearly a contemporary of Sextos Empeirikos, he has discovered, as the great Skeptic did, the weakness of the reason and the contradictions of the various systems of Greek thought. 'From my early youth,' he says,² 'being involved in such reasonings, in order to learn something definite I used to resort to the schools of the philosophers. But nought else did I see there than the setting up and knocking down of doctrines, and strifes, and seeking for victory, and arts of syllogisms, and the skill of assumptions, and sometimes one opinion prevailed, as, *e.g.* that the soul is immortal, and sometimes that it is mortal. If therefore at any time the doctrine prevailed that it is immortal I was glad, and when the doctrine prevailed that it is mortal I was grieved, and again was the more disheartened because I could not establish either doctrine to my satisfaction. However, I perceived that the opinions on subjects under discussion are taken as true or false according to their defenders, and do not appear as they really are. Perceiving, therefore, that the acceptance does not depend on the real nature of the subjects discussed, but that opinions are proved to be true or false according to ability of those who defined them, I was still more than ever at a loss in regard of things. Wherefore I groaned from the depth of my soul. . . . And again living in doubt I said to myself, Why do I labour in vain when the matter is clear, that if I cease to exist when I die it is needless to distress myself now when I live? . . . But if I am to exist, what does it profit me now to distress myself gratuitously? And immediately after this another reasoning assailed me, for I said, Shall I not have something worse to suffer than that which distresses me now, if I have not lived piously? and shall I not be delivered over, according to the teachings of some philosophers, to Pyriphlegethon and Tartarus, like Sisyphos or Tityos or Ixion or Tantalos, and

¹ Comp. Neander, *History of Christian Dogmas*, Eng. trans. vol. i. p. 84.

² Cotelarius, *Patres Apost.* vol. i. p. 615. Comp. *Ante-Nicene Library*, vol. xvii. p. 18; Neander, *Church History*, Bohn's trans. i. pp. 44, 45. The same narrative occurs also in the *Clementine Recognitions*.

be punished for ever in Hades? But again I replied, saying, But there are no such things as these. Yet again I said, But suppose there be? Therefore, said I, since the matter is uncertain, the safer plan is for me rather to live piously.' We need not pursue the path of this typical Christian doubter further: it is enough to say that after exploring different religious systems he finally finds refuge in Christianity. The experiences here narrated were probably common to a select few of the more thoughtful converts from heathendom to Christianity. Hence we perceive that Skepticism had begun to subserve, innocently and unconsciously, the cause for which we shall presently find it employed purposely, *i.e.* as a propædæutic to Christian dogmatic faith. It is, however, quite conceivable that there were some to whom the freedom and elasticity of the early Church afforded a relaxation from the dogmatic aspects of Greek philosophy, just as they did from the harsh and exclusive tenets of the early heretics. What I have adduced serves to show that there was ample room for diversity of opinions within her bounds, so that views and beliefs which were afterwards denounced as heterodox, or at least latitudinarian, were then recognised as varying aspects of a common truth,¹ or as harmless speculations which could not affect injuriously the practice of Christian virtues.

The specific causes of the dogma-development which set in during the second century of the Christian era, and which rendered the free and open exercise of the human faculties an impossibility for some fourteen centuries, I take to have been these: (1) the inherent proneness of men to speculate on all the opinions and problems in which they are concerned, and (2) the no less firmly implanted tendency to accept the result of their speculations as infallible truths, and as such to impose them upon the rest of mankind. With these general dogmatic aptitudes were combined, in the definitive establishment and consolidation of Christian dogma, the following causes:

1. The closing of the canon of New Testament Scriptures.
2. Hierarchical pretensions of the teachers of Christianity.
3. Decrees of councils.
4. Union of the Church with the Roman Empire.

The merest superficial consideration of these agencies will serve to reveal the mode in which they curtailed the liberty of thought pertaining to the earliest phases of Christianity. And this result remains unaffected by what is equally true, *viz.* that they are to a considerable extent natural products of the planting

¹ Comp. Neander, *Christian Dogmas*, i. p. 82.

of Christianity at a particular time and under certain circumstances. It is evident, *e.g.* that however desirable or necessary was the selection by the Church of certain writings, in which the life and words of its founder were most truthfully depicted, this could only be effected by the sacrifice of much of the freedom of doctrine and usage that belonged to oral tradition. However natural, again, in view of irresistible human proclivities was the growth of hierarchical ambition, it must have operated to the detriment of a spiritual community of which each member claimed, in virtue of personal fellowship with his lord, the right of being both priest and king. Moreover, if the action of some authoritative centre such as an œcumenical council was needed for securing a measure of uniformity in doctrine and practice, the advantage was only purchasable by the sacrifice of some proportion of the independence hitherto enjoyed by individual churches, as well as by the more generally disastrous result of engendering an intolerant and exclusive spirit inimical to the future welfare of Christianity. The union of the Church with the Roman Empire I regard as, humanly speaking, *accidental*, though it is to this that we are probably indebted for its surviving as it did the wreck of the empire, and the darkness which followed the barbarian irruption.

It would, however, be a mistake to suppose that these dogmatizing agencies were unattended by others of a different nature capable of counteracting or at least moderating their mischievous effects. No law of nature is more infallible than that reactionary Skepticism treads on the heels of dogma. No principle in the history of human thought is better authenticated than that the human intellect invariably contrives to find a loophole when threatened with excessive repression, enough to breathe at, if not enough to escape by. Hence we find—and the remark is true of every religion founded upon sacred writings—that with the admission of the Old and New Testaments as the authoritative documents of the Church there sprang up various methods of allegorical interpretation, comparisons of various texts, conflicting views of words and meanings, which operated as palliatives of an undue and slavish literalism.¹ Jerome, Augustine, Ambrose, together with Origen, Basil, and most of the Greek Fathers, availed themselves of figurative interpretations as often as they

¹ 'L'esprit humain,' says M. Renan, 'sait toujours revendiquer son indépendance. Enchaîné à un texte, il saura retrouver sa liberté dans l'interprétation de ce texte; il le faussera plutôt que de renoncer au plus inaliénable de ses droits, l'exercice individuel de la pensée.'—*Averroes*, &c. p. 89.

pleased, and we have Augustine's own evidence¹ of the effect of thus treating difficult passages in lessening his own Skeptical objections to enter the Church. In fact, the Skeptical instincts of nominalism may be manifested in sacred writings just as much as in formal systems of philosophy.² Words can bind no further than the meanings attributed to them, and these must depend in every case on the subjective and personal estimate of those who receive and apply them.³ Nor was Christian liberty ultimately without some safeguard from the sacerdotalism of the Church and the intolerance of its councils, for one authority, whether of a single individual or of a body of men, might be opposed to another. Indeed, as a fact, the fulmination of one bishop against another, or the decrees of one council anathematized by the next, was no uncommon phenomenon in the history of the Church. Besides which, there was always room for an appeal from ecclesiastical tyranny to the gentle teachings of Christ Himself. Undoubtedly the most powerful of the dogmatizing influences I have enumerated was the incorporation of Christianity into the Roman Empire. This event imparted to every religious tenet the effect of a legal enactment; invested it with a double prestige, civil as well as ecclesiastical; fortified it by a twofold sanction, secular as well as sacred. Moreover, it increased the dogmatic effect of other contributory causes. By its means the utterances of Scripture became more binding and authoritative, sacerdotalism more domineering, councils more arbitrary and dictatorial. The change which the religion of Jesus underwent by this alliance with the powers of this world, however useful in some respects, was nothing less than portentous. Now was seen the practical effects of two centuries' growth in dogmatism and hierarchical ambition. The legitimate effect of dogma is intolerance and persecution; and in the Arian and Priscillian persecutions we perceive what an impassable chasm

¹ See *Essay on the Skepticism of Augustine*, in the next chapter.

² It should be noted as exemplifying the irrepressible nature of men's free instincts and their dread of the chains of literalism, that allegorical interpretation is a concomitant of every religion whose source is a sacred text. In most religions it is assigned a technical name, and in some it has an elaborate code of rules and methods of application. Comp., e.g. on the allegorism of the Koran, Munk, *Le Guide des Égarés*, ii, p. 197, note.

³ The somewhat shifty principle of allegorical interpretation was most repugnant to Luther's intensely dogmatic nature. Alluding to the Mahometan allegorists, he says: 'Est enim allegoria tanquam formosa meretrix, quæ ita blanditur hominibus ut non possit non amari præsertim ab hominibus ociosis qui sunt sine tentatione . . . ego itaque odi allegorias.'—*Comm. on Genes. cap. xxx.*

already separates the gospel of Christ from the Church of the fourth century.

But although I have placed the first distinct symptoms of dogmatic development about the middle or end of the second century, the Church as a whole cannot be said to have possessed a scheme of coherent doctrine until the time of Constantine and the decrees of the first general council. At this point, therefore, we may for the present take our leave of her. We have already seen, and shall have future opportunities of investigating, what defences human reason was able to set up against the now pronounced ecclesiasticism of the Church. From this point it is clear that if Free-thought and inquiry are to have any existence in the Church it can only be in spite of the enormous forces arrayed against them.

In this rapid sketch I have only attempted to indicate broadly the nature of and scope for intellectual liberty which existed in the earliest stages of Christianity, particularly noting the fact that the primary purport of Christ's teaching was undogmatic, that its methods were rational and persuasive, and that, so far from refusing the conscience and intellect of the individual, it was precisely to these sources of authority that it appealed. I am aware that the ground I have hurriedly traversed has been pretty well trodden by historians and philosophers during the last and present centuries; but I may point to that fact for the confirmation of the general conclusion I have independently attained: for now the undogmatic character of Christianity for more than a century after its birth is fully conceded. This common conclusion may doubtless have a different significance, according to the point of view from which it is contemplated. To Roman Catholics, *e.g.* it will seem a plea for the supreme ecclesiastical jurisdiction claimed by their Church. To Protestants it may appear a reason for bibliolatry, while by some theologians, such as Newman, it is an argument for a doctrine of development. It appears to me that its chief and most obvious bearing is as a defence of and sanction for Christian freedom. As such it may well be invoked by every advocate of intellectual and religious liberty, for no Christian community not hopelessly demoralized by dogma could so far stultify its origin as to refuse an appeal to the Magna Charta of the Gospels.

It would be well indeed if both Churches and individuals, forgetting the complicated and speculative systems which Christianity in some of the darkest periods of her history, and often from the most unworthy motives, has compiled, would once more revert to their founder, and insist on no longer creed or more elaborate ritual than He Himself required. Like Antæus in his struggle

with Herakles, who was invincible as long as he was in contact with mother earth, so Christianity, in its efforts for the moral and spiritual well-being of humanity, might derive fresh strength and fuller liberty by a persistent recognition of the simple undogmatic faith proclaimed to mankind on the hillsides of Galilee.

ARUNDEL. Thanks, Harrington, for your paper, with some portions of which I agree, while from others I dissent. Had it been read before an assembly of clerics, it would have been, I fear, vigorously denounced as a colourless caricature of Christianity.

HARRINGTON. Dogmatically 'colourless' it may well be, for so I submit was the actual teaching of Christ contrasted with the Pharisaic Judaism which preceded and the ecclesiasticism which followed it. It was precisely on account of its comparatively neutral and colourless qualities—the absence of stress on the requirements of the law of Moses, on the tradition of the elders, that the Jews put Christ to death. A 'caricature' I contend it is not, except on the hypothesis that the teaching of Christ and that of the Churches are inherently incompatible. Were Christ to reappear in our England of to-day, and were to preach the simple truths He taught the Galilæans, I have no doubt His teaching would be deemed 'colourless.' For that matter, I suspect that all ultimate truth, whether in religion or philosophy, is like the sun's rays, absolutely void of colour; and it is only when warped by the prismatic intervention of our imperfect knowledge or our crude methods of analysis that it assumes a variety of hues.

ARUNDEL. Oh, for my own part I don't at all like the excess of colouring which ecclesiasticism has developed by decomposing and destroying the original white ray of Christianity. Nevertheless, similes apart, I should gladly have welcomed a *little* more doctrinal teaching in your exposition of Christianity. It seemed lacking in the requisite elements and conditions of solidarity. It possessed little that was adapted to organize and consolidate individual Christians into a coherent and visible society. To take one significant action of Christ which you omitted to notice, His choice of twelve

apostles was clearly intended to denote His own will and purpose to found a distinct community with duly authorized teachers possessing well-attested credentials.

HARRINGTON. No doubt the apostles were chosen to propagate the Kingdom of Christ, the consolidating principles of which are the two great commandments of the law; but that He intended His kingdom to be marked off from other communities by any other than spiritual and ethical distinctions, or that He desired to limit its propagation to His own followers, I emphatically deny. You remember, *e.g.* His judgment of those persons whom His zealous apostles forbade when they saw them perform deeds of mercy in Christ's name presumably as the Messiah, whereas they followed not their Master, 'He that is not against us is on our part'—a dictum which Lord Bacon calls 'that league among Christians framed by our Lord.'¹ Nor do I conceive that the credentials of the apostles, so far as they were not moral or spiritual, were intended to mark them off from other teachers, or to attest the exclusive sanctity of their mission. You remember the words, 'Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, have not we cast out devils in Thy name?' &c.

ARUNDEL. But my contention is that the teachings you have named, though I grant their primary importance, were not enough to constitute a firm basis for the Church, so that the addition of a few others by the early Church was absolutely necessary.

TREVOR. If your implication is that ecclesiastical unity is attained in proportion to the number, minuteness, &c. of its Dogmas, then I think the whole of Church history is against you. As a rule, the divisions of the Church date from and were stimulated by its dogmatic efforts. (For as to the fundamental points of Christ's teaching, there never was any controversy in the Church.) Hence every Christian creed and confession may be said to have been the seed-plot of a new crop of heretics and dissentients, just as in philosophy we find Skepticism is the natural outcome of excessive and aggressive dogma of every kind. 'It will be ob-

¹ *Opera*, Ellis and Spedding, viii. p. 75.

served,' says Sir G. C. Lewis,¹ 'that the great controversies between the Christian sects either turn upon questions which have no direct bearing upon human conduct (such as the doctrines of the Trinity or Transubstantiation), or upon forms of Church government and discipline which are matters of positive institution. They rarely turn upon the moral doctrines which are involved in Christianity. Upon these there is a prevailing tendency and approximation to an agreement.'

ARUNDEL. Well, I have a still stronger objection to Harrington's treatment of the Christian Church. In his definition of it, and the enumeration of its claims upon Christians, he omitted the chief—I mean the indwelling and inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

HARRINGTON. Pardon me. I conceded fully the Divinity of Christ, and *ipso facto* the co-operation of the Holy Ghost—the spirit of truth—in every act of His life and every doctrine that He taught.

ARUNDEL. I am aware of that. I am now speaking of the presence of the Comforter with His followers, 'to guide them into all truth' for ever after.

HARRINGTON. Tell me, Arundel, would the Holy Ghost influence Christ's followers and the Church in the same manner in which He operated upon Christ, or in an entirely different manner?

ARUNDEL. Of course in the same manner.

HARRINGTON. Besides being involved in the very notion of the thing, the conclusion you have mentioned is explicitly stated in the *Filioque* clause on which the Western Church has always laid so much stress, is it not?

ARUNDEL. Certainly, and it has a still higher attestation in Christ's affirming the presence of the Comforter with His followers as identical with His own.

HARRINGTON. Now what works for the most part did we observe that Christ, both by precept and example, inculcated?

ARUNDEL. Works of morality, humanity, and religion.

HARRINGTON. We are agreed, I think, that as a mode of religious practice the moral or human works occupied a

¹ *Influence of Authority in Matters of Opinion*, p. 51.

higher position in Christ's teaching than purely religious, I mean ritual, acts.

ARUNDEL. That I fully concede.

HARRINGTON. So that, on the assumption of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the minds of the apostles, and the after-Church, it would necessarily continue to manifest the same conviction of the superiority of obedience over sacrifice—of ethical action over ritualistic observance?

ARUNDEL (after some hesitation). I suppose so.

HARRINGTON. But I should like something stronger than supposition. If Christ placed morality above ritual, and did so as we are agreed by the influence of the Holy Ghost, an inversion of their positions, so that ritual should be regarded as superior to ethical conduct, and dogmatic purity to moral excellence, would involve a distinct departure from the teaching of Christ—would it not?

ARUNDEL. Of course.

HARRINGTON. And *ipso facto* an influence of a nature opposite to the teaching of the Holy Ghost?

ARUNDEL. True.

HARRINGTON. So that the Church, which should not only place ritual above morality, but should make the former a substitute for the latter, could scarcely claim to be guided by the Holy Ghost?

ARUNDEL. Certainly not. For my part, I should regard the claims of not a few ecclesiastical councils to the inspiration of the Holy Ghost as completely falsified by their own unholy and immoral decisions; while the assertion of Paul IV. that the nefarious deeds of the Inquisition were animated by the Holy Ghost, seems to me worse than blasphemous.

HARRINGTON. Hence the doctrinal development, so styled, which makes the manifestation of the Holy Ghost in the Church not only divergent from but opposed to His operation in Christ Himself, must needs be utterly false and spurious.

ARUNDEL. So it would seem, though the effect of your argument would be a denial of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the Church, and so far of the holiness, truth, and

authoritative character of its dogmas and teachings. I myself should be loth to allow that as a general proposition, and it would falsify the promises of Christ to His apostles.

HARRINGTON. Take the Church of Rome in the period of its greatest power, you would not, I think, deny that both in its ambitious theory and immoral practice it was as diametrically opposed to the spirit and precepts of Christ as any institution could possibly be.

ARUNDEL. Oh, of course! but you have taken the Church in its most corrupt state. Go to the early Church, that of the first four centuries, or still better that of the apostles, there you must concede the influence of the Holy Ghost.

HARRINGTON. But before I do that, you allow that the Holy Ghost cannot be said to be the ruling spirit of the Church in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. So that if it actually guided the Church of the apostles, it must afterwards have abandoned the Church as a corporate institution. Hence it is a mere question of the century when this abandonment took place.

ARUNDEL. Not quite so fast, Harrington! When the rulers of the Latin and Greek Churches forsook the pure, simple teaching of the gospel, of course they also seceded from its spirit. The moment they did this was the time at which the Holy Ghost may be said to have left them. Still I should not say on that account that He had abandoned the Church; for the Church is the aggregate of all members of the Christian community, and so long as private Christians lived holy simple lives, after the example of Christ, so long would the Holy Ghost be an effective agency in the Church.

HARRINGTON. So that, in affirming the presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church, you only assert its agency in isolated individual cases, not in the Church as a spiritual corporation, and therefore not in its rulers, its councils, its dogma-making assemblies of bishops, &c.

ARUNDEL. Of course not. Our 21st Article tells us that no council is infallible, and the 19th admits that all the Christian Churches have erred.

HARRINGTON. What would you say was the test of such error?

ARUNDEL. The extent of its departure from the life and words of Christ.

HARRINGTON. You allow, therefore, that it is not as a dogma-imposing body that the Church is influenced by the Holy Spirit, but as an aggregate of Christian people, and in so far as each individual fulfils the ethical precepts of Christ?

ARUNDEL. To confess the truth, what I am most anxious to avoid is the tendency to individualism and anarchy which appears to be the legitimate issue of your reasoning. It seems a contradiction to maintain that members of a community may be animated by a certain spirit, while its ruling powers are actuated by motive-influences of quite an opposite kind.

HARRINGTON. Passing over the common fallacy contained in your combination of the terms individualism and anarchy, which implies that the individual as such *can* possess no principle of government, your difficulty appears to me baseless. Take the ruling powers of our own, or, indeed, of any country: does not history teach us that in the majority of cases in which popular rights and instincts have opposed themselves to the ideas and privileges of the ruling classes they have generally approved themselves to be right? Does not this mean that the convictions of private persons may have a greater amount of truth and validity than those of their rulers?

ARUNDEL. But the cases, surely, are not quite parallel between, let us say, the passing of the Corn Law Acts and the dogmas and decrees of a Church Council?

HARRINGTON. They are sufficiently so for the purposes of my argument. My contention is that it is not in the Church as a corporation that we must look for those graces and virtues on which Christ insisted, or which distinctly prove the influence of the Holy Ghost, and hence not in the Church as a dogma-making and creed-imposing power, but in the Church as a spiritual aggregate of Christ-like men and women. Individual Christians, as a rule, have had little to do with the devising or defining the dogmas by which they have afterwards come to be ruled; though where

popular instincts are profoundly moved by religious questions, their spontaneous action has been on the whole as healthful as in political questions. The Reformation, *e.g.* was essentially a popular movement.

ARUNDEL. So was the French Revolution, and yet look at the wild licence and ruthless barbarity that marked it.

HARRINGTON. Crimes of violence are unhappily common to fanatics of every kind, but the history of Christian dogma is able to furnish more instances of them than can be found in secular history since the Christian era. Moreover, even the crimes of political history, since the same period, may be traced indirectly to the domineering and tyrannical spirit of ecclesiasticism. The French Revolution was, almost as much as the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, brought about by the Church, for it was a result of despotism, injustice, and oppression, which the corporate Christianity of Romanism, so far from attempting to repress, as in obvious duty it was bound to do, actually upheld and confirmed.

ARUNDEL. The purport of your argument seems to be to deny the necessary inspiration of every dogma of the Christian Church after the time of Christ.

HARRINGTON. Without entering into details, such is, I admit, my opinion. I could have wished the Church to have preserved always the elasticity and undogmatic character of its earliest foundation. So long as men obeyed the two commandments of the gospel, so long as they acknowledged the spiritual authority of Jesus Christ as the founder of the Christian kingdom, everything else should be allowed to be matter of choice and expediency.

ARUNDEL. What about the Sacraments?

HARRINGTON. I would have them regarded as expedient, as aids to morality, not as universally obligatory. Their magical virtues stand for me on the same footing as witchcraft.

TREVOR. Pardon me, but I think your discussion is entering upon difficult ground, and it is not always expedient to pronounce dictatorially on expediency. I was about to observe, as to your argument of the Holy Ghost in the Church, that it is not only the moral test of any

such inspiration which seems wanting, but also the intellectual test.

ARUNDEL. What do you mean, Doctor?

TREVOR. I mean that the claim of the Church of Rome to be guided by the spirit of truth is not only refuted by its placing belief and ritual above ethical action, in flagrant opposition to the Gospels, but also by the absurd superstitions in which persons and councils claiming to be guided by Him undoubtedly believed. If the Holy Spirit was unable to guard fathers and councils from such transcendental absurdities as, *e.g.* witchcraft, divination, and even from grotesque perversities in the interpretation of Scripture, we may surely hesitate to believe that He could direct the same intellects and assemblies into valid and infallible determinations upon such mysteries as the nature of God or of the world to come.¹

ARUNDEL. That argument has a dangerous two-edged power. We might as well object to Christ's own teaching, which we ascribe to the same spirit of truth, that it ought not to have sanctioned such a superstition as, *e.g.* demoniacal possession, on which ground we might claim to refuse the acceptance of His religious and ethical instruction.

HARRINGTON. Excuse me, Arundel. Your analogy is somewhat superficial, for the following reasons: 1. The representation we have of Christ is by the medium of writers who were themselves grossly superstitious, and whose superstition is more than once corrected by Himself. 2. Even allowing the narratives to stand as they are, Christ nowhere demands belief in demoniacal possession, nor, indeed, in miracles of any kind, as a condition of Christian life; on the other hand, He frequently repudiates a merely thaumaturgic faith. 3. Demoniacal possession may be regarded as a crude expression of the physical nature or affinities of moral evil, and hence coming within the scope of Christ's action as a moral teacher. 4. The acceptance of Christ's religious and moral teaching must in the last instance be based on His own foundation for it, *i.e.* the reason and conscience of the receiver, whereas fathers and councils frequently

¹ Compare on this argument Bishop Thirlwall's powerful and eloquent remarks, *Remains*, vol. iii. p. 397.

insisted on such beliefs as a *sine quâ non* of orthodoxy *ab extra*, and quite irrespectively of personal conviction.

ARUNDEL. You have just reminded me that your mode of dealing with the Gospels is rather lax and arbitrary. Indeed, this was one prominent feature of your paper. Of course, by a judicious selection of what suits our point of view and a careful elimination of all opposite and discordant elements, we might prove almost anything from the Gospels.

HARRINGTON. I suppose you would allow that it is right, at least not wrong, to follow the example of Christ ?

ARUNDEL. Certainly, though I can't quite see the bearing of such a very obvious proposition on our subject.

HARRINGTON. If Christ deals in a particular manner with the writings of the Old Testament, His followers cannot be impugned for treating in a similar manner the writings of the New Testament.

ARUNDEL. Of course not.

HARRINGTON. Well, it seems to me that in His treatment of the law and the prophets Christ especially employed this principle of judicious selection for which you blame me. Of the law of Moses He selects the *résumé* which occurs in two verses of Deuteronomy, says not a word of its thaumaturgic elements—the events in the national history of which the Jews were all so proud—does not refer to sacrificial or ceremonial requirements of law as matters of general observance, and preserves a significant silence as to others of its aspects on which His countrymen laid particular stress.

ARUNDEL. At any rate the intellectual criterion of the presence of the Holy Ghost does not appear to me very valid, for it would imply an interference with the laws which govern the ordinary intellectual progress of humanity. Hence I should not regard the Church's opposition to Galileo as any conclusive proof of its defective inspiration, in the same way that I should the enormities of Alexander VI. or the deeds of the Inquisition.¹

¹ Bishop Thirlwall seems to imply, though he expresses himself with characteristic caution, that the moral corruption of the Church may be ascribed to the reluctance of the Holy Ghost to interfere with the freedom of the human will. Of the two, it is easier to conceive that the intellectual error of the Church may be due to His refusal to interfere with the laws

TREVOR. As an apology for the Church, and from its own point of view, your distinction is baseless. The Church never discriminated, *i.e.* openly and consciously, between intellectual and moral truth. The spiritual insight capable of pronouncing on the one was assumed to include apprehension of the other. I may add that my argument of the claim to the possession of the Holy Ghost being prejudicially affected by intellectual ignorance is distinctly sanctioned *quantum valeat* by Augustine,¹ who on this very ground refutes the title of Manes to the name and influence of the Paraclete. He does not seem to see that the argument is equally applicable to the exclusive claim of the Church to the guidance of the same spirit.

MISS LEYCESTER. I think you gentlemen are arrogating more than your fair share of the discussion. I have long been wanting to ask Charles what, on his hypothesis, becomes of the definition of Christianity as a *Revelation*. You can hardly say that a new Revelation was needed to teach men that it was wicked to murder or steal.

HARRINGTON. You must bear in mind, Florence, that all that I purported to comprehend in my paper was the aspect Christianity bore to Free-thought: there are other phases, doctrinal, devotional, &c. which did not come properly within my province. Moreover, I do not know that I am concerned to defend all the technical terms Christian dogmatism has devised generally for dictatorial, self-assertory purposes. What is called Christ's Revelation, He Himself termed His kingdom. That He proclaimed His teaching as a disclosing or unveiling of truth, differing in kind from all preceding conceptions, I utterly deny. Nor can I find that He often employed the term 'new' to qualify His teaching. On one occasion He certainly says, 'A new commandment I

which ordinarily regulate the course of human progress, morality being much less affected by growth and evolution than knowledge. Of course if both the moral and intellectual guidance of the Holy Ghost in the Church be denied, there is no province left for the exercise of His functions. It may also be alleged against the bishop's argument that some limitation or influence over the will is necessarily implied in every doctrine of grace.'—Thirlwall's *Remains*, vol. iii. p. 489.

¹ *Confess.* lib. v. chap. v.

give unto you,' but this is none other than the second of the great precepts which He derived from the older law, so that at most the 'newness' could only have been the new form of or else the additional sanction or emphasis placed on an old command. That this was especially needed in the time of Christ, as a forcible vindication of the obligatory and religious character of ethical duties, will hardly be denied.

MISS LEYCESTER. May we then assume—for that seems the outcome of your reasoning, that Christianity is, as Tindal said, 'as old as the Creation'?

HARRINGTON. If I were a theologian, accustomed to base every opinion and even every truism on textual authority, I should ask you to consider the implication of John's account of the Logos, 'The same was in the beginning with God,' or the text, 'Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' Being, however, only a layman, and pledged to use the ordinary standards of reason and common sense, I say that no conceivable charter of authority can be ascribed to any religion greater than that it is coeval with the world and humanity. Ritter in his history¹ speaks of 'Das Ewige im Christenthum,' discriminating in a single phrase between what is accidental and temporary and what is absolute and eternal in Christianity. It is the prerogative of truth to be everlasting, and of all natural laws to be universally binding. The attempt of theologians to limit all truth to the actual time and teaching of Christ, independently of the contradiction of such an opinion to His own explicit declaration, can only be maintained by a fatal undermining of the justice and providence of God. At the same time I humbly conceive that Christ does not merely transmit older truths to after-ages in just the same form as He received them. Both the service to God and duty to man which He inculcated

¹ His words are worth quoting. Speaking of creeds and religious formularies, and acknowledging in some respects their utility, he adds: 'Halten wir uns doch daran, dass jeder sprachliche Ausdruck über Dinge der Religion dem Wechsel unterworfen ist, kaum ohne Veränderung des Sinnes aus der einen in die andere Zeit, viel weniger aus der einen in die andere Sprache, übertragen werden kann, und dass daher das Ewige im Christenthum durch solche wandelbare Formen nur schwach zu bezeichnen ist.'—*Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. v. p. 9.

receive a new enhancement, a fresh accession of spiritual energy, from His words and life.

ARUNDEL. There I heartily agree with you. . . . But it is not only with Tindal among English Deists that you can claim some *rapprochement*. Your mode of interpreting Christianity is substantially that of the 'moral divines' of the last century. Indeed, for a considerable part of your essay you were industriously belabouring the well-thrashed chaff of those eminent men, not to mention earlier and later operators with the critical flail on the same husks, which of course I don't deny to have once contained good grain, but only assert to have been thoroughly emptied of it for a considerable period.

HARRINGTON. I am quite aware, my dear Arundel, of the essential harmony of my view with that of a good many philosophical inquirers who have approached the question of Christianity without ecclesiastical bias or prejudice. My concern in view of our subject is to determine the original code, the Magna Charta, if I may so phrase it, by which our Skeptics in their several divergences from Christianity may be judged.

ARUNDEL. Well, professionally, and I dare say unconsciously, you were inclined, I think, to play the advocate, and to strain a point in favour of our Skeptics. Your proposed code or standard bore a slight *soupçon* of being a piece of *ex post facto* legislation, and to be arrived at in this way: given men with a minimum of Christian belief, it is required to find a form of Christianity so comprehensive as to include them.

HARRINGTON. Which is, at least, as good policy, and infinitely more in harmony with Christ's own teaching and practice, than the one your profession is much too fond of defending, *i.e.* given men with a maximum of faith—including creeds, dogmas, and superstitions not even *named* by Christ—it is required to devise an original framework of Christianity which will include and authenticate them, as well as exclude all others not endued to an equal extent with powers of credulity, or perhaps possessing a greater share of critical fastidiousness.

ARUNDEL. At all events, if your 'charity' is the virtue that hopeth all things, I don't think you can claim for it the merit of 'believing all things.' But I am anxious to hear what can fairly be alleged in defence of what seemed to be an excess of individualism. If the conscience and reason of the Christian be the supreme authority for all truth whether revealed or not, what bonds of cohesion are left to prevent the Church or Christian community falling to pieces like a rope of sand? Harrington refused a while ago to allow my junction of individualism with anarchy: to me, I confess, they seem allied, if not as synonyms, at least as cause and effect.

TREVOR. To me, on the other hand, if I may take up the gauntlet you have thrown down, individualism, when set up as a bugbear to frighten men from due self-reliance and Free-thought, seems the emptiest of inanities. From the very nature of the case—the natural constitution of man and his relation to the universe—the term can never be more than relative and limited. Conceive the most unlimited freedom of human thought and action. Set up the individual above the community, and even the race. What do you thereby effect? At most only a moderate and limited singularity. Imagine, *e.g.* that all the experience and traditions of humanity in respect of food and drink were suddenly abolished, and tell every man he may eat and drink what seems best to his individual fancy, and we know the inevitable result: the general experience of mankind would soon assert itself, and dominate, with rare exceptions, over individual eccentricity. So far from anarchy, as a state of things in which no ruling principle exists, being the outcome of such unrestricted liberty, the very experiment of granting it would demonstrate the impossibility of anarchy. The same argument is also applicable to religious and political freedom, though in the spiritual and mental requirements of men there is obviously more room for variation than in their physical needs. Let men have all the religious and social liberty that can be desired with due respect to the equal rights of others, their relation to the universe will necessitate to an overwhelming majority the postulate of a deity or some equivalent power as the source of the laws of the universe, while their relation

to each other, their sharing common instincts and common wants, will make mutual help and love, in other words, morality, the foundation of their social existence. Hence I say, let us not be deterred by an apophthegm of doubtful truth from insisting on as much individualism as is necessary to human liberty. As the world and humanity are constituted the fear will always be not of anarchy but of panarchy, if I may coin the word, *i.e.* the merging of all individualism in a despotism, intellectual, religious, or otherwise, in which every rule and prescription are imposed *ab extra*, and maintained as an imperious and infallible dogma.

HARRINGTON. On the whole, I agree with you, Doctor. History clearly proves that the besetting sin of humanity and the leaning of the majority is not towards anarchy in the sense of individual independence, as much as towards panarchy, as you call it. I was about to answer Arundel's objection, and concurrently to illustrate the position I would assign to the fundamental points of Christianity in this way. Half a dozen men, we will suppose, are intently surveying a landscape. With eyes of different powers, every man sees his own prospect, and that only. The horizon looks nearer or farther, and objects close to it seem greater or smaller, or assume in other ways a different appearance, according to the eye-power in each particular case. Now, if every one possessed the means of transmitting to paper with the rapidity and precision of a photographic lens his own particular view, we should no doubt find all of them differing in minor respects each from the other. But we should also find this, that every view had the same general characteristics. The foreground, the prominent objects, would be alike in every case; we should discover that it was mostly in the distant objects, or those placed in a peculiar position with regard to the beholder, that differences occurred; in other words, the individual peculiarities would bear no proportion to the general sameness. Now this is what Christianity did for mankind. Christ did not formulate a number of intellectual and speculative beliefs. He did not attempt to fill the canvas of the minds of His indi-

vidual hearers, still less of all future history. A few foreground truths on which there could be no possibility of dispute among religious or humane persons were all that He insisted on.

ARUNDEL. One question more before we break up. If, as your paper maintained, Christianity is based upon individualism, if Christ was careless, as you appear to think, of amalgamating His followers into a distinct and definite community, what becomes of your old position as a loyal defender of a State Church? For on your premisses a Church as a self-legislating, dogma-making power has no right to exist, and in that case cannot claim to be supported by the State.

HARRINGTON. As to Christ's own teaching, of course He says no more on the mutual relation of the Church with the State than He does on any other complicated problem of political or social arrangements to which the progress of history has given birth. But for my part I see no reason why Christ's life and teaching may and ought not to be held up, by special provision of any State calling itself Christian, to the admiration and imitation of its citizens. The actual organization or machinery by which this object is accomplished seems to me a matter of secondary importance. What is most to be guarded against is any undue infringement of Christian liberty, whether by the secular tendencies of the State, or the sacerdotal instincts of the Church, or any portion of its ministers. After all, the best type of a Church, whether State or not, and which gives most freedom to its members, is that which comes nearest to the teaching of Christ; whose dogmas are few and obvious, whose worship is simple and unsuperstitious, whose injunctions are mainly ethical and humanitarian, whose basis is broad and catholic, and whose sympathies, like its Founder's, are free, generous, and comprehensive.

TREVOR. Nevertheless, you appear to me to have missed the strongest argument for the formal alliance of Christianity with the State, viz. their sharing to a great extent similar aims and objects. Christianity—I mean that of Christ—is the highest expression of ethical and social duty, the supreme form and eternal embodiment of that justice and morality

which are the objects of all legal enactments, and the bonds of all civilized communities. Hence it consecrates and imparts a religious flavour to duties which might conceivably suffer by a too secular or merely political presentation. On the other hand, had Christianity in its essence and most authoritative aspect consisted merely of ritual observance beyond what was needful as the simple outward expression of religious feeling, or if it could be fairly interpreted as pure sentiment and unrelated to practical morality—in either case, the State might decline to connect itself with it. As it is, by adopting the teachings of Christ, justice, rectitude, self-denial, duty—the bases of wise human conduct and the foundations of State policy—are all idealized and religionized, raised to a higher level of thought, and invested with perennial sanctions. They are conceived, to use Spinoza's phrase, *sub specie eternitatis*.

ARUNDEL. Your exposition of the relation between Church and State seems to me inadequate, and it leaves the clergy open to the reproach *quantum valeat* of Sacerdotalists, that they are only a department of the State, a kind of ecclesiastical police.

TREVOR. That is surely unavoidable whenever Christianity is accepted as involving primarily ethical duty and as opposed to ecclesiasticism. Pharisees and Sacerdotalists have in all ages decried the conception of human duty which does not proceed from ritual service, but Harrington has reminded us what Christ's own estimate of this over-religionism was. . . . But I think it is time we were on our road to Hilderton, so I move our immediate adjournment.

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EVENING VIII.

THE SKEPTICISM OF ST. AUGUSTINE.

φαμέν τοίνυν ἐνθένδε γυμνῶ τῷ λόγῳ, τὴν φιλοσοφίαν ζήτησιν ἔχειν περὶ ἀληθείας καὶ τῆς τῶν ὄντων φύσεως· ἀλήθεια δὲ αὕτη περὶ ἧς ὁ κύριος αὐτὸς εἶπεν, Ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ἀλήθεια.

CLEM. ALEX. *Strom.* i. ch. v. Potter's ed. i. 335.

'Setting forth the Church as the way to Christ, instead of setting forth Christ as the way to the Church, has been a fountain of unnumbered evils.'

BISHOP EWING.

'The plague of the Church for above a thousand years has been the enlarging our creed and making more fundamentals than God ever made.'

BAXTER.

'Il faut faire une grande différence entre ce qu'un homme croit par l'efficacité de la foi, et ce qu'il avoue ingénument que la Raison lui suggère sur les dogmes de la Religion.'

BAYLE, *Dict.* art. 'Charron.'

'O æterna veritas, et vera caritas, et cara æternitas, Tu es Deus meus.'

AUGUSTINE.

EVENING VIII.

THE SKEPTICISM OF ST. AUGUSTINE.¹

MRS. HARRINGTON. I suppose that mental like physical travelling brings us acquainted with strange company. It seems difficult at first sight to perceive our right of including Augustine in our researches. He was, or is esteemed to have been, one of the main pillars of dogma in the Christian Church. 'Saul among the prophets' seems a far less striking example of misplacement than 'Augustine among the Sceptics.'

¹ The following works are referred to in this chapter:—

Augustini Opera omnia. Ed. Benedict. XI. vols. fol. Paris 1689. But the *Confessions* are quoted from the edition of the *Bibliotheca Patrum.* Oxon. 1838.

Bindemann, *Der Heilige Augustinus.* 3 vols. 1844-69. This is, on the Protestant side, by far the most exhaustive work on Augustine.

La Philosophie de Saint Augustin. Par Nourisson. Paris 1866.

Histoire de St. Augustin. Par M. Poujoulat. 2 vols. 12mo. Paris 1852.

Études sur Saint Augustin, son génie, son âme, sa philosophie. Par l'Abbé Flottes. Paris 1861.

Saint Augustin et la liberté de conscience. Par M. Saint-Bené Tailandier. *Revue des Deux-Mondes*, vol. xx.

Bossuet, *Défense de la Tradition et des Saints Pères.* *Œuv. Comp.* ii.

Die Philosophie der Kirchenväter. Von Hüber. München 1859.

Geschichte der Christlich-Lateinischen Literatur, von ihren Anfängen bis zum Zeitalter Karls des Grossen. Von A. Ebert. Leipzig 1874.

Histoire critique des principaux commentateurs du Nouveau Testament, &c. Par M. Simon. To this work Bossuet's *Défense de la Tradition et des Saints Pères* is a reply, though, after the manner of his Church, more declamatory and abusive than erudite and critical.

Of Church Histories, those most worth consulting on Augustine are Neander, vols. iii. and iv., Bohn's trans., Gieseler, Milman and Robertson.

Of the Histories of Philosophy, Ritter is very valuable, vi. 153-188; so is also De Beausolve's *Histoire de Manichée.* 2 vols. 4to.

The best dictionary articles on Augustine are in the *Dictionnaire des Sciences Philosophiques*, in the *Nouvelle Biographie Générale*, and Herzog, *Encyclopädie.*

TREVOR. If you remember, Mrs. Harrington, we are already pledged to include Augustine: and our resolution to that effect is amply justified, for the following reasons:

1. We may plead a precedent: he has already been classed among Skeptics in Staudlin's History, the learned author of which terms him 'dieser talentvolle Zweifler,'¹ and indirectly his Free-thought has been recognised and commented on in the general histories of philosophy.

2. He was, by his own confession, a Skeptic for nearly half of his life.

3. Although he subsequently became a dogmatist, and a severe and rigid one, yet even his final theological convictions were strongly coloured by his prior contact with Skepticism and Free-thought.

4. His works, even those written in the interests of dogma, have exercised considerable influence on the Free-speculation of succeeding times.

ARUNDEL. Let me suggest two other reasons why we should discuss the great Bishop of Hippo in relation to Free-thought. 1. He is the most remarkable example we shall meet with of the progress of a keen speculative intellect from Skepticism to Christian certitude, without adopting any such doubtful expedient as Twofold Truth. 2. After discussing, as we have, the beginnings of Christianity, Augustine, the child of a heathen father and Christian mother, will come in opportunely to test the growth of Christian dogma in the fourth century A.D.

MRS. HARRINGTON. I am more than satisfied. I fear my ignorance of patristic studies induced me to underrate Augustine's Skepticism.

TREVOR. Your error is not uncommon. Theological writers of all ages are only too anxious to draw a veil over the intellectual and moral 'wild oats' of the great champion of Latin orthodoxy. Hence Augustine as a dogmatist, a prominent Christian bishop, a defender of ecclesiasticism, has quite eclipsed the Skeptic, the restless Free-thinker, the Pagan rhetor of the first thirty-three years of his life; and the error, however natural from some points of view, is the

¹ *Geschichte des Skepticismus*, i. p. 534.

less excusable in reality because the methods and teachings of his dogma-period, and his undeniable ability in employing them, were results of his Skeptical training, as I hope my paper will abundantly prove.

HARRINGTON. Well, as long as the 'Confessions' are read, we need not be afraid that the halo of the saint will ever by its dazzle hide the faults of the sinner. The book certainly gives one the impression of absolute truthfulness in matter, though doubtless forced and rhetorical in manner.

ARUNDEL. The reluctance Trevor speaks of to disclose the faults of great men may arise from other causes than undue respect for their fame and the services they have rendered humanity. For my part I both dislike and suspect the excessive candour which, for whatever reason, reveals to the world the depths of degradation into which passion and folly may have betrayed any man. Hence I think Augustine might as well have omitted several passages of his 'Confessions.' His is a prominent example of a tendency frequently found in religionists of an effusive type, to exaggerate their infirmities in order to enhance their merits in having escaped them, or by way of contrasting present attainment with former unworthiness, just as a successful merchant sometimes boasts that he began his career with only sixpence in his pocket. Of course the ascribing every religious or moral progress to Divine aid is a *sine quâ non* of all piety. What does not seem equally pious or wise is the ostentatious parade of what may have been a degrading starting-point. So that, when Augustine calls God as 'Deus meus' to bear witness to the immoralities of his early life, the invocation is needless as addressed to Omniscience, and of doubtful utility as obtruded on the gaze of fallible humanity. The approval of the work by an immoral sentimentalist like Rousseau is almost a sufficing condemnation of a considerable portion of it.

HARRINGTON. Leaving out cases like Rousseau's, in which the tendency you speak of may be both needless and hurtful, we must, I think, make a special exception of Augustine's 'Confessions,' both on account of their psychological profundity and their religious philosophy, attributes

which render the work unique among religious autobiographies. From the point of view of his final acquisition of Christian certitude, he surveys retrospectively the halting steps and devious paths by which he conceives himself to have attained it. The sun of religious and moral perfection, in whose beams he rejoices, seems to cast a reflected light on all his past explorations and search for truth. Hence every impulse however misguided, every propension however apparently evil, assumes for him a new aspect. His moral and intellectual restlessness is only the blind, erring efforts of the soul in its instinctive search for God. Every false love was but the vagrant inarticulate expression of a craving which could find satisfaction only in the Infinite. His greatest errors are so far sanctified that they are the outcome of a passionate longing after certainty. No doubt he confesses and bewails his faults, both intellectual and moral, but it is with a half-sympathetic consciousness that in the mysterious decrees of Providence they have been 'stepping-stones of his dead self,' to use the poet's expression, towards a higher and nobler existence.

TREVOR. You have just touched upon one of the most striking contradictions in Augustine's character—I mean the union for a considerable part of his life of large-hearted, comprehensive sympathies with a continually hardening and exclusive dogmatism. Nothing can better illustrate the refrigerating power of sacerdotalism and dogma than the fact that they were enough to congeal the human sympathies, the emotional tenderness, the mystical depth and fulness of feeling which belonged to Augustine's better nature. His 'Retractations,' or, as that work might not unfairly be named, his 'Apology for overmuch indulgence in the ecclesiastical vices of comprehensiveness and Christian charity,' is a dismal catalogue of the products of the dogmatic ice-machine. Richard Simon, the father of modern Biblical criticism, used to say that he preferred Augustine's retracted opinions to his definitive tenets. Indeed, his negations transmuted into affirmations would form a judicious and Christian creed, just as the 'Index Librorum Prohibitorum' may prove a valuable guide to the best literature.

MISS LEYCESTER. With regard to Augustine's contribution to Christian dogma, I suppose we ought to believe, at least most Christians do believe, that the specific course which the stream of Christian doctrine took was directed by Divine wisdom. I must say that it appears to me to have been mainly the result of political accident and policy. Such, at least, was the conclusion I derived from Gibbon's 'Decline and Fall.' Jerome remarked that the encouragement which Constantius gave to Arianism had almost produced the effect of horrifying the Christian world by the discovery that it had become Arian. I have often asked myself, Suppose it had, what would it have signified? It seems preposterous to say that the Christianity of Christ and the Gospels could have been prejudicially affected by such an event. No doubt there would have been other terms and formulæ. The Nicene Creed, *e.g.* would have assumed a different shape, but both the orthodoxy and the heresy of the fourth century had already departed so far from the simplicity and practical genius of Christ's teaching that the question of their own mutual differences is comparatively of small importance. Imagine the Arian controversy as an outgrowth of future Christianity submitted to Christ for decision, with its purely speculative import, its minute points of difference, the distinction, *e.g.* between a vowel and a diphthong,¹ the bitter rancour, animosity, and even bloodshed of which it was the cause. With what holy scorn would He have denounced the dispute, and every section and subsection of the parties concerned in it! The burdens imposed on the Christian conscience by His own followers He could not but have acknowledged were infinitely heavier than those of the Pharisees which He so vehemently reprobated, while the zeal of each party in proselytizing had notoriously the precise effect He so forcibly described in the case of converts to Pharisaism.

ARUNDEL. I should be ready to concede for my part

¹ Boileau's satirical lines are well known (*Sat.* xii.) :—

'Tu fis, dans une guerre et si triste et si longue,
Périr tant de Chrétiens—martyrs d'une diphthongue.'

Unluckily, the poet thought fit to alter in the later editions of his satire this incomparably terse and vigorous expression.

that more stress than was right or needful was placed upon the differences between orthodoxy and heresy in many instances—Arianism being one. At the same time we must bear in mind the standpoint of such men as Augustine, Jerome, Athanasius in the Arian controversy. It was not merely the relation between Jesus of Nazareth and His Father that occupied their minds. By means of the Neo-Platonic and Aléxandrian philosophy interfused into early Christianity, and of which we have traces in the fourth Gospel, they had elevated themselves to a high metaphysical platform, on which ordinarily slight differences became of considerable moment. Conceive, *e.g.* God as absolute truth—Augustine's favourite conception—and Christ as the embodiment of truth. Now it is the inherent property of all truth to be eternal. Hence Christ, as truth, must have been so coeternal with the Father that it is impossible to say there ever was a time when He did not exist—which was what the orthodox maintained.

HARRINGTON. No doubt the leaders of Christian thought were expert enough in transcendentalizing any question that presented inexplicable difficulties in a concrete form. Nor would I deny the legitimacy of such a process in metaphysical theology. It is, however, liable to abuse. Too often theologians, like mystics and cuttle-fish, escape pursuit by enveloping themselves in their self-raised obfuscations. As to Florence's question, its purport is, What is the use of dogma regarded as a part or proof of a possible Divine guidance of the Church? My own opinion is, there is no valid proof of any guidance except the very un-Divine, I should say the intensely human, one, of sordid greed and hierarchical ambition. On the whole, the history of the Christian Church—I speak of course of the corporate body—from the third to the fifteenth centuries appears to me a retrogressive movement, whose real object and only conceivable consummation was the utter thralldom of humanity. Still, as another possible answer to Florence's suggestion, I may mention a theory which I first heard from a professional friend who, like myself, seeks to enliven the dry-as-dust pursuits of law by occasional incursions into philosophy and

theology. On my once asking him what, under the hypothesis of a Providence in history, was the best account he could give of the *rôle* of ecclesiastical dogma, he replied: 'In my opinion, to preserve intact the germ of Christianity, *i.e.* the genuine, historical, human Christ. We may regard this central truth like a kernel inclosed in some half-dozen shells, husky rinds, and involutions of various kinds and thicknesses. In order to arrive at it we must first break and throw away the ecclesiastical shell, then the dogmatic shell, next the thaumaturgic shell, lastly the eschatological or purely Jewish shell. It is only by peeling and cracking in this way that we arrive at the kernel. Now,' he added, 'it is just this process of shell-breaking that we see at present going on around us—the relaxation of dogma in modern Churches and peoples, the large increase of tolerance and charity, the distinct subordination of petty definitions of speculative teaching to large aspects of practical truth—which to the terrified ecclesiastic assumes the form of Skepticism. To my mind the process is both inevitable and wholesome. The millennium of Christianity will arrive when men are able of themselves to discriminate between what is real in historical Christianity and what is fictitious, between the original Divine deposit and the adventitious human accretion, between what is permanently valuable and what can never be more than temporarily so.'

ARUNDEL. Your friend must have wielded a most potent pair of nut-crackers. I wonder he confined his operations to the hard shells, and did not extend them to the kernel itself, as so many of his analytical temperament are apt to do. He might have found it equally incapable of resisting such well-directed critical pressure. Hence, like the fool in the story who was persuaded that an onion was a curious kind of nut inclosing a delicious kernel, by the time he peeled off the last coat he must have found—at least he was in danger of finding—nothing for his pains.

HARRINGTON. I presume he pursued his investigations till he came to what he could masticate without danger to his teeth, swallow without straining his deglutition, and assimilate without indigestion—the ordinary object,

I may add, of all nut-cracking, whether physical or intellectual.

TREVOR. To me the theory you have quoted seems quite paradoxical. It is certainly a novel view to take of the uses of dogmas, which are generally assumed to be obstructive and determinedly hostile to all new truth, that they really serve to guard and protect it. Your friend seems to have been misled by a false analogy. New truth is not for the most part contained in the old, but has an independent origin and existence of its own: there is a polemical relation between them until the new discovery has triumphantly vindicated its claims to superiority. The theory has also a further defect of ignoring the positive mischief of those various dogma-shells, *i.e.* their assuming the appearance of and being represented as the real kernel or vital germ, of which they are only the hard dead involucre.

MISS LEYCESTER. For my part, the hypothesis seems to me as reasonably probable as any other that could be devised in a matter so recondite. Charles considers dogma-growth from the Protestant point of view as a decided retrogression; Catholics believe that every stage of such growth marks a real progress in the history of humanity. This theory occupies a middle position. Hence dogma-development becomes of itself neither retrogressive nor progressive. The seeming growth is but the temporary condition of things from which in due time new growth, or rather the old germ under new and favourable auspices, is destined to spring to maturity. Nor is it, notwithstanding Dr. Trevor's cautiously expressed objection, inapplicable to the ordinary advance of knowledge. It is surely no paradox to say, *e.g.* that modern astronomy was contained in ancient astrology, or modern chemistry in the old alchemy. The methods of research were largely alike; the chief differences were in the theories and starting-points, and in the objects contemplated.

TREVOR. Accepting your hypothesis, the kernel of modern astronomy is certainly an anomalous product to have issued from the nut of astrology. I suppose you would hardly contend that the Copernican system was really involved in the Ptolemaic?

MISS LEYCESTER. Perhaps not, but you have given the

theory a more specific and narrow implication than I suspect it was intended to have. I should be far from saying that the rule was universal. As a general mode of scientific progress, I think it holds good. Nor, I think, would you deny that in its application to Christianity it is especially appropriate; for here the question is of a deposit of faith, a germ of moral and spiritual truth generally authoritative among men, and therefore not so likely to be changed by the antagonism of distinctly different veracities or principles that assume that name, as enveloped and hidden by them.

TREVOR. I should like to have some specific example of these preservative blessings of dogma.

HARRINGTON. Let me give you the one my friend suggested to me. 'Take,' he said, 'the controversies of the early Church on the Divinity of Christ. No doubt most liberal thinkers of our day, contrasting the enormous emphasis laid upon it by the post-Apostolic Fathers, the councils convened to define it, the persecutions employed to assert it, with the reticence of Christ on the subject, would think such a stress misplaced and exaggerated. But suppose the Arians had been successful, and the Nicene Creed had received corresponding modifications. The tendency to diminish the supremacy of Christ thus commenced, might have gone on till other and more serious stages of deterioration were reached, so that eventually the Church might have lost Christ, especially in the dark ages through which Christianity had to pass, as the centre of her system. Whereas by insisting on it from an early period, exalting it even to an unreasonable extent, she at least preserved it, until men of a freer mind, of more liberal culture, able to assimilate and equalize the essential features of Christ's teaching with other varied progress in science and philosophy, should be in a position to take the germ or kernel, and, throwing away the shells which have subserved their purpose, to adhere to that fractional part of Christianity in which all its real vitality consists.' My reply to this far-fetched hypothesis was, briefly, that it was to the literature of Christianity, not to its dogmatic development, that modern thinkers would appeal. So far as the dogma aided to preserve the literature in which

was contained the first form of Christianity, so far only would the argument be valid. On the very question at issue, the teachings of Christ on His relations to God are more valuable than all the decrees of all the general councils on the same subject.

TREVOR. You might have suggested in addition the absurdity of supposing that sixteen centuries were needed to develop a germ which, in point of fact, came into existence in the completest maturity.

MISS LEYCESTER. But, Doctor, as you are aware, the germ might have been mature without its state of preparedness being shared by surrounding circumstances, and he might have answered your objection by pointing out other examples of the arrested vitality or slow growth of truth, and the many instances in which the germ of some scientific or philosophical discovery has lain dormant for centuries, awaiting the fulness of time when it was destined to find a congenial environment, and thereby a rapid and decisive development.

MRS. HARRINGTON. It does not seem to me that we have the requisite data for deciding what especial purpose, agreeably with the Divine government of the world, such an extreme expansion as is presented by some forms of Christian dogma was meant to subserve. For that matter, however, there are other episodes—retardations of growth, mysterious and prolonged stoppages of Time's great clock—in secular history as well, of which it is difficult to see the utility considered as bearing directly on the moral or intellectual progress of mankind.

ARUNDEL. One purpose of this luxuriant dogma-growth—I am far from thinking it the only one—may have been the consolidation of Christian nations and races, in times of political and social disorganization, by the principle of supreme and Divine authority, the only one which imperfectly civilized races are able to understand.

HARRINGTON. 'Until,' you should have added, 'the human reason, educated and enlightened, might be able to assume its own inherent functions of self-government, provisionally delegated to the guardianship of external authority'—precisely St. Paul's argument as to the providential

purpose of the Jewish law, 'Now I say that the heir as long as he is a child differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.' Nevertheless, my friend, you must have a care lest in admitting the temporary nature of dogma you lay yourself open to the imputation of supposing that it is destined some day to total extinction, which I know cannot be your opinion.

ARUNDEL. Certainly not. It is of the overgrowth of dogma that I was speaking. That purely authoritative teachings and modes of communicating them should lose somewhat of their power in proportion to the progress of men in every department of thought and science appears to me so self-evident as to be almost a truism.

MISS LEYCESTER. I can understand the fascination which arbitrary uninquiring belief has for intellects of a weaker kind—'ivy-minds,' I have heard them called. To such persons dogmas are like the old Jewish cities of refuge, into which any man guilty, or fearing to be 'guilty of error unawares,' might escape. What I am not able to divine is how men of strong powerful intellects should allow themselves to be bound passively to the chariot wheels of authority, without the least preliminary examination of the origin and function of the chariot, the character of the charioteer, the direction in which it is being driven, or even the nature of the bands and ties which render them helpless participators in its movements.

TREVOR. For a detailed solution of your difficulty you must await our discussions. The motive-influences in every great mental movement are so various, and depend so completely on personal character and circumstances, that an epitome of them is impossible. Augustine will, *e.g.* give us an instance of the direct production of extreme dogmatism by means, (1) of a reaction against Free-thought; (2) imaginative and speculative power; (3) hierarchical ambition. But while in his and other cases we agree to deprecate and lament excessive dogma, we need not shut our eyes to obvious palliatives and excuses which may be urged, even by those who are aware of some of its dangers. Especially

may be noted in every presentation of truth, the inevitable necessities of the case. You cannot eliminate the human factor in the problem. Truths of every kind, even when not originated by, must needs pass into and through, human intellects, which do not invariably act the part of spiritual filters; they must be exposed to human temptations and be expressed in human language, and therefore be liable to human fallibility and error.

HARRINGTON. Excuse me, Doctor, the consideration just mentioned is of too subtle and abstruse a character to be largely influential. Most men, so far from being kept back, are rather impelled by a sense of fallibility to embrace and exaggerate the merits of dogma. They take no account, as a rule, of possible defects in their own receptivity—for of course truth is received *ad modum recipientis*, just as sounds are heard or objects are seen.

MISS LEYCESTER. But why should men be always anxiously scrutinizing their conditions of perception or introspection, like a valetudinarian with his fingers for ever on his pulse? Should not intellection be just as unconsciously performed as any physical function of a sound and healthy organization? And, after all, no man can have any other mode of apprehending truth but what is innate and peculiar to himself. Such a fact ought, no doubt, to impart some modesty into his beliefs and methods of attaining them, but ordinarily it has the very opposite result.

TREVOR. I agree with you, but in my suggested palliatives for dogmatism I was regarding it from our own philosophic and candid standpoint. Human fallibility and its consciousness does really operate in two ways—1st, it drives men to dogmatism; 2nd, it impels them to Skepticism. But, as you say, the latter is really the logical result. Taking, *e.g.* ecclesiastical dogma, I know no better antidote to its excessive pretension than the secret history of the councils, emperors, empresses, and bishops who took part in them, such as we have in the ingenuous pages of Tillemont. The passion, lust, ambition, and self-interest which were frequently predisposing causes of the determinations and decisions of councils are perfectly appalling.

HARRINGTON. I remember once making a remark on this very subject of the suspicious sources of dogma-growth, to a clerical but cynical friend. His reply will serve in part as an answer to Florence's wonderment that strong intellects are found to be passive recipients of dogma. He said: 'Provided a dogma does not absolutely shock common sense, provided it is not clearly out of all harmony and connection with other beliefs in the same category, I am willing to accept it. As to knowing precisely how it came to have the shape or formation it now presents (limiting, of course, the remark to human agencies, *i.e.* all the secret intrigues of courts, councils, bishops, &c.) why, thanks, I would much rather not. I like or can tolerate the finished article well enough, but I don't care to see the process of its manufacture. Similarly, if I want to relish my dinner, I would much rather not be in the kitchen while it is being prepared. The saucepan and gridiron may not be scrupulously scoured, the cook's hands or her apron may not be perfectly clean, or any one of the many requisite operations may not be effected with the extreme care and nicety that my fastidiousness would suggest. But when the meal is dressed and served I sit down with an appetite, not wholly ignorant that there may have been incidents in its production which, if I knew, would make me uncomfortable, but feeling happy in the consciousness of ignorance when knowledge might be painful and disquieting, and recognising as inevitable the human instrumentality and its shortcomings to which I owe not only this but numberless other dressings, meals, and preparations mental as well as physical.' . . . I ought to add that I consider his cynicism as merely the cloak of listlessness or idleness, for he was by no means deficient in intellectual power.

MISS LEYCESTER. Such a theological Epikourean richly deserved an occasional attack of severe mental dyspepsia in order to recall him to a sense of duty. I suppose it is of no use reminding men of that type of Locke's severe comments on their apathetic listlessness, or telling them that all truth unverified is in reality no truth at all—in the sense of personal possession.

TREVOR. Not in the least. Their dogmatic appetites are large and their digestions good. But, though I agree with it, I may remind you that exceptions have been taken to the idea so strongly insisted on by Locke. In the case of wrong belief, Augustine, *e.g.* with a pardonable reminiscence of his past career, thought that there was a considerable difference between a heretic and a man who merely believed in heretics.¹ The heretic or heresiarch, he maintained, was the skilled leader who knew full well the meaning and object of his wrong teaching; whereas his disciple might be deceived by the illusion of the teacher's intellectual or other gifts. The former was bound to substantiate and verify; to his personal dependant this independent criticism was needless, or, at least, not necessarily obligatory.

HARRINGTON. A charitable distinction, truly, and worthy of a redoubtable dogmatist like Augustine, to whom, like others of his class, self-engendered misbelief, however honestly come by, is always criminal. Why might not the poor heresiarch plead the illusion and false glamour of his supposed wrong tenets, as well as his disciple urge his own personal influence? Ideas and theories are often far more attractive than persons, and exercise much greater influence. Besides, Augustine's intellect was too inherently powerful to permit him to become the blind follower of any system. Indeed, as a Manichæan his own personal influence seduced several of his friends. Considered therefore as an attempt at exculpation, his distinction reminds one of Juvenal's verse—

Quam temere in nosmet legem sancimus iniquam.

ARUNDEL. I don't see why you should press Augustine's distinction so hardly. It seems no more than the ordinary discrimination between the leaders of any great movement, whether religious or political, and the sequacious crowd which follows at their heels. Take the analogous case of a rebellion or treason: every government would think itself bound to treat its leaders with more severity than its followers.

TREVOR. No doubt. But your suggested analogy is

¹ *De Utilitate Credendi*, cap. i. *Om. op.* viii. p. 46.

deceptive. Mental freedom, its limits and duties, are not, nay, cannot be, determined by the rough-and-ready considerations which obtain in political government. The pillars on which human society is placed must not be meddled with except for imperative reasons; but no such reasons of general danger from anarchy and disorganization obtain in the independent pursuit of truth, and the spiritual freedom resulting from such pursuit.

ARUNDEL. In other words; a heresiarch is not so dangerous as a political rebel—a questionable proposition, I apprehend, to many people. But suppose that the direct tendency of any theoretical or philosophical system should be the subversion of all constituted authority, might it not be right to suppress the movements, together with its leader, while in the theoretical bud, before it has time to develop into an open political organization?

TREVOR. Certainly not. You are, I suspect unconsciously, suggesting the mischievous fallacy adopted by tyrants and despots of every kind, and which has done more harm to human liberty than any other argument. Society can only take cognizance of this as of every other antagonistic element in some overt form or manifestation. In its 'theoretical bud' every movement is, or must be held to be, blameless, nor should any attempt be made to repress by physical means theories and ideas which are best counteracted by reasonings of an opposite kind. As a matter of history and experience, no theoretical principle or philosophical movement can in a healthy state of society, *i.e.* one in which liberty is most widely and equally distributed, 'operate injuriously.' . . . But our discussion is taking a political turn, so I will with your leave recall your attention to our subject by commencing my essay on the Skepticism of Augustine.

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Few names in Christian antiquity are better adapted to illustrate the relation of Free-thought to ecclesiastical dogma than that of Augustine. His life is a canvas on which are depicted in vivid colours the juxtaposition and varied antagonisms of Christianity and heathendom in the fourth century. In his character and

intellectual career, as in his parentage and environment, he has a divided personality, representing the dualism of the age in which he lived. The son of a Pagan father and Christian mother, his whole life shares the heterogeneous character of its origin. At different periods of his career he is a Pagan philosopher and a Christian bishop, a thorough-going Skeptic and an ardent believer, a debauchee and a rigorous ascetic, a leader among Free-thinkers and the most despotic of dogmatists, a friend of heretics and their most ruthless adversary. All the main currents of thought and feeling which are found intermingled in an age of great mental upheaval and social commotion are found reflected in his life. This is, no doubt, a proof of the greatness and capacity of his nature. A great picture presupposes a large canvas. Indeed, one main distinction between really great men and those of ordinary stature is found in the fact that the first will, nay must, by tendencies they cannot control, mirror the age in which they live. Their mental activities are faithful, automatic, self-registering reflections of the religious, political, or other waves of human energy which pass by and through them, and they are therefore indissolubly part and parcel of their time; whereas the life of the ordinary man may be shifted a century or two backwards or forwards without much damage to its integrity or identity. Augustine's is a mind of this full and comprehensive order. Like an inland sea which drains all the watercourses of the surrounding neighbourhood, from the broad permanent river to the insignificant and temporary mountain torrent, its receptivity is limited only by the number and contents of its various confluent. This aspect of Augustine's intellect is clearly expressed in his works. Few are the currents of speculation whether Pagan or Christian, few the religious emotions, few the ideas and opinions in regard to theology and kindred subjects, which are not found in that voluminous treasury of ancient Christian thought. Fénelon said that a judiciously selected collection of the metaphysical truths scattered with lavish but careless hand throughout Augustine's works would be much superior to Descartes' 'Meditations.'¹ Leaving out of consideration Fénelon's comparison and the restriction of his remark to metaphysics, we may certainly admit that no Christian teacher, ancient or modern, could furnish such a number of remarks, pregnant and pithy, subtle and profound, on most subjects of human speculation, as might be gathered from Augustine's works. Nor is their value limited to the age when they were written, to

¹ Fénelon, *Lettres sur divers sujets de Métaphysique*, &c. Lettre iv.

which indeed they stand in the relation of a veritable encyclopædia. It is a proof of the reach and expansiveness of his intellect, that many, perhaps most, of his observations have a real and permanent value. The theologian, the metaphysician, the Pietist, the mystic, the historian, the ethical student, &c. may even now find many a priceless 'excerpt' bearing on his own specialty, by digging in these extensive quarries of ecclesiastical lore. This many-sidedness must be ascribed to the very fact of the incongruities in his career, that, *e.g.* he was a philosopher as well as a divine. Indeed, the dualism of a life almost equally divided between Free-thought and dogmatism is reflected in his works: they betray the instinctive liberty, impatience of restraint, the depth and audacity of speculation which pertain to the genuine Skeptic, curiously interblended with the arbitrary, overweening spirit of the ecclesiastical dogmatist.

Augustine was born at Tagasta, a small town of Numidia, in the year 353.¹ His father, Patricius, was a Decurio—a magisterial office in a Roman colony of some little importance—and was also a member of the town council of Tagasta. As I have remarked, he was also a Pagan, having received Christian baptism only a short time before his death. Augustine's mother, Monica, is a well-known and illustrious type of Christian virtue and devotion, albeit her piety is not untinged by superstition. His early youth Augustine narrates in his 'Confessions' with an exuberance of candour and a stress on his shortcomings which is probably owing in some measure to his subsequent prepossession in respect of original sin. The general corruption of manners among the Christian communities of Africa—for Augustine's case was not peculiar—was no doubt fostered by the customary delay of baptism until the fermentation of youth had somewhat subsided. Youthful misdemeanours, even of a great kind, were extenuated by the plea—certainly ill-sounding in the mouth of a Christian parent—'Let them alone, they have not yet been baptized.'² Of this liberty Augustine seems to have taken the fullest advantage. Left to his own devices, his greatest delight was seeing spectacles, plays, and whatever appealed most strongly to his imagination. He also displayed at an early age no small amount of waywardness and impatience of restraint, which prognosticated at once both the Free-thought of the earlier and the dogmatic rigour of the later portion of his life. But Augustine's youthful excesses did not

¹ On the year of Augustine's birth, cf. Bindemann, vol. i. p. 1, note.

² *Confessions*, p. 10. Cf. Flottes, *Études*, p. 8.

veil from his father's careful eye the promise of future greatness. Patricius designed him for a rhetor, as the profession in which his vivacity of character, his ardent imagination, and an excellent memory gave the greatest promise of success.

Having exhausted the educational resources of his immediate neighbourhood, Augustine repaired, at the age of seventeen, to Carthage to complete his studies. Unluckily, his father, who had watched over his education with the greatest solicitude, died about this time, and the further cost of his training was borne by Romianus, a wealthy nobleman of Tagasta, and a distant relative. Into the various dissipations which made Carthage notorious, even amidst the corruption then generally prevalent in every part of the Roman Empire,¹ the young student plunged, with all the recklessness of his nature. An illicit intercourse with a female of that place² resulted in the birth of a son, on whom Augustine, with a characteristic conviction that even his animal passions were in some sort the objects of Divine guidance, bestowed the name of Adeodatus. Meanwhile, notwithstanding youthful vices, his

¹ Flottes, *Études*, p. 13. Comp. Salviani, *De Gubernatione Dei*, lib. vii.; *Bibliotheca Maxima Vet. Patr.* vol. viii. p. 368; and Ampère, *Hist. Lit. de la France*, ii. pp. 172, 173, &c. In a work on Christian Free-thought it may be worth notice, in passing, that Salvian, a contemporary of Augustine and Athanasius, is disposed to tolerate the Arianism of the barbarians, on account of the superiority of their morals to those of the orthodox. Addressing the Romans, he says, 'You think you are better than the barbarians. They are heretics, say you, and you are orthodox, hence you are superior as to doctrine; but as to practice, I am sorry for it, you are worse, for you know the law and you violate it. . . . They (the barbarians) are heretics, but they know it not. They are so to us, but to themselves they are not so. They think themselves Catholics; so much so, indeed, that they accuse us of heresy. The truth is with us, but they think they possess it; they are wrong, but their intention is right.'—Ampère, *Hist. Lit.* loc. cit.

² Augustine's biographers pass *sicco pede* over these early escapades in the life of their hero. The Abbé Flottes, e.g. gravely comments: 'Il était alors absorbé par le besoin d'aimer et d'être aimé; mais il ne savait point se renfermer dans les bornes que prescrit l'union chaste et lumineuse des esprits' (*Études*, p. 10). It is a striking illustration of the laxity in the relation of the sexes among the Christians of the fourth century that neither Augustine nor his mother once seems to have thought of an early marriage as the only Christian preventive of such immorality; indeed, his parents were opposed to a scheme which might have thwarted their ambitious projects on behalf of their son (cf. Flottes, p. 9). Even when Augustine came to contemplate marriage, just before his baptism, it was merely with the intention of mending his fortunes. As for the saintly Monica, she seems to have dreaded a *mésalliance* for her son as much as a modern fashionable mother would have done.

education was progressing. His favourite studies were narratives that appealed to the imagination, or which inflamed his easily excitable passions. Virgil was the author who seems to have taken the greatest hold on his young mind.

The turning-point of Augustine's intellectual career was the reading of 'Hortensius,' a lost work of Cicero's, having for its subject an exhortation to the study of philosophy. The rhetorical style of this work, its flowing language, its lofty spirit, the single-hearted devotion to wisdom for its own sake, exercised a marvellous fascination on the young student. The results thus produced in diverting his thoughts into new and purer channels, and kindling a pure and ardent thirst for knowledge, appeared to him in after-life as a first step to Christianity, although the remark¹ that his ardour for the work was cooled by its containing no mention of the name of Christ savours rather of the Christian bishop who wrote the 'Confessions' than of the young Pagan in doctrine and morals which Augustine really was at that time. Cicero's 'Hortensius,' moreover, impelled him to search for truth as an independent thinker apart from schools of philosophy or doctrinal systems of any kind, and for this reason may be regarded as the starting-point of the Free-speculation which, commencing at his nineteenth year, continued up to his baptism, when he was thirty-three years old. Following this philosophical conversion as an effect of the spiritual forces it engendered, Augustine was induced to examine for himself, apparently for the first time, the contents of Holy Scripture.² The result was unsatisfactory, the young rhetor being repelled by its plain, unornate style. 'He disdained its simplicity, while its internal meaning escaped his understanding. Once really quickened, Augustine's powerful and inquisitive intellect, guided by the fervid imagination which was always the dominating principle of his energies, made rapid progress. He studied Aristotle's Categories, and extended his researches to other branches of what was then regarded as a liberal education. The facility with which he acquired these sciences, and the ease and readiness with which he learnt to impart them to others, served to confirm the vanity and ambition which formed a part of his natural character, and which even Christianity, so far from extirpating, merely transmuted into another form and directed into new channels. At this particular stage of his mental progress, Augustine is therefore the earnest inquirer into, and the eager recipient of, Gentile wisdom. But in slaking his thirst for know-

¹ *Conf.* p. 30.

² *Ibid.* p. 31.

ledge at this great fount of enormously diversified contents, it is not wonderful to find that he imbibed somewhat of Gentile folly and superstition. He was now and for some years subsequently a firm believer in judicial astrology and other methods of divination, which he occasionally seems to have practised on his own behalf.¹ There was, indeed, a strong vein of superstition in Augustine's character which never altogether abandoned him. We learn from his 'Confessions' that two of his friends endeavoured to dissuade him from his belief in divination but without success. The saintly Monica followed the course of her gifted but headstrong son with bitter tears, but neither now, still less at any former time, could she have had the least control over him. Indeed, he admits that he was impatient and ashamed of being ruled by a woman. Nevertheless the fruit of his philosophical conversion, the impulse he had received from Cicero's 'Hortensius,' remained. Its eloquent exhortation to pursue philosophy, not only as a scholarly acquisition but as the highest aim of human life, struck a responsive chord in Augustine's breast. Still the voice of the Roman orator was no more than the plaintive cry of a fellow-wanderer in the broad plains of philosophy. Truth and wisdom were duly exalted, but Cicero as an Academic Skeptic could have had no pretence of having discovered them. Their pursuit was enjoined, but without the promise of definitive attainment. Augustine was compelled to search for himself, and the effort, while indispensable to true intellectual independence, entailed some years' wandering among various schemes of thought of a more or less promising character.

Manichæanism presented itself to him as a philosophic and religious theory which claimed to have discovered, and consequently to be able to teach men the truth. The purport of this curious form of belief was, apparently, to reconcile in some sort all the great Oriental beliefs. It was a heterogeneous compound of Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, and Christianity. With the first it shared an elaborate system of continuous and perpetual emanations, and a practice of self-denial and asceticism. With the second it inculcated a dualism that divided the physical and moral universe into two antagonistic sovereignties. While as to Christianity, it spiritualized the material forms of some of its prominent doctrines, and endeavoured to reduce it to a kind of Oriental mysticism. Even a summary of the contents of this complicated and at that time widely diffused faith would be far beyond the scope of our present inquiry. In its relation to Augustine we can only con-

¹ *Contr. Academ.* i. chap. vi. *Confess.* p. 46.

sider it as Dr. Bindemann suggests, in the specific form in which his own works present it. Even with this restriction, we can readily comprehend the varied attractions it offered to the speculative, eager, truth-searching intellect of Augustine. The subject is indeed one into which he enters fully in several of his works,¹ so that there can be no question as to the motives which induced him to become a Manichæan. First among its fascinations he himself ranks its perpetual appeals to truth, as the simple disinterested object of its research.² With all its undoubted absurdities, it professed to be rationalistic: it taught that faith must follow and be guided by reason; that truth must be discussed and disentangled ('nisi prius discussa et enodata veritate'³) before it could claim the allegiance of its followers. On the other hand, Manichæans reproached Christianity with requiring a dogmatic faith based only on authority, and leaving no room for the free-play of the intellect. It was inevitable, as Augustine himself observed,⁴ that a system professedly so free and unbiassed, so fair and reasonable, so absolutely disinterested, should have attracted a young and ardent Free-thinker like himself. In after-years he compared the Manichæans to cunning birdcatchers laying their limed twigs close to water in order to entrap thirsty birds.⁵ The bait of 'reason' and 'wisdom' he found irresistible. Nor was he alone in yielding to their allurements; indeed, he was only one of many less known and illustrious instances of the seductive power of Manichæanism. Some of his personal friends, however, seem to have been drawn to the new system less by its own inherent merits than by the influence of his teaching and example. Besides the magnetic force of a professed adherence and devotion to truth, other motives of more or less power combined to render peculiarly adhesive the bird-lime that obstructed the free motion of our 'thirsty bird.' For some time he had held the opinion that the form of God was corporeal, and Manichæanism supplied both a basis and sanction to that opinion. Moreover, in the distinct repugnance to Christianity which the

¹ See, e.g. *Conf.* p. 32; *De Utilitate Credendi*, *Op.* viii. p. 46, &c. See also his various controversial treatises on Manichæanism.

² *Confess.* p. 32: 'et dicebant: veritas et veritas et multum eam dicebant mihi.' Cf. *De Mor. Manich.* c. 17: 'Magni pollicitatores rationis atque veritatis.'

³ *De Utilitate Credendi*, cap. i. *Om. op.* viii. p. 46. Cf. Bindemann, i. pp. 92, 93.

⁴ 'Quis non his pollicitationibus illiceretur, præsertim adolescentis animus cupidus veri?' *De Util. Cred.* c. i. *Om. op.* viii. col. 46.

⁵ *De Util. Cred.*, *Om. op.* viii. col. 47.

impartial critic must assign to Augustine at this time—notwithstanding the affection for the name of Christ which he claimed to have imbibed with his mother's milk, and which may be classed among the 'after-thoughts' of the 'Confessions'—the negative criticism which Manichæanism brought to bear on historical Christianity no doubt recommended it to the young rhetor and teacher of logic. Nor are there wanting other and still profounder bonds of sympathy; the dualism and, speaking generally, the syncretistic aspects of Manichæan speculation commended it to a Skeptical, many-sided intellect like Augustine's, besides affording a ready solution of such problems as the nature of evil. The Pantheistic view of nature it inculcated tended to satisfy his aspiration for a faith which should include and form part of the natural laws and phenomena of the world, instead of standing aloof from them. The craving after redemption and inward peace, so distinctly but fancifully impressed even on the wildest vagaries of Manichæanism, appealed to the emotional elements in Augustine's character, and possibly tended to confirm his incipient conviction of the unsatisfying nature of mere sensuous enjoyments. Even his opposition to Holy Scripture, though based on its rhetorical deficiencies, corresponded with the polemical attitude Manichæanism had always maintained towards it, especially to the Old Testament. With all these philosophical and spiritual affinities, we are in a position to understand Augustine's nine years' application to this system. It was not in itself Skepticism, for some at least of its many doctrines were insisted on with a despotic vehemence never exceeded by any form of belief; but it was a very efficient preparatory course for the future Academic philosopher. Indeed, its educational value, irrespective of any development it was likely to attain, must have been very considerable for a man of Augustine's intellect and temperament. Its eclecticism and enormous amplitude of range were suited to a Free-thinker; its multifarious contents were adapted to an eager omnivorous intellect, as well as to a powerful imagination; while its many inconsistencies, both inherent and extrinsic, formed a perpetual exercise for the young dialectician, and incidentally gave promise of future deliverance from its toils. Nor again would it be impossible to find in Manichæanism aspects of a harsher tendency—a stress upon authority, a leaning towards hierarchical pretension, a jealousy and exclusiveness as regards other creeds—which might be held to adumbrate Augustine's last stage of evolution, and his final resting-place in the Christian Church.

But leaving speculation for fact, it is certain that from his

nineteenth to his twenty-eighth year Augustine was an earnest and sedulous, if not enthusiastic, disciple of Manichæanism. During this period he changed his abode, perhaps more than once, from Tagasta to Carthage, though he finally settled down for some years at the latter city. His employment was that for which his father destined him—he was a teacher of rhetoric and logic, a disputant in the public schools, an occasional writer of odes and poems for the theatre—in kind, a sort of cross between an ancient philosopher and a modern *littérateur*. His success in these various occupations was indisputable, and was rightly regarded by him as typifying the eminence he was ultimately destined to attain, though he could hardly then have prognosticated the specific ground on which his future celebrity was destined to rest. His attachment to Manichæanism, however, though lasting so many years, could at no time have borne the character of unqualified adherence, for it is important to note that he never became one of ‘the elect,’ *i.e.* the highest esoteric circle of Manichæanism, but was content with a place in the outer court of ‘hearers’ (*auditores*). We might readily infer on *a priori* grounds that the reason of this arrested Manichæan development must have been personal. The members of an ambitious proselytizing sect would only have been too glad to number among their leaders a man of Augustine’s eminence and character, and this opinion is borne out by numberless passages in his works, in which he dwells on the defects and inconsistencies of the system, which prevented his full concurrence with, and finally determined his abandonment of it.¹ In the first place, Manichæanism had promised to its young adherent ‘truth’—not as an object of search, but of actual realization. For a time he probably regarded this promise as fulfilled. ‘Truth,’ as the reasonable and only possible solution of the great problems of the world, the nature of God, His providential dealings with man, the mutual relation and inter-dependence of different portions of the universe, both physical and spiritual, Manichæanism claimed to have discovered. It boasted to be the sole Oidipous of the riddle, the only conceivable disentanglement of the complicated web. To each of its disciples it imparted a master key, which it said could turn all the great, and as yet unopened, locks of the universe. Augustine took the

¹ Cf. *e.g.* *Confessions*, pp. 34, 35, and see *passim* the books *contra Faustum* (*Op. om.* viii. 183–470), and the treatises *De Moribus Manichæorum* (*Op.* i. 715–43), *Contra Epistolam Manichæi* (viii. 151–82). Comp. on the various influences which finally separated Augustine from Manichæanism, Bindemann, i. 132–43; and Beausobre’s *Histoire*, liv. ix.

key thus put into his hands, and in process of time submitted it to a rigorous examination. He fitted it into the several locks it was said to open, but found that it failed in his hands to do its office. Partly opening some, it absolutely refused to move the wards of others—in short, the ‘truth’ of Manichæanism he discovered to be either incomplete or else altogether deceptive. Like the mirage of the desert, it attracted the traveller by its distant promise, only to disappoint him on a nearer approach. Another main cause of Augustine’s dissatisfaction with Manichæanism was the discovery that its negative dialectics and its aggressive attitude to other systems, which at first had so delighted his keen critical intellect, were much more potent and successful than the arguments it could adduce in its own support. He then learnt what was evidently a well-acquired lesson of his life, and which afterwards stimulated his energy in the cause of dogma—how much easier destruction was than construction. He was also impressed, as he tells us, by the inconsistency between the profession and practice of ‘elect’ Manichæans, the claims of those persons to a peculiar sanctity of life being by no means borne out by their actual conduct. Not that Augustine’s own life was immaculate, but greater liberty was conceded to him as being only a ‘hearer,’ just as the unbaptized among Christians were permitted greater licence than was allowed to those who were baptized. A potent influence in his gradual severance from Manichæanism must also be ascribed to a general increase of knowledge. Augustine’s was eminently a progressive and expansive intellect, full of curiosity on all subject-matters of learning, and of ardour in their pursuit. His Manichæan period, varying as it does between his twentieth and thirtieth years, included the most inquisitive and acquisitive portions of his life. Then was pursued those extra theological studies which take up such a considerable portion of his works. Besides professional exertions in grammar, logic, and rhetoric, he continued the cultivation of all other branches of contemporary science. He studied mathematics, and wrote treatises on such subjects as music, beauty, geometry, and arithmetic, &c., most of which are now lost. But foremost among favourite studies at this time was the reading of the Greek philosophers, and especially of Plato. Here he became acquainted, probably for the first time, with the Sokratic elenchus—an instrument which proved as effective in his own case as in that of so many other Skeptics.¹ His first application of it was to the Manichæan system and its

¹ Comp. Hüber, *Philosophie der Kirchenväter*, p. 238.

boasted possession of 'truth.' Its success in overthrowing that motley edifice of rationalism, theosophy, and superstition, and liberating him from bondage,¹ suggested to Augustine the high value he ever afterwards entertained of the Sokratic method. We here arrive at what we must regard as the turning-point of Augustine's life. His study of Plato is the initiatory stage of his Skepticism, the real but invisible line of demarcation that separates the Manichæan from the Academic philosopher. Hence although Augustine's complete severance from the former creed did not take place until some years later, the hold it had gained on his convictions began from this time gradually to relax. But Plato was only the chief among other Greek and Roman thinkers to whom Augustine's attention was thus directed. His profession of regret that he failed to discover Christ in these philosophers may not unfairly be taken as the *arrière pensée* of a Christian bishop who, although trained on Gentile literature, and owing no small part of his culture, fame, and ability to its teaching, ungratefully affected to despise it at the close of his career. At least, if he felt some slight regard for the hallowed name he heard so often from his mother, it could only have been at this time of a superficial kind. Augustine's investigations into the profundities of Plato² and thinkers of similar idealistic tendencies served also to nourish and expand his imaginative powers. Hence by degrees his conception of God as body gave way to a more spiritual idea, and his first acquiescence in Manichæan dualism as the readiest mode of accounting for the existence of evil in the world was succeeded by a profounder estimate of the true relation of moral causes and effects. Reasons of smaller import and of a more personal character may also have contributed in some slight degree to complete Augustine's divorce from the first definite system of thought he had embraced. The death, *e.g.* of a much-loved friend, who in his last moments had abjured Manichæanism and embraced Christianity, profoundly affected a mind peculiarly open to such influences.³ Perhaps also the repeated exhortations of his mother were not altogether without effect on his final determination.

Acted upon by so many causes, intellectual, religious, and personal, Augustine, by slow and imperceptible stages, arrived at the

¹ *Confess.* lib. v. cap. 14.

² On Augustine's indebtedness to Plato see Dr. von Stein's *Sieben Bücher zur Geschichte des Platonismus*, vol. iii. pp. 57-62.

³ *Confess.* pp. 49, 50.

full conviction not only of the inadequacy of Manichæanism to satisfy his own mental and spiritual needs, but of its inherently corrupt and debasing tendency. No doubt there were points in the system both immoral and misleading, but there were other elements in it of a wholesome if not truthful character. Certainly as a form of belief peculiarly suited to the Oriental imagination, and in communion with which many thousands had lived pure and on the whole useful lives, it deserved more respect than Augustine towards the close of his life was inclined to pay it. But he is but one example of many of the ingratitude of thinkers towards systems and creeds which possess only a transitory or propædeutic interest for themselves. Such persons might reflect on the maxim, 'Not to speak ill of the bridge that has carried them over.' There are few systems of thought that, earnestly pursued, are utterly devoid of all merit or utility. We may say of such philosophers what George Herbert said of preachers—

The worst speak something good.

In Augustine's case, it is at least easy to discern the educational advantages he derived from his long connection with Manichæanism. Its very weaknesses and inconsistencies, and the obvious necessity of verification, fostered and confirmed his intellectual independence; while its eclecticism and endeavour to amalgamate conflicting systems of thought imparted a width and comprehension to his mental outlook which a narrower and more uniform system could hardly have effected.

But before finally breaking with a faith he had nevertheless long outgrown, Augustine determined to give Manichæanism one more chance. Hitherto it had been to him an impersonal creed. True, many of his friends were Manichæans, but the belief had not been specifically authenticated to his warm and sympathetic nature by association with a teacher to whom he could look up with reverence and affection. This opportunity was now afforded him. The leading spirit among the Manichæans of that time was a certain Bishop Faustus of Mileve, whose acquaintance Augustine had long been desirous of making.¹ At last he happened to arrive at Carthage, and our Skeptic immediately sought an interview. He had accumulated, as it seems, a considerable stock of doubts, dilemmas, and inquiries, not only on the subject of Manichæanism but on many points of general knowledge. On all these he ex-

¹ *Confess.* lib. vii. c. 11: 'Cras inveniam, ecce manifestum adparebit et tenebo; ecce Faustus veniet et exponet omnia.'

pected as he reasonably might from the chief leader of a religious system that claimed to be founded by an incarnation of the Holy Ghost, and to have discovered truth, something like an adequate solution. Especially did he desiderate further light as to astronomical and other phenomena of the universe on which Manichæanism largely theorized. Unhappily he was doomed to disappointment. Not that Faustus was at all wanting in learning, ingenuity, and eloquence; on the contrary, he pre-eminently shone in these qualifications. Never before had Augustine heard the doctrines of Manichæanism presented in such a plausible and attractive guise. Still, though charmed as a rhetor with the graces of his manner and discourse, as an earnest searcher for truth he desired something more than eloquent phrases and well-arranged propositions.¹ Accordingly he opened his Skeptical budget. He asked Faustus for an explanation of the solstices, the equinoxes, eclipses, and other points of general information on which his inquiring intellect had exercised itself. To his surprise as well as gratification, Faustus candidly pleaded his entire ignorance. Sokrates himself could not have been more ingenuous or more earnest in disclaiming knowledge.² The admission was honourable to Faustus as a man, besides harmonizing with Augustine's Skeptical proclivities, but it was scarcely calculated to restore his vacillating faith in the creed of which the bishop was the acknowledged oracle.³

Augustine's interviews with Bishop Faustus form the last scene in what we may term the 'Manichæan act' of his intellectual life-drama. They were also a *lever de rideau* for the first scene in the next act. The avowed nescience of the Manichæan leader coincided with and confirmed the results of his own Skeptical studies in Plato, Cicero, and other Gentile thinkers. To Augustine it must have seemed that a wonderful unanimity as to the impossibility of knowledge pervaded systems of thought so different in origin and general purport. Was then truth altogether unattainable? It certainly appeared to be so. Manichæanism, with its arrogant boast of that attainment, had evidently lied. Augustine's opinion of his quondam friends might have been expressed by the lines:

And be these juggling fiends no more believed
That palter with us in a double sense;
That keep the word of promise to our ear,
And break it to our hope.

¹ *Confess.* p. 68.

² *Confess.* p. 69.

³ *Comp. Flottes, Études*, pp. 40, 41.

Whither could he go next? To what philosophy or religious creed could he appeal? For the time our truth-searcher is disheartened. He tells us that although he had determined to abjure his old faith, nothing better presented itself for his acceptance.¹

While in this frame of mind, Augustine determined to leave Carthage and take up his residence at Rome. His resolution gave great pain to his mother, who employed every means of dissuading him from his purpose, but in vain. Indeed, he cannot be absolved from needless harshness and cruelty in the manner in which he carried out his project.² Soon after his arrival at Rome, where he took up his abode with a Manichæan, he was seized with a violent fever. For some time his life was despaired of, but with the help of a constitution unusually robust he was able gradually to throw it off. His attitude to Christianity at this time is incidentally marked by his not only refusing Christian baptism, which some friend had probably suggested, but by ridiculing it as a heavenly medicine. He still associated with his former coreligionists, both 'auditors' and 'elect,' though he had really quite renounced their creed. As soon as he had recovered his health and made the requisite arrangements, he established a school for instruction in rhetoric, which, however, brought him in more fame than pecuniary profit. But what was of more importance to his mental future was the self-analysis and criticism he underwent at this time, and which was suggested by his hostile relation to Manichæanism, Christianity,³ and every other system of positive truth. This introspection and its results he thus describes: 'Reflecting often so far as my capacity permitted on the human mind, so vivacious, so penetrating, and so keen, I did not conceive truth unattainable, except for the reason that we are ignorant of the mode of acquiring it, and that this method should be suggested by some Divine authority. It remained to ask what this authority was, because of so many conflicting systems each professed to possess it. Hence I found myself in an inextricable labyrinth, which I was very reluctant to penetrate, but into which my mind, restlessly stirred by the desire of finding truth, impelled me.'⁴ Such is Augustine's own account of the motives that induced him to embrace Academic Skepticism. In the 'Confessions' he passes over this episode in his life somewhat lightly, and yet it included, so far as mental movements insensibly commenced and as gradually ceasing can be determined by distinct measurements of time,

¹ *Confess.* p. 75.

² *Confess.* pp. 71, 72.

³ Cf. *Confess.* p. 76.

⁴ *De Util. Credendi, Op. om.* viii. col. 57.

some five years of his life. But this may be explained by the fact that the 'Confessions' are written from the standpoint of the Bishop of Hippo; and if they are careful to record deviations from morality while they are inclined to be reticent on extreme aberrations from orthodoxy, this is only consistent with the dogmatic error which attributes to the latter greater criminal guilt than to the former.¹

We have thus traced Augustine's life to its avowedly Skeptical period. Truth is now to him, as to other Academics, not a realized possession so much as a hidden object of search. We have no record of the precise extent to which Augustine carried his Skeptical uncertainty. That it was in any respect complete, that it resulted in the sheer vacuity which it was the aim of Pyrrhonic, and perhaps also of Academic,² Skepticism to establish, may be unequivocally denied. His intellectual organization absolutely forbade the possibility of doubt on such fundamental points as the Being of God,³ the real existence of truth, the impossibility of waiving or transcending the ultimate facts of consciousness. Hence it might easily have been foreseen that however much Academic Skepticism administered to certain needs in Augustine's nature, however much it subserved him in his present necessity, whatever basis it furnished for freedom of research, whatever hope it held out to a sanguine thinker like himself of a final attainment of truth, however close the contact it established between himself and some of the greatest thinkers of Greece and Rome, it was hopelessly inadequate as a full satisfaction of his mental and spiritual cravings. A state not only of contented suspense, but even of long-deferred fruition, was abhorrent to his nature. Truth, real, objective, impregnable, he must acquire, not as a contingency of the future, but as an actual present possession. To attain this blissful consummation no cost was too great, no sacrifice too

¹ Augustine's after-opinion of the criminality of doubt is thus stated in his *De Civ. Dei*, lib. xix. c. 18: 'Omnino civitas Dei talem dubitationem tanquam dementia detestatur, habens de rebus quas mente atque ratione comprehendit, etiamsi parvam, "propter corpus corruptibile quod aggravat animam" (quoniam, sicut dicit Apostolus "ex parte scimus"), tamen certissimam scientiam.' What renders doubt thus criminal is the fact that it may be overcome and destroyed. 'Ignorantiae malum non tantum minui sed et consumi potest in hac vita,' *Op.* x. 689. Whence it would seem that Augustine, towards the end of his life, came to regard doubt and ignorance as purely volitional!

² See, on Academic Skepticism, the remarks in vol. i. Evening iv. pp. 302-321, and comp. Bindemann, i. 186, &c.

³ Cf. *Confess.* p. 89.

impossible. It was by the promise of this definitive possession that Manichæanism had been able to entrap him. Finding himself deceived, he tried to discover a substitute in the probabilities and perpetual truth-search of the Academics. In reality it was only a *promise* of water to a man not only thirsty but determined at any risk to quench his thirst. I cannot say that I regard such an intellect, with its passionate and indomitable cravings, as the highest in its own nature or as the best adapted for the pursuit of truth in a world constituted like our own. There is little in the laws and phenomena of the universe which suggests impatience as an useful implement in their discovery and interpretation, nor can it be said to be a fact impressed on human history that he who is determined to realize truth within any given period must inevitably succeed. What is, however, certain is that intellects of this ardent type will find what they *conceive* to be truth, and will insist on it with a profession of infallibility which will render them dogmatists of the most rigorous kind.

We have Augustine's own reminiscences of this Skeptical period in his books against the Academics.¹ Indeed, his polemical writings against once-cherished beliefs are invaluable for elucidating the different stages of his mental development. Although written from a hostile point of view, we can nevertheless discern, by the form of and stress upon certain arguments, the measure of their hold upon himself; just as in the demolition of a building we can, by examining plan and materials, form an accurate idea of its state before it was destroyed. I think, therefore, this may be a suitable place to examine very briefly his treatise against the Academics. We must, however, bear in mind that the work was written some few years after the time to which our sketch of his life has brought us, and that it is a post-mortem examination, the dissection of a faith which has become dead to the operator, though some of its once-living tissues still possess enough vitality to quiver under his scalpel.

In form the treatise is clearly suggested by the philosophical dialogues of Cicero, its main distinction from the Academics of that writer consisting in the object of the argument and the tone in which it is discussed. A free debate on the merits and defects of the Academic philosophy is supposed to be carried on by the pupils and friends of Augustine, he himself acting the part of

¹ Augustine's books against the Academics have been analyzed by Poujoulat, *Histoire de St. Augustin*, i. pp. 45-57, and much better and more fully by Bindemann, i. pp. 295-309.

moderator and referee. The issue first propounded is whether the discovery of truth is necessary to a happy life, or whether its investigation suffices to attain that object. So proposed, the question at once suggests definitions. What, *e.g.* is the meaning of a happy life? To some of the speakers it seems that the mere search after truth constitutes happiness. To this it is answered that the happiest life requires the employment of man's noblest functions, the gratification of his highest needs. Hence the perfect life must consist in the possession of wisdom as a *sine quâ non* of happiness. But no man who is still searching can be said to have attained to that spiritual perfection. The defenders of the Academy then appeal to Cicero as a wise man who had enjoyed a happy life, and yet had taught that truth could not be comprehended by man, and that every wise man must without bias or prepossession content himself with its pursuit, and in that pursuit must learn to find his happiness. Upon this the anti-Skeptics retort that search implies privation and imperfection, and he who cannot, or at least does not, attain the object of his quest does not deserve the name of happy. Whereupon it is urged that the intellectual perfection of man consists, at least during his earthly life, in seeking, not in possessing, truth; the full knowledge of truth being a distinctive attribute of God, and perhaps also of human souls set free from the body. On earth, therefore, man attains in sincere effort after truth his highest destiny and happiness. This is evident if we ask the question whether we could dare to call the man who nobly pursues truth unhappy. For every man, we may suppose, is either happy or unhappy. This conclusion is moreover expressed by the definition of a happy life, as that most consonant with reason, for certainly no man could live more rationally than the perpetual seeker after truth. The Dogmatists reply to this: The man who is in error can be said to live neither reasonably nor happily. Now he who is always searching and never finding must be in error, whence it follows, either that the erring may be happy, or that he who perpetually searches and never finds does not err. The Skeptic advocate answers that search is so far from being error that it is the best, nay, the only precaution against error, which on the contrary implies positive and definitive tenets. As the combatants seem here to need a satisfactory definition of error, Augustine interposes by suggesting a delay in order to obtain one. The Academic then proposes to define error as 'the regard for the false instead of the true.' His opponent demands whether he will not admit that 'the truth is the straight path of life,' on which the Skeptic exclaims that his ideal wise man follows this straight road.

The anti-Skeptic amends his definition : ' Wisdom is,' he says, ' the straight road that leads to truth.' Whereupon his adversary triumphantly asks, ' What road is so fitted to lead to truth as the earnest pursuit of truth ?'

Again there occurs a difficulty. Wisdom must have its definition. Augustine is appealed to for the purpose. He suggests one which men of ancient times had proposed, viz. Wisdom is the knowledge of human and Divine things. The suggestion was clearly in favour of the Dogmatist. The Skeptic replies by requiring a particular example of this definition ; he points to the case of a certain Albicerius, a diviner, and asks whether he would not be regarded as a knower of human and Divine things. The anti-Skeptic demurs to the reply, both on special and on general grounds ; he suggests another definition of wisdom, *i.e.* the knowledge of these Divine and human things which relate to a happy life. But the Skeptic objects that this definition is too narrow. Every effort and endeavour for knowledge is, he insists, a source of happiness. God alone possesses knowledge, and has appointed the search for it as the earthly destiny of humanity. The anti-Skeptic then expresses his surprise that the wise should be thus allowed to toil in vain, but is met with the exclamation, ' How, in vain ! when he labours for such a reward ?' for it is because he seeks that he is wise, and so far as he is wise is he happy. While, therefore, a man keeps his mind as much as possible free from all restrictions of the body, he is not distracted by vain desires, but directs his calm gaze upon God and his own inner being, so that enjoying in this world the free unimpeded exercise of his faculties, he is destined in the next to the full fruition of his efforts. Augustine here interposes with the remark that he would have concluded the discussion before, but he wished to let his young friends exercise freely their faculties for philosophical argument. He suggests as a compromise that both the possession of truth and also its search are needed to constitute human happiness in its totality. The discussion thereupon terminates for the time.

On a subsequent occasion it is resumed, when, after some remarks on the relation between the Old and the New Academy, and the special antagonism of the latter to the Stoics, it enters upon another phase, viz. Is it not absurd to assert the unknowableness of truth, and yet to lay stress on the ' probable' as the rule of life ? for the proposition that anything resembles truth which is the meaning of probable presupposes the existence of truth itself, and also the fact of a certain recognition of it on our own parts. Augustine himself is now the opponent of the

Academics, and his friend Alypius their lukewarm defender. Hence this portion of the work is of special importance as pointing out those arguments of the Skeptical philosophy which Augustine thought most weighty, and therefore in all probability those which had exercised most influence on himself, as well as the counter reasonings he found most effective in his own case. Alypius is not satisfied with Augustine's definition of the probable, which he makes a question of words, whereas the Academics merely employed it as a principle of action.¹ Augustine then points out that the definition of a wise man as one ignorant of wisdom is a clear contradiction in terms, for no man can be wise without partaking of wisdom. The position of the Skeptics necessitates the postulate either that wisdom is equivalent to nothing or that it resembles falsehood. Alypius suggests that truth is like Proteus—continually assuming new forms,² so that it cannot be apprehended except by some Divine interposition. To this Augustine assents. Alypius then requests Augustine to abandon this mode of discussion, and to refute the Academics in a formal discourse. Augustine assents: he begins by an account of preceding philosophies, and their several relations to the New Academy. The two points of Skeptical misbelief which he especially contravenes are: (1) that nothing can be truly perceived; (2) that to no proposition or dogma is an unqualified assent to be given. As to the first, he shows that no opinion of the unreliableness of the senses can enable us to dispense with their communications, or in practice to refrain from trusting them most implicitly. He also proves that logic, or the laws of the mind, enable us to arrive at truth, for of two alternative antagonistic propositions it asserts one to be undeniably true. As to the second point, the inconsistency of arrogating the name of wise, while the possibility of possessing wisdom is denied, is again pointed out. The delusive nature of probability as a substitute for truth is also insisted on, and Augustine reveals the chief motive-influence of his change from Academic unbelief to

¹ This, though true of the scope originally assigned to probability by Carneades, is not true of the scope it came ultimately to possess among his disciples, as is conclusively shown by Cicero and Sextos Empirikos. Comp. account of Carneades, *ante*, vol. i. pp. 308-321.

² Augustine himself occasionally admits the individualistic, and so far the manifold character of truth: 'Veritas et una est, et multæ, quia multæ animæ quas illustrat,' *Op. om.* iv. 65. In the same sense he says, 'Qui vult habere veritatem privatam (*i.e.* absolute truth) timeat ne eâ privetur.'—*Confess.* p. 242.

Christian certitude by maintaining that the man who trusts to well-founded authority is much more likely to attain truth than he who mistrusts in probability. The Academics, he further declares, act hypocritically in dissembling their real sentiments. He traces the origin of their mistake to a one-sided and materialistic interpretation of Plato's teaching. In this section we have the encomium of Plato, afterwards withdrawn in the 'Retractions,' as the 'wisest and most learned man of his time, who so spake that whatever he said thereby became great, and uttered things that howsoever spoken could never be insignificant.'¹ Augustine makes a good point by showing the unfitness of probability to become a ground of ethical action. Error consists not only in a tendency to the false, but in departure from the true, which with a mere standard of probability can never be avoided. What would then become of the rigid undeviating test of right and wrong which is the first principle of moral action? Under the fluctuating law of probability the adulterer would be able to justify his vice, the betrayer of his country would apologize for his treason in some Catiline-oration—in short, all the fundamental principles of social order would be fatally undermined.²

Such are a few of the salient points in Augustine's argumentation with his fellow-Skeptics. Although the work contains much discursive and irrelevant matter, and is not devoid of the verbal quibbling one might naturally expect in a rhetor's exercitation, no one can deny its subtlety, its comprehensive breadth of view, nor on the whole its impartiality. How far it may be regarded as a triumphant refutation of Skepticism will depend materially on the mental character and point of view of the student, as well as his prepossessions at the time. What is significant is, that Augustine did not think his arguments, though the best he could offer, unanswerable to Skeptics;³ indeed, he expressly states that their influence on himself was only partial. The words in which he avows this and concludes his treatise are of considerable importance, both as exhibiting his standpoint when they were written, and as indicating the motives by which he determined to guide his future intellectual course:—

'This have I meanwhile persuaded myself, so far as the prob-

¹ *Om. op.* i. col. 291.

² *Om. op.* i. col. 290, 291.

³ See the remarkable passage, ep. i. Hermogiano, *Op. om.* i. 245, 246. Dr. Bindemann observes on this, somewhat needlessly, 'Dass Augustinus an dieser Ansicht stets festgehalten habe, ist mehr als zweifelhaft.'—*Op. cit.* i. p. 307, note.

ability of the case and my own ability permitted, concerning the Academics, which, if it be false, matters not to me, for whom it is enough not to share the opinion that truth cannot be attained by man. But whosoever supposes that the Academics really thought this, let him listen to Cicero himself. For he says they had a way of hiding their opinion, nor would they divulge it to any one, unless to him who lived together with them till old age. However this may be, God knows, but I believe that opinion (*i.e.* that men cannot attain truth) to have been Plato's. But that you may receive briefly the whole of my present argument:—of whatever kind human wisdom may be, I acknowledge that I have not yet attained it. But inasmuch as I am only thirty-three years of age, I do not think I ought to despair of some time acquiring it. Hence, despising all other objects which mortals call good, I intend to follow up this investigation. From which enterprise, since the arguments of the Academics have very considerably deterred me, I have fortified myself enough against them, as I think, by means of this disputation. No man, however, doubts that we are impelled to knowledge by a twofold impulse, *viz.* of authority and of reason. As to the former, I have decided never more to depart from the authority of Christ, for I cannot find a stronger.¹ As to what should be pursued by the most subtle exercise of the reason—for I am so constituted as to desiderate not only what is true by faith but its apprehension by the intellect—I am persuaded that for the present I shall find it in the system of the Platonists, which is not opposed to our sacred writings.'²

It must be admitted this conclusion of his argument against the Academics is somewhat paradoxical. We might almost characterize it as a semi-Skeptical termination of an anti-Skeptical work.³ His confessed obligation to reason as well as to authority; his claim to understand what he is asked to believe; his faith in

¹ *Comp. Contr. Epistol. Manich.* i. c. 4: 'Quæ quidem (veritas) si tam manifesta monstratur ut in dubium venire non possit, præponenda est omnibus illis rebus quibus in Catholica teneor: si autem tantummodo permittitur et non exhibetur, nemo me movebit ab ea fide.'

² *Op. om.* i. col. 294.

³ Simon Foucher, who (with Gassendi) is the chief exponent of Academic philosophy in modern times, does not scruple to maintain that Augustine remained an Academic Skeptic and Platonist for the rest of his life. He says that the books *contra Academicos* were really written, 'not against, but for them; ' that the Academics against whom he directed his arguments were not the true thinkers of the name, but those who were regarded as such by the vulgar. *Comp. Nourisson, Philosophie*, &c. ii. p. 237, and *Simon Foucher*, par l'Abbé F. Rabbe, pp. 142, 143, &c.

the Platonic philosophy, which, he admits, denies the possibility of attaining truth—all point in the direction of the intellectual vacillation of the recent convert to Christianity. True, he owns the authority of Christ as the most valid he could then discover; but that authority was at first based upon intellectual and moral grounds, without which, he tells us, it would have had no existence for him.

But leaving for the present Augustine's Skepticism, we must now retrace our steps and consider the various influences which conspired to transform the Academic doubter into the Christian teacher.

Augustine's residence in Rome did not last much over one year. In the early part of 384 he learned that the magistrates of Milan had applied to Symmachus, the Prefect of Rome, for a professor of rhetoric. Augustine asked for this appointment, and after satisfying Symmachus, himself a proficient in rhetoric, of his fitness, he obtained it. Accordingly he left Rome, and, accompanied by his friend Alypius, proceeded to Milan. This town was then the seat of a well-ordered and flourishing Christian Church, presided over by the celebrated St. Ambrose. It is hardly possible to exaggerate the influence this auspicious presentation of Christianity had on the sensitive mind of Augustine. The bishop was one of the most illustrious leaders of the Latin Church. Renowned for his learning, his eloquence, and his piety, he was precisely the character to captivate the young professor of rhetoric. For probably the first time in his life Augustine beheld Christianity in its highest, noblest, and richest development. He saw it united not with sectarian narrowness, but with sympathies of considerable breadth and comprehension. He saw it combined not with ignorance, but with great and varied learning; not with uncouth speech and expression, but with the graces of eloquence and the glow of rhetoric; not with mean and ignoble or even an ordinary presence, but with the venerable aspect and dignified bearing of a true religious leader. Added to these public and generally recognised attributes were the fascinations of his personal intercourse. Ambrose received the young rhetor with unaffected courtesy and kindness; and Augustine soon became, first a friend, and then a disciple of the famous Bishop of Milan.

But if Augustine was first attracted to Ambrose by a common interest in rhetoric, and by the artistic form in which he presented the doctrines of Christianity, his was not the intellect to be satisfied with the mere plausible appearance of truths proffered for his acceptance. Although Ambrose's sermons were to his fastidious taste a more congenial introduction to Christianity than

the Bible, he could not accept them without criticism. Accordingly, as continued intercourse with the Bishop afforded him opportunity, Augustine took occasion to communicate to him his various difficulties and misgivings on the subject of Christianity. First in importance were his old Manichæan doubts as to the Bible, especially the narratives of the Old Testament. Augustine was probably surprised at the ease with which they disappeared under the allegorical treatment that Ambrose had borrowed from Origen. Miraculous events in the ancient Jewish records, narratives of doubtful moral import, anthropomorphic conceptions of Deity, unworthy views of His dealings with humanity, were readily transmuted and rendered innocuous if not edifying, by this most potent of all exegetical methods. The pregnant words of Paul—'The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life'—were perpetually on the lips of the Bishop of Milan, and Augustine readily accepted them, not only as an useful key to the interpretation of Holy Writ, but as eminently suited to his own fervid imagination and many-sided intellect. Later on, with the development of hierarchical pretensions and dogmatic proclivities, we shall find that he distrusted the allegorical method.

Concurrently with modified ideas as to Biblical interpretation, Augustine's subtilizing instincts were further strengthened and confirmed by a study of the later Platonists, especially of Plotinos. These writers, with their sublimating methods, exercised the same solvent power on his interpretation of Christian dogmas that Ambrose's allegorical exegetics did on his Bible studies. Both the written records and the traditional teachings of Christianity were thus submitted to a similar idealizing operation. Religious belief was becoming not a matter of reasoning and criticism as much as of imagination and feeling, and a road in full harmony with Augustine's proclivities and with the bent of his mental character was thus opened for him towards the reception of Christian truth. But Augustine's progress in this new path was slow, nor could the influence of Ambrose, nor the exhortations of his mother who came to reside with him at Milan, hasten his movements. He had already been more than once deceived—Manichæanism had cajoled him with a profession of truth which he discovered to be false; Academic philosophy had offered him probability as a substitute for truth, an unsatisfactory alternative to a man of his sanguine temperament. Might not Christianity also deceive him? True, there were aspects in its character and history that seemed to attest its truth. Many of his old objections to it had been removed by Ambrose. The more he applied his

Neo-Platonic metaphysics to its interpretation, the easier seemed its dogmas. For all that, Augustine proceeded with wary step. He exercised the true Skeptical caution: 'I avoided,' he says,¹ 'everything like assent, dreading precipitation, rather than which I would suffer the torture of suspense. For I wanted to be just as sure of invisible things as I was that seven and three make ten.' But it was precisely this assent—the unquestioning adherence to authoritatively announced truth—that Christianity demanded under the name of faith. Reflection indeed ultimately suggested the analogy that belief in matters transcending our personal experience was a *sine quâ non* of all social existence, and from this fact he inferred, without giving much heed to the successive steps of his ratiocination, the similar necessity of belief in Holy Scripture, and hence in the Church—a principle which, as propounded by Augustine, we shall have to examine further on. Meanwhile he continued in this condition of uncertainty for about two years. That the scale, however, was beginning to turn in the direction of Christianity is shown by his becoming a catechumen, and thus a regular recipient of Christian instruction. We can imagine the joy of his mother over this event, and her eagerness to regard it as a prognostication of her son's full acceptance of Christianity, which had been the object of her prayers for so many years.

But it was not only his inner life, intellectual and religious—for with Augustine these were indissoluble—that was the subject of uncertainty and hesitation. He was also dissatisfied with his social position and worldly prospects.² From his earliest years he had been the prey of ambitious desires and expectations, which as yet he had failed to realize. Now, not without the co-operation of his mother, who shared his ambitious projects, and who on this occasion manifested a tendency to maternal intrigue which one would hardly have expected to find in St. Monica, Augustine took steps to improve his fortunes by marriage. In order to accomplish this, the poor mother of Adeodatus, who had been faithful to him for so many years, was cruelly sent adrift, and proposals were made to a certain lady of wealth and position. These were accepted; but as the lady was young the ceremony was delayed for two years, and the match was subsequently broken off. Monica was disappointed at the untoward result of her matrimonial plotting. To say the truth, it was not only her son's worldly prospects but his

¹ *Confess.* pp. 86, 87.

² *Confess.* viii. 1: 'De mea vero temporali vita nutabant omnia.'

spiritual weal that animated her zeal. Foreseeing that he might ultimately be induced to accept Christian baptism, she was anxious that his marriage should precede that event. His conduct proved how well founded were his mother's anxieties in this respect, for no sooner did he discover that his marriage was to be delayed than, having dismissed his former mistress, he immediately took another.¹ With all the conditions and circumstances, both of his inner and outer life, thus disturbed, it is no wonder that Augustine suffered sometimes from fits of despondency. To such an unreflecting excess did he allow these to dominate over him that on one occasion he is inclined to envy even the sottish happiness of a drunken beggar whom he met in the streets of Milan.

Meanwhile his instruction in the elements of Christianity was proceeding. He had now arrived at the point of believing most of the doctrines of the Church, with the exception of the Incarnation. This dogma he could not for some time reconcile with the reason which he still brought to bear on all doctrines submitted for his acceptance. Some aid in receiving the ecclesiastical construction of that doctrine he derived from his Neo-Platonic studies,² for he found a similar doctrine in Plotinos, though not conceived from so materialistic a standpoint. From the same source he derived

¹ In relating this transaction, Augustine has the grace to admit that his behaviour contrasts unfavourably with that of his rejected concubine, the mother of Adeodatus. 'Et illa in Africam redierat, vovens tibi (*i.e.* Deo) alium se virum nesciturum, relicto apud me naturali ex illa filio meo. At ego infelix nec feminae imitator, dilationis impatiens, tanquam post biennium accepturus eam quam petebam, quia non amator conjugii sed libidinis servus eram; procuravi aliam, non utique conjugem.'—*Confess.* p. 101. Few of Augustine's biographers seem inclined to bestow much compassion on the lot of the unfortunate mother of Adeodatus, so harshly treated by her unworthy protector. All that the Abbé Flottes, *e.g.* finds to reprehend is, that Augustine had not remained faithful to her *until his marriage*! Dr. Bindemann, without openly blaming Augustine, paints his behaviour in characters sufficiently dark by his description of the poor forsaken woman's lot: 'Die arme Verstossene, die auch ohne das Eheband dem Manne ihrer Wahl aufrichtige Liebe und Treue erhalten zu haben scheint, und jetzt einsam in ihre Heimath zurückkehrte, gelobte scheidend, nimmer wieder einen anderen Mann zu erkennen. Ihren Sohn Adeodatus liess sie bei seinem Vater zurück.' Something like genuine compunction for the 'wrecked life' he had caused would have been worth some hundreds of the pious ejaculations scattered so profusely throughout the *Confessions*, and a little womanly sympathy for the fallen sister, whose greatest infirmity had been fidelity to her profligate son, had certainly not detracted from the brilliancy of the aureole with which ecclesiastical tradition has surrounded the head of the pious Monica.

² *Confess.* vii. 19, p. 120.

enlightenment, both as to the being and attributes of God, and the nature of evil. Under the guidance of Ambrose he once more recommenced his Biblical studies. To his question as to the portion of Scripture best adapted for his perusal, his teacher responded by recommending the prophet Isaiah—advice which, coming from one rhetorician to another, may readily be understood; but Augustine seems to have especially concentrated his attention on St. Paul, with whom he had considerable mental and spiritual affinity. Indeed, he not only accepted his scheme of theology, but so formulated and elaborated it as to give it, in the opinion of many persons, an undue precedence over the simpler teaching of Christ in the subsequent history of the Church.

The result of these various studies, together with continued intercourse with Ambrose and other prominent ecclesiastics of Milan, was to induce a determination to receive Christian baptism. The more immediate circumstances attending this resolution are well known. Like so many other men of his imaginative temperament, Augustine was by no means without a taint of superstition. His mother Monica continually received Divine warnings and directions in dreams, and in every important conjuncture of his life Augustine regarded himself as the object of special supernatural admonition. Having heard of a certain hermit who had been induced to embrace Christianity by a Biblical sortilegium¹—a mode of seeking Divine guidance not yet extinct among the ignorant and superstitious of several European countries—Augustine resorted to the pious lottery on his own behalf. Taking a copy of St. Paul's Epistles and opening it, his eye caught the words, 'Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying, but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.' He felt the striking applicability of the text to his own irregular and immoral life, and considered the warning as one sent immediately from heaven. To a plain man, however, it might seem not impertinent to suggest that the observance of rudimentary principles of ethical conduct scarcely needed the sanction of such an haphazard oracle. One might have thought that the instructions of Ambrose and other leading ecclesiastics of Milan, together with the continued exhortations of

¹ Readers of Petrarca will remember the oracular response the great humanist received on consulting Augustine's *Confessions* for a similar purpose, and which had the effect of 'converting' him from explorations of nature to investigations of the human mind.

his mother, might have sufficed to produce a conviction both of the sin and degradation of the vices mentioned by St. Paul, even if his own independent reflection were incapable of enforcing a similar conclusion. But in truth Augustine's was a nature unwilling to be ruled except by outward force and external sanction, and the gist of his numerous writings serves to show that he considered every man amenable only to similar influences. The basis of his morality is indicated by his confession that the change in his immoral course of life was chiefly prompted by the fear of future punishment. Were it not, he adds, for this deterrent, he himself would choose to be an Epikourean philosopher. Augustine's ethics, we thus perceive, is based entirely on the common theological opinion that what constitutes the guilt or immorality of an act is simply its deviation from the supposed express injunctions of Deity, moral duties deriving no part of their obligation from inherent properties or relations. His adherence to Christianity, as we shall shortly see, is similarly based upon external compulsion.

Augustine was baptized by Ambrose in the year 387, which date we may accordingly accept as approximately the termination of his free-search and philosophical Skepticism. The remaining events in his life we need not pursue in detail. Ordained priest in 388, and Bishop of Hippo in the following year, the rest of his life was occupied in elaborating his dogmatic system and contending with heresiarchs. He died in the year 430.

I have just said that Augustine's Skepticism ends *approximately* with his baptism. What I mean is: there are similarities and coincidences between his Free-thought and dogmatic periods which make his transition from one to the other not a psychological impossibility. Augustine's intellect was much too powerful and independent blindly to accept a creed that possessed no affinity whatever with innate proclivities and long-cherished modes of thought. Indeed, conversions from an extreme of philosophy or religion to its opposite, with no intervening resting-place, or the least graduation in departure from the old and approximation to the new, are possible only to weak or ill-balanced intellects. Hence we continue to find in Augustine a large measure of free-speculation, partly lying side by side with, partly involved in and animating his dogma. We discover that if the principle of authority, once the exclusive property of the reason, is now delegated to Christianity, it has not altogether lost its former independence. We perceive that Augustine's Skepticism has become not so much extinct as transformed from theory to practice, from philosophy to religion. In a word, we find that if the philosopher has been converted into

a divine, the Skeptic into a Dogmatist, the heathen rhetor into the Christian preacher,¹ the same strong individuality is apparent in each stage of the process—the original thought, so vividly impressed on Augustine the Manichæan and Academic Skeptic, is not absolutely extinguished by the mitre of the Bishop of Hippo, and that whatever other effects followed his baptism and its accompanying rites, the older spirits of free-research and rationalism were not completely exorcised by the administration of that sacrament.

I. Augustine's primary motive in accepting Christianity was clearly the determination to choose and submit to authority as a rule of faith. Hitherto he had proceeded on the opposite tack. He had set forth at the age of nineteen years in quest of truth—truth which he endeavoured to acquire as a personal possession. He had followed what appeared to be the dictates of his own reason, employing the enlightenment of different promising systems to aid him in his search. When after much wandering and no little anxiety he arrived at the conviction that truth was unattainable by human effort, he began to conceive as a possibility that it might be the object of Divine Revelation. Clearly the philosophies of Greece had failed to discover truth. The Skepticism of the Academy was itself a distinct admission of the failure. Could it be that truth was a nonentity, or rather a falsehood? Had God infused into the breasts of men a passion, deep, fervent, inextinguishable, for which He had provided no suitable object? That the passion existed was clear from the efforts of so many of the noblest of mankind to attain truth, from the claims of so many to have really acquired it. As to its realization, it was refuted by the conflicting views of those very claimants. Truth in itself, said Augustine, must be one, even if its human perception be characterized by individual peculiarities. Might it not be that God, who instilled the passion into human hearts, had reserved for Himself the manner of satisfying it? If superhuman in origin, might it not also be superhuman in the mode of its gratification? Human

¹ Dr. Bindemann points out that Augustine's *Sermons* and most of his other works are in reality rhetorical and dialectical exercitations (ii. p. 164, &c.), so that what Augustine did in abandoning his calling of rhetor was in reality to transfer it from the chair of the professor to the pulpit of the Christian teacher. Indeed, he himself lays the greatest stress on the necessity of logic to rule the form, and rhetoric to supply the requisite graces to every presentation of Christian truth. Cicero was in this respect his model rather than the writers of the New Testament. So he says: 'Dixit quidam eloquens (Cicero) et verum dixit, ita dicere debere eloquentem, ut doceat, ut delectet, ut flectat.'

authority so conspicuously failing,¹ did not an appeal lie open to Divine? and philosophy issuing in Skepticism, was there not only room but an imperious necessity for Revelation? True, he had himself adopted Skepticism as his temporary resting-place, but it was confessedly only as a *pis-aller*, or as a reconnoitring post whence he might determine his future course. In this state of hesitation Augustine came in contact with the Bishop of Milan. Here he saw Christianity, for the first time in his life, in its most attractive features. Here was a system claiming Divine origin, and attesting its claim by the rapidity of its growth and the grandeur and magnificence of its power. The 'gigantic edifice of Christian authority extending itself throughout the universe,' to use his own words, while it appealed to his imagination, seemed an opportune solution of his intellectual difficulties. He bowed his head before the inspiring ideal of a Church—one, universal, indivisible—which has captivated and deluded so many illustrious imaginations both before and since. He was misled by the conception of a 'Civitas Dei'—a kingdom of God, such as is falsely claimed to be represented by Romanism—an enormous spiritual power, deriving authority directly from heaven—the sole sacred and exclusive depository of all truth—governed by a hierarchy illustrious for its talents and venerable for its holiness, and ruling over weak and erring men with a wise, gentle, and infallible jurisdiction. Such was the Christian society, the Church Catholic, as Augustine depicted it in the warm glow of his imagination, with the prosperous Church of Milan, the venerated figure of Ambrose, the learning and piety of men like Jerome, Athanasius, and Cyprian, the devotion and purity of so many other Christians unknown to fame—of whom his mother was a type—as foreground accessories of the picture. There is no trace in Augustine's works of an impartial and critical estimate of the human agencies which contributed to the spread of Christianity. He regarded it not so much in its evolutionary as its static aspect, as it presented itself to him in Africa, at Rome, and at Milan at the end of the fourth century. He thought it impossible that it could have been established, preserved, and extended without Divine aid, and apart from Divine purpose. His single proof, not only of the Divine

¹ *I.e.* in philosophical and religious speculation. In matters of ordinary knowledge Augustine not merely admitted human authority, but made it a basis of generalization for Divine: *e.g.*: 'Juvat sequi auctoritatem et præcepta sapientum et per hæc loqui sibi Deum credere,' *Op. om.* i. 435. On the other hand: 'Rationi roborandæ, hominum auctoritatem quærere est imbecillitatis,' *Op. om.* i. 504.

origin but also of the intrinsic truth of Christianity, was its rapid propagation and prosperity.¹ This was his continual reply to all doubts and criticisms from whatever source they emanated. To the Manichæans, Donatists, Arians, Pelagians, his demonstration of the truth and superiority of Christianity was, in one word, *circumspice*. Behold the growth, power, magnificence of the Church! The argument was not new; it is the stereotyped plea put forth again and again by the Christian apologists. But though not new it was effective; it appealed to accomplished facts, to evidences patent and indisputable. The Church had progressed. This was acknowledged by all. No heresiarch or hostile critic could help admitting the fact. So far as mere prosperity was an infallible evidence of truth, no testimony could be more satisfactory. What Augustine would have said to the smaller beginnings of Christianity, when its followers consisted of a few Galilæan peasants, what to the Church of 120 that assembled in the upper chamber at Jerusalem, what to the division of the Eastern from the Western Church, what to the Reformation, &c. we are left to guess. Certainly, if outward prosperity and universality are the only tests of truth, Augustine's argument can no longer be said to apply to any Church in Christendom. It was this prosperity that gave the Church its autocratic power, its

¹ On this point numberless passages from Augustine's works might easily be collected. Thus, speaking of the motives which induced him to join the Church, he says: 'Ut ergo hanc omittam sapientiam quam in Ecclesia esse Catholica non creditis' (he is addressing Manichæans) 'multa sunt alia quæ in ejus gremio me justissime teneant. *Tenet consensio populorum atque gentium: tenet auctoritas miraculis inchoata, spe nutrita, caritate aucta, vetustate firmata: tenet ab ipsa sede Petri apostoli . . . usque ad præsentem episcopatum successio sacerdotum: tenet postremo ipsum Catholicæ nomen quod non sine causa inter tam multas hæreses sic ista Ecclesia sola obtinuit*' (*Contra Epist. Man. c. iv. Op. om. viii. 153*). . . Compare also the following: 'Si ergo incognita crediturus sum cur non ea potius credam quæ jam *consensione doctorum indoctorumque celebrantur, et per omnes populos gravissima auctoritate firmata sunt?*' (*Op. om. viii. 161*) . . . 'Si ergo ad millia fabulosorum phantasmatum te auctoritati ignotissimæ et furiosissimæ subdidisti . . . cur non potius Evangelicæ auctoritati, *tam fundatæ, tam stabilitæ, tanta gloria diffamatæ, atque ab Apostolorum temporibus usque ad nostra tempora per successiones certissimas commendatæ non te subdis*' (*C. Faustum, xxxii. 19*). Similarly, the diffusion of Holy Scripture, as though it were independent of the extension of the Church, becomes the chief proof of its truth. ' . . . jam credere cœperam nullo modo te (Deum) fuisse tributurum tam excellentem illi Scripturæ per omnes jam terras auctoritatem, nisi et per ipsam tibi credi et per ipsam te quæri voluisses' (*Confess. p. 89*).

supreme authority over the consciences of men. If we would ask the source of this authority, we are told it is not truth. It consists : (1) of miracles ; (2) the number of disciples.¹ According to Augustine there was a 'pre-established harmony' between truth and numbers, so that the latter might always be accepted as a criterion of the power. A true religion, he thought, could not exist without the accompaniment of a powerful and supreme authority.² That he regarded the authority as extrinsic and separable from the truth of Christianity, a Divine but adventitious sanction of it, is conclusively shown in a remarkable passage, where he says that he would not have believed the gospel unless the authority of the Church had compelled him ;³ words which imply not only an imperfect conception, but an absolute inversion of the true relations between Christ and His Church ; and which, therefore, it is painful to find in a man of Augustine's great mental power.⁴ The thought never seems to have occurred to him—if the Church testifies for the gospel, who, or what, will testify for the Church ? or, if the compulsion of the Church be his sole reason for embracing Christianity, might not the same compulsion urge him to other beliefs than the

¹ *De Util. Cred., Op. om.* viii. col. 67. In a subsequent passage he adds, 'The succession of bishops and councils.' The soundest argument of the treatise, on behalf of authority, is its necessity to man as a social being—*ζῶν πολιτικός.* *Op. om.* viii. cols. 62, 63.

² 'Vera religio . . . sine quodam gravi auctoritatis imperio iniri recte nullo pacto potest, *De Util. Cred.* c. 9. Compare the passages accumulated in notes *d* and *f* of the *Confessions, Bib. Patr.* p. 87.

³ *Contra Epistolam Manichæi*, cap. v. *Op. om.* viii. 154 : 'Ego vero Evangelio non crederem, nisi me Catholicæ Ecclesiæ commoverit auctoritas.'

⁴ Ritter is among the few modern writers who have called attention to this fundamentally false conception of Augustine, and its baneful influence both on himself and his disciples. Not only does Christ thus become the mere creature of the Church, but the Church as the only source of truth, authorizes Holy Scripture, authenticates and sanctions all science and philosophy, and establishes and even creates ethical laws and prescriptions. It seems curious that a man of Augustine's intellectual penetration did not perceive the mischief of this unbounded ecclesiasticism, from which Christendom has suffered so severely. Comp. Ritter, *Geschichte*, vi. p. 432. In the fourteenth century the falsehood of Augustine's dictum was clearly pointed out by Marsilio of Padua, in his celebrated *Defensor Pacis*, who remarks : 'Non enim dicta Christi vera sunt causaliter, eo quod eisdem testificetur Ecclesia Catholica, sed testimonium ecclesiæ causaliter verum est propter veritatem dictorum Christi' (Goldast, *Monarch.* ii. p. 255), or, as Wessel more pithily expressed the same truth, 'Evangelio credimus, et propter Evangelium Ecclesiæ et Papæ, non Evangelio propter Ecclesiam.'—Goldast, *Monarch.* i. p. 567.

gospel, perhaps differing widely from it? Nor are these words a mere rhetorical ἄπαξ λεγόμενον, an unique expression of a *modus credendi* not to be found elsewhere. Striking as they are, they are no more than what he states repeatedly as to the grounds of his faith; indeed, as you will see, they only apply to himself the precise argument which he recommends so often to Donatists and Manichæans. But the principle thus naïvely admitted by Augustine deserves more than a passing allusion. We are here face to face with the primary misconception, the *πρῶτον ψεύδος* on which the whole superstructure of Christian dogma is based. It is a distinct enunciation of ecclesiasticism pure and simple. He claims for the Church that character and prerogative which Romanism has so perniciously asserted for so many centuries, *i.e.* it is not the organ and vehicle, but the absolute and infallible source of Christian truth. As such it is superior even to its Founder. Not the gospel but the Church claims our allegiance. Not the actual living Christ, but doctrines, creeds, and dogmas not to be found in His teaching, and, being speculative rather than practical, ritual rather than ethical, are even opposed diametrically to it. Undoubtedly if the history of the Church teaches one lesson more clearly than another it is the baneful influence of this servile dogmatism, together with its allied sacerdotalism, both in those who administer and those who receive it. And the same history forms a doleful commentary on Augustine's words, and the enormous distance by which the authority of the Church may become separated from the teaching of Christ. Nor is the psychological aspect of this position unworthy of notice. Augustine is not ordinarily credited with maintaining the doctrine of Twofold Truth. An overt profession of such a slippery tenet he would in all probability have strongly denounced; but in thus making his religious belief the result of coercion, and a coercion which must *ab initio* have been external to himself, he is really advancing a mode of belief hardly distinguishable from Twofold Truth. He distinctly avows that his volition has been forced; and the very statement implies that his mental being has been divided. What these sympathies or reasonings were which Christian dogma forcibly suppressed he does not tell us. They were probably the convictions of his rationalistic period, when, *e.g.* he refused to accept the doctrine of the Incarnation. Anyhow, there was a spiritual contention within him between—(1) inherent proclivity, intellectual or spiritual; (2) outward compulsion on the part of ecclesiasticism. Further, the very terms in which he announces the victory of the latter over the former proclaim that it was obtained at the cost of some sacrifice. The emphatic 'I

would never have believed' announces the survival of no small amount of the old Adam of intellectualism. I do not for a moment suppose that this old leaven was not finally subdued, but there can be no question that it existed during some portion of his ecclesiastical development.

That this obedience to Christian dogma 'on compulsion' might be interpreted as sanctioning Twofold Truth is shown in the similar applications of that principle by such Free-thinkers as Le-Vayer, Bruno, and Vanini. In some of these instances the assertion of the principle meant merely 'emotional conviction,' the adherence of the feeling and affections to beliefs which have been surrendered by the intellect; but it has also been employed for a more suspicious purpose, viz. to express an ironical or purely verbal adherence to external authority in cases where a *bonâ fide* adherence might be a matter of difficulty if not impossibility.

From the point of view of Augustine's principle of authority, his celebrated work 'De Civitate Dei'—'Of the Kingdom of God'—has a peculiar significance. It embodies in an elaborate form, and with a suitable magnificence of thought and diction, that imperial representation of Christianity which had first fascinated him. Though composed some years after his conversion, and evincing a temper soured and sympathies narrowed by dogmatic habits of thought and episcopal administration, the outline and main argument of the work consists of that aspect of Christianity which always appeared to him most irresistible. He starts from a standpoint of Dualism which may possibly be a reminiscence of his Manichæan period. The Church is a Divine, superhuman sovereignty, placed by God in juxtaposition with an earthly and secular dominion, and destined to counteract its malicious influence. These two antagonistic states Augustine traces from the earliest history of humanity. The kingdom of God is found in the Bible and in Jewish history; the kingdom of the world or the devil belongs to profane history and to Gentile religions and philosophies.¹ The former finds its final consummation in the glories of heaven, the latter in the eternal torments of hell. The intention of the work is to prove the Divine design of establishing the Church as the exclusive source of truth upon the ruin of all other kingdoms, systems, and institutions of whatever kind—an ideal dream that came nearest to realization by Hildebrand.

¹ It is noteworthy that Augustine, at this period of his life, makes especial exception of the Platonic philosophy, at least to the extent of admitting that it had discovered the true God.

Such a purpose, if consistently pursued, necessarily induces a partial and unsympathetic treatment of alien peoples, thoughts, and creeds. The very conception of the Church as the sole depository of truth puts, *ipso facto*, all other truth-claimants out of court. But while in idea Augustine's 'kingdom of God' is largely dominated by a harsh, arbitrary, and dogmatic spirit, it possesses in detail considerable value as a treasury of ancient lore, as well as occasionally of subtle, original, and profound thought.

Comparing Augustine's conception of the 'kingdom of God' with the 'kingdom of heaven' as conceived by Christ,¹ we are made aware of the growth of dogmatic Christianity in the four centuries that had elapsed since its beginning. What we especially observe in Augustine is the striking absence of sympathy and tolerance for non-Christian modes of thought, and an estimate of all human history from the exclusive standpoint of the Bishop of Hippo. We find his usual tendency to make material prosperity the mark of truth and Divine favour—the doctrine that orthodox faith supersedes moral excellence, nay, that without this faith all virtue and self-denial is nothing else but a gorgeous lie;—the representation of God as a sovereign pontiff rather than as the merciful Father of all mankind. In short, we find, either in germ or in some stage of development, the worst tendencies of dogmatic Christianity. We hence perceive that Christianity has already lost its primal purity and freshness, that it possesses no longer the freedom, the humanity, the peace and calm of its earliest form. Augustine's kingdom of God stands in the same ratio to the diviner ideal of the Gospels as the proud sovereignty of Louis XIV. might be said to bear to some free Swiss or Italian republic, or as the suspicious temper, the sordid care, the restless ambition of a man spoilt by contact with the world bears to the freedom, trustfulness, and generosity of youth. And if Augustine's conception compares disadvantageously with Christ's ideal, its condemnation is no less distinctly written in subsequent ecclesiastical history. Few patristic writings have been received with more favour by Romanist theologians than the 'De Civitate.' Frequently it has been held to supply a basis and justification of the most exorbitant excesses of Papal domination. The growth and development of that power afford an instructive illustration of the real working of a kingdom claiming to be of God, but in truth administered by

¹ For the purpose of this comparison, a study is recommended of the 4th, 18th, and 19th Books of the *De Civitate*, on the one hand, and of the Sermon on the Mount and the Parables of the Kingdom, on the other.

men more than ordinarily human in all that relates to the weakness and fallibility, the pride and presumption, the lust and passion, of the race.¹ Against this pernicious sovereignty the Reformation was a glorious and successful insurrection, and it is not too much to say that the liberty and prosperity of modern nations depend in no small measure on the resistance they oppose to its claims.

But though the authority of the Church was Augustine's first motive in embracing Christianity, we are not warranted in assuming that the surrender of his reason was made immediately and unconditionally. No doubt Augustine must have determined that the chief doctrines of Christianity were capable of being defended by rational means, or at least by reason acting in conjunction with and subserviency to devout imagination. His employment of allegory, *e.g.* had made the Bible more credible and more edifying. His Neo-Platonic studies had divested some of the dogmas of the Christian faith of their most embarrassing aspects. If all his difficulties had not disappeared (and in the year of his baptism he expressly disavows having yet discovered truth), he was warranted in thinking that a method he had proved to be so effective might be equal to their complete extermination. For the present, however, Reason is 'scotched' rather than killed; indeed, for the greater part of his after-career she occasionally, but with increasing feebleness, seems to wish to assert her former independence,² though ultimately she is reduced to complete sub-

¹ Cf. Bp. Thirlwall's works *passim* on this point.

² 'Credere autem tunc est culpandum, cum vel de Deo indignum aliquid creditur vel de homine facile creditur.'—*De Util. Cred.*, *Op. om.* viii. 61. But a whole catena of passages condemnatory of rash belief, and laudatory of wholesome ignorance, may be gathered from Augustine's works. Here are a few of such sentences:—

'Magis eligo cautam ignorantiam confiteri quam falsam scientiam profiteri.'—*Op. om.* ii. 739.

'Non erubescendum est homini confiteri se nescire quod nescit, ne dum se scire mentitur, numquam scire mereatur.'—*Op. om.* ii. 704.

'Melior est fidelis ignorantia, quam temeraria scientia.'—*Op. om.* v. 144.

'Ignorantiæ confessio gradus est Scientiæ.'—*Op. om.* v. 1223.

'Melius est nescire quam errare.'—*Op. om.* iii. 445.

'Ignorantia in Dei rebus magis pia est quam præsumpta Scientia.'—*Op. om.* v. 582.

'Ignorantia quædam docta Spiritu Dei.'—*Op. om.* ii. 393.

Comp. Letter to Consentius, *Ep.* 120 *passim*, on the relation of faith and reason.

ordination as the *ancilla theologiæ*, being deprived of all volition, and compelled to exercise her ratiocination in strict obedience to the behests, and with a single eye to the interests, of theology.¹ But though reason may thus have been a concurrent influence in his first adoption of Christianity and the principle of authority, it was by no means the only or even primary motive. As I have remarked, Augustine was chiefly led by his vivid and powerful imagination. By the aid of that forward and irresponsible faculty he conceived the Church as the ideal source and abode of truth. He depicted its origin, its claims, its growth, its power, and its destiny in the brilliant forms and warm hues which his fancy conjured up, and which he incontinently transferred to the canvas of his intellect, employing his reason merely as a convenient 'dryer' to give his colouring the requisite hardness and finish.

And this leads me to observe that Augustine's adoption of authority, strange as it may seem, is in reality based upon Skepticism. He adopts it as a test of truth, because he claims to have discovered the comparative imbecility of reason. He accepts dogma for the express reason of the absolute failure of intellectual research. Few persons, I think, adequately consider how closely akin uninquiring Dogmatism is to complete Skepticism, and how nearly extremes, apparently so antagonistic, really meet. For the same consciousness of impotence which leads men to distrust their own faculties and judgment ought, if consistently applied, to induce a similar distrust of every definitive conclusion or dogma that they determine to accept. The imbecility that prompts and justifies a negative must *à fortiori* vitiate an affirmative. Nor is the principle really affected by the fact that in the adoption of dogma we place confidence in those who possess more enlightenment than ourselves: if I, *e.g.* am totally unable to discover or discern truth of myself, I cannot decide whether others possess it or not. Hence, in embracing dogma, Augustine, like every other thinker in his position, is really impelled by Skeptical motives. In the mental vacuity of Academic Skepticism—so intolerable to a man of his warm feelings and ardent imagination—he is ready to accept superhuman dictation, or, using his own expression, 'the mind being too keen to apprehend truth, it must be received as a Divine and authoritative communication.'

¹ M. Bouchitté, in the *Dict. des Sciences Philosophiques* (art. 'Augustin'), comments on this tendency of Augustine's speculations, and points out the stress he occasionally places upon knowledge, not, however, for its own sake, but as the handmaid of faith.

Nor was it only with regard to himself and his own experience that Augustine decided on the superiority of authority to reason. He considered the respective operations of the rival principles on the bulk of humanity, and on the laws that govern social existence. He found that as a teacher authority claimed, and in some respects rightly, more general influence than reason.¹ For as to things beyond their personal knowledge, men must to a very large extent rely on the experience of those better informed, and without the agreement arising from general uniformity of opinions, society would become a mere house divided against itself, and therefore doomed to destruction. The authority which secured this uniformity thus played the part of a lubricating agent in enabling the wheels of the social machine to work easily. Even morality was in most cases enforced less by its own inherent claims than by the coercive force of the will and customary usage of the community. A more questionable argument on the side of authority is Augustine's assertion² that Christ appealed to faith rather than to reason to confirm His teaching. So far as words go, this is no doubt true. Reason, as the highest faculty of discerning and receiving truth, is not once named in His teaching, but in reality the doctrines of Christ were, as we saw in the last chapter, utterly destructive of all constituted authority, as this was then understood by the Jews, and the principle to which He appealed, no matter by what name it was distinguished, was not only reliance on the inherent truth of His teaching, but on the consciousness of His hearers and their moral and spiritual perceptions; in other words, it was virtually an appeal to reason as against authority.

It is a common, perhaps not unnatural, fault of all dogmatists to place comparatively little stress on the momentous probability that the authority of fallible men—and no Revelation is conceivable except on that authority—may deceive. Augustine, however, contemplates this as a possibility in certain cases, but not with the result of lessening his confidence in authority. He puts the issue on a utilitarian basis: 'If authority fails us we are unfortunate, but if we have no authority we are still more so. Mental energy of any kind is better than a condition of helpless passivity, and therefore a misleading authority is better than none.'³ We need not discuss this principle at present, for we shall have

¹ Cf. *De Util. Cred.*, *Op. om.* viii. 62, &c.

² *De Util. Cred.*, *Op. om.* viii. 65.

³ 'Auctoritate decipi miserum est, sed certe miserius non moveri.'—*Op. om.* viii. 67.

future opportunities of doing this. Besides, the question is clearly one of which the ultimate decision will depend mainly on the mental tendencies of those who answer it. That Augustine's solution was in harmony with his intellect and spiritual temperament we can readily perceive, though it is hardly one that a more critical and cautious thinker would be content, unreservedly, to accept.

II. Passing from the principle of authority as that which chiefly determined his reception of Christianity, some significance must be attached to the fact that the newer dogma was a not unnatural reaction from older free habits of thought. It was the revenge of the imagination for the assumed misleading of the intellect—the retaliation of faith and spiritual emotion for the supposed perversion of the reason. Throughout his career no characteristic is more clearly expressed, both in his thought and life, than a self-willed impulsiveness, of which the waywardness of his boyhood was a forecast. In all such characters the volitional energy, though apparently strong, is really weak. And this febleness is strikingly exemplified by Augustine's behaviour in more than one conjuncture of his life. Having failed to find truth in Gentile schemes of thought, and thus reached the lowest ebb of conviction and knowledge, his very tendency to reaction would of itself create both an expectation and a readiness to take advantage of a recurrent flow. Hence, had Augustine never come in contact with Christianity, he would undoubtedly not have been long satisfied with the incertitude of the Academic philosophy. He must needs have become sooner or later a dogmatist, and in all probability one of a vigorous type. In this as in other respects Augustine presents a curious parallel to Pascal. In both cases we find mental powers of no mean order overborne by an imagination and religious passion of still greater force and vehemence. In both we have a will too easily led captive, whether by bodily passions or by the overmastering power of the feeling and the fancy. In both also, over-indulgence (for them) in intellectual speculation, as a kind of mental libertinism, ends by inducing a violent reaction in favour of emotion and religious sentiment. In other words, Skepticism of an extreme kind prepares the way for a dogmatism as extreme and perhaps still more unjustifiable.

III. But besides these reasons which pertain to Augustine's character and circumstances, other causes were hardly less instrumental in determining the bent of his mind to dogmatic Christianity. There were at least two points on which the Christian

faith appeared to coincide with the methods and results of Skeptical speculation.

1. It distinctly admitted faith as a principle of action to be based upon imperfect knowledge. Augustine started on his intellectual career with the determination to know before he believed. He might have taken as his motto Abelard's apophthegm, indeed he calls it his own at one part of his life,¹ '*Intellige ut credas.*' His experience of Manichæanism, of Skepticism, and of other methods of Greek thought demonstrated the difficulty, to say the least, of such a purely intellectual creed. But precisely the same difficulty, he found, was also admitted by thoughtful Christians. They were far from professing demonstrative certainty as to the objects of their faith. On the other hand, they denied the possibility of such assurance. To 'walk by faith, not by sight,' was not only the necessity of the Christian, but constituted his peculiar and saving merit. To see partly as in a glass was his undeniable earthly destiny. No doubt there was between the belief of the Christian and the uncertainty of the Skeptic the profound distinction that the former was a religious, the latter an intellectual, principle: the resemblance between them was rather in germ than in development. Probability *e.g.*, could never transcend itself. No matter how closely it approximated to certainty, it could in theory never attain it. Skepticism drew a distinct line of demarcation between the two. With faith, on the other hand, the case was different. As a principle of assurance unfettered by conditions of positive knowledge, and deriving all its sustenance from itself, it possessed a vitality and inherent power of growth which was able by due nourishment not only to equal but even to transcend ordinary intellectual certitude, especially in warm, emotional, semi-mystical natures. Augustine's faith, as we shall see, was destined to acquire this higher demonstrative intensity. But even with these dissimilarities of development, both the faith of the Christian and the probability of the Academic operated in much the same manner as a principle of action.

2. But faith as a condition of imperfect knowledge found both a *raison d'être* and a peculiar intensity in another doctrine of ecclesiastical Christianity: I mean the natural depravity of man. So strikingly did this dogma coincide with Augustine's Skepticism, his experience of the intellectual imbecility of humanity, that we can hardly wonder at his acceptance of it as a complete solution of

¹ '*Intellige ut credas verbum meum; crede ut intelligas verbum Dei.*'—*Aug. Serm. xliii.* near the end.

what would otherwise have been an enigma. Not that Augustine was the first discoverer of the affinity between Nescience and an excessive depreciation of human nature. From the earliest history of Christianity the Skeptical argument had been employed, for evidential purposes, as an *à priori* justification of Divine Revelation both in its ethical and intellectual acceptance. By the early Christian Fathers¹ the confessions of ignorance, limitation, &c. on the part of Greek Skeptics were put forward to show the necessity of superhuman knowledge; and instances will frequently meet us among modern thinkers of a similar ratiocination. Indeed, I regard it as more than likely that Augustine's acceptance of Greek Skepticism, coming immediately after his long indoctrination into Manichæan ideas, may have led to his intensifying the doctrine of original sin which he received in Christianity. But this is a point we need not discuss here. We shall by-and-by have to consider more fully the part which this doctrine plays in Augustine's dogmatic development. At present it will suffice to note its influence in leading him to accept Christianity.

IV. Nor must we forget that there was in all likelihood a personal motive in a change of religion that involved a complete abandonment of his worldly calling and prospects. Augustine's conversion occurred in a crisis of his career. His removal from Carthage to Rome had not resulted in the increase of fame and prosperity he had anticipated. Nor did his stay at Milan materially improve his prospects. The celebrity he had long hoped to achieve was as yet a vision of the future. The matrimonial speculation by which he intended to give a new impetus to his fortunes had fallen through. In a word, the problem of his life still remained to be solved. It was just in this untoward conjuncture of circumstances that he became acquainted with Ambrose. He admired his eloquence and learning, and was probably astonished at the extent of his personal influence. The past career of the Bishop of Milan was well known to him. He could not help being struck by the fact that in many points it closely resembled his own. Here was the son of a heathen prefect who had attained the highest dignity in the Christian Church, and who found in that position ample room for the exercise of talents he had cultivated as a rhetor, who could still enjoy heathen literature and eloquence, and who combined, with the indulgence of tastes belonging to his past life, a present sphere of honour and dignity well fitted to satisfy his ambition, and to give employment to his administrative

¹ Hüber, *Philosophie der Kirchenväter*, pp. 14-81.

capacities. Why should not that career become his own? Ambrose certainly encouraged in the interests of the Church all Augustine's wistful but coy advances towards Christianity, and Monica warmly seconded his efforts. I am far from thinking that this was a primary influence in Augustine's conversion, but that it occupies a foremost place among subordinate causes is, I think, borne out both by the ambitious schemes of his earlier life and by the hierarchical pride and despotic temper of his later episcopal career.

Such seem to me to have been the causes, intellectual, religious, and personal, that induced Augustine to become a Christian, and in fulfilment of early hopes and dreams to stamp his name indelibly on the page of human history.

But our concern with Augustine's Skepticism does not altogether end with his baptism, as might be supposed. For although the remainder of his life is a persistent and steady growth in the temper and methods of dogma, Skepticism of a pronounced kind still plays an incidental but not unimportant part in it. Hence it is necessary for the full consideration of our subject to cast a brief glance at Augustine's dogmatic system.

Of all the various speculative constructions which Christian theologians have laboriously built up, few can exceed in grandeur of outline, harmony of purpose, and minute elaboration of detail the complex scheme which Christendom owes to Augustine. Whatever criticism may be offered as to its want of conformity with the actual teachings of Christ, its unworthy conception of Divine Providence, its superb indifference to the feelings, instincts, and rights of humanity, its arbitrary and servile tendencies, every critic must allow the imposing character of the system as a whole. Like the spiritual dominion arrogated by Hildebrand, or the European sovereignty prospected by the First Napoleon, we have presented to us the magnificent outline of a despotism comprehending in its sway nothing less than the whole universe. In making our own brief estimate of it, it will suffice to consider it from two standpoints: God and man. We shall thus apprehend, if not all the minute details, the general spirit and import of Augustine's teaching.

1. Augustine's doctrine of God seems to me in many respects the most valuable part of his dogmatic teaching. Few readers whose knowledge of Augustine is limited only to the 'Confessions' but must have been struck by the diversity, the spirituality, the subtlety, the emotional intensity of his various conceptions of the Deity; and the 'Confessions' are by no means the most remarkable

of his many works in this particular. A collection of these multifarious definitions and conceptions might easily be made which would go far to prove Augustine guilty of Pantheism,¹ if they could not be easily rebutted by many others which insist on the personality of the Deity. Much of Augustine's eclecticism on this subject is due not only to the reach and profundity of his intellect, but to the fact that his theology is largely derived from nature. So interpenetrated is he with the diversity of natural activities and phenomena, so fully persuaded of the divinity and omnipotence underlying every manifestation of these energies, that every portion of the material world becomes a sacred territory—a holy mountain and burning bush, in which the attentive ear may detect the still small voice of the Eternal. Augustine is indeed an eminent example of the comprehensive many-sided *théodicée*, which of necessity will result from the operation of a powerful and independent intellect on the various problems of nature and humanity. In every such case, the theologian's conclusions being emanations from and copies of the Infinite, it will not be wonderful if the *tout-ensemble* of his conceptions share the diversity and complexity so strongly impressed upon nature itself.

Augustine first of all discovers in Deity what he has so long sought, viz. truth. God is the absolute,² the universal, and eternal truth—the only source of truth for all existing beings. What he has been blindly endeavouring to find throughout his life is God. All his errors and wanderings had, though unconsciously, this for their object. When he was a Manichæan he conceived of God as of a substance. When he became an Academic, God as an attainable object was still further removed. Reduced with other truths to a mere probability, he could only be possessed, if at all, in a future world. But besides being absolute truth, God is also the single source of all beauty and of all goodness. 'O God,' he exclaims in the beginning of his 'Soliloquies,' 'Thou art the author of truth, the author of wisdom, the author of true and supreme existence, the source of happiness, the source of all that is good and beautiful, the source of intelligence, the source of our awakening and our enlightenment, the source of the trust by which we are admonished to return to Thee.'³ God being truth itself, He con-

¹ Comp. e.g.: 'Sic est per cuncta diffusus, ut non sit qualitas mundi sed *substantia creatrix*, sine labore regens, et sine onere continens mundum' — *Op.* ii. p. 682; '*Dei natura ubique integra, ubique præsens non in parte minor, et in parte major; sine ulla mole magna*'— *Op.* viii. 161.

² Hüber, *Philosophie der Kirchenväter*, p. 260.

³ 'Deus, per quem omnia, quæ per se non essent, tendunt esse . . .

stitutes the highest object of the reason. All ratiocination that has not God for its single object is nugatory and false. On the other hand, the highest efforts of true reason must be essentially Divine. God is manifested to the human reason mainly in two ways: (1) by creation; (2) by His incarnate Word or wisdom. In creation, 'God is the cause of all substance, the reason of the understanding, and the order of existence.'¹ But though defining God as the life of all that lives, he is in no danger of being ensnared by Pantheism. He regards his own spiritual evolution as a progress from the material aspects of nature to the spiritual. This is in part the signification of his conversion from Manichæanism to Christianity. Many are the allusions in his writings to this change of view. 'This is,' he exclaims, 'what I love when I love my God—and who then is He? I asked the earth, and it answered me, It is not I, and everything it contains made also the same response. I asked the sea, the great deeps, and all the living beings that people them, and they answered me, We are not thy God, search higher than us. I asked the breath of the winds, and the air with all its inhabitants replied, Anaximenes was deceived, I am not God. I asked the heaven, the sun, the moon, and the stars, and they responded, Neither are we the God whom thou seekest. Finally, I addressed myself to all those beings that surround my physical senses, and I said to them, Since you are not my God, at least teach me something about Him; and they all cried with a loud voice, It is He who hath made us.'² Augustine applies the same question to himself considered as soul and body. The soul, as immaterial, he finds most capable of acquainting him with the nature of a spiritual God; still neither can do much more than reiterate the answer already received. Both nature and humanity are in fact the passive objects of Divine omnipotence; nevertheless, in theory he is not unmindful that God's attributes of supreme power and authority must be limited by His moral qualities, though in practice this limitation cannot be said to be of much value, for the reason that man's powers are so degraded

Deus, a quo dissonantia usque in extremum nulla est, cum deteriora melioribus concinunt. Deus quem amat oune quod potest amare sive sciens, sive nesciens—Deus in quo sunt omnia, cui tamen universæ creaturæ, nec turpitudine turpis est, nec malitia nocet, nec error errat . . . Deus pater veritatis, pater sapientiæ, pater veræ summæque vitæ, pater beatitudinis, pater boni et pulchri, pater intelligibilis lucis, pater evigilationis atque illuminationis nostræ, pater pignoris quo admonemur redire ad te.—*Solil.* lib. i. c. 2, *Op. om.* i. 355, 356.

¹ *De Civit.* lib. viii. c. 4.

² *Confess.* p. 172.

and distorted that he can form no conception of God's moral attributes.¹

From the very fact of His infinity, whether considered in itself or as expressed by the boundless variety of nature, combined also with the limited and fallible character of human conceptions, God can only be comprehensively defined in a series of antitheses. These occur repeatedly in Augustine's works, and are models of religious eloquence and impassioned feeling.²

As a general outcome of Augustine's *théodicée*, we may say that its chief characteristic is its combination of sublimity and versatility. This is the reason why religious thinkers of so many kinds, ranging from the freest of Free-thinkers to the narrowest of dogmatists, unite in appealing to Augustine. In truth, the theological fabric he has erected is not a temple to the one God, but a multitudinous Pantheon of divers and scarcely reconcilable deities. Here we have the merciful Father of all men revealed to us by Christ side by side with the arbitrary, bloodthirsty tyrant of Calvin. Here we have the supreme spirit in juxtaposition with a sensuous materialized God. Here we find the veiled shadowy deity of the mystic : here the many-membered variously dowered idol of the Pantheist : here the symbol of light and intellectualism adored by the rationalist : here the cosmic deity of the natural theologian. The Jehovah of the Hebrews, the Father of the Christians, even the deities of Greece and Rome in some of their manifestations are all fully represented, recognised, and worshipped in the Augustinian Pantheon. I do not of course dwell on this as a matter of reprehension. I have already pointed out that the multiplicity of Augustine's theological conceptions is only a natural result of his own many-sidedness, intellectually and spiritually, and an inevitable reflex of the manifold materials employed in their creation. Under the circumstances it is not wonderful that his conjectures

¹ This is one point, among several others, in which Augustine's opinions tend distinctly to Dualism, or Twofold Truth. The gulf that he places between God and man is too wide to be bridged over. Hence he says, on the one hand, that Christians do not 'worship a God who repents, who is envious, who suffers from defect, who is cruel, who finds pleasure in the blood of men or animals, who is pleased with vices or crimes, or whose power is limited to a small corner of the earth' (*De Moribus Eccles. Cath.* i. c. 10), while on the other he is equally explicit in denying that man can have any idea of the moral attributes of the Deity, on account of the limitation and corruption of his faculties. Unfortunately for Christianity, it is on the latter horn of the dilemma that he allows himself to be impaled. Cf. Flottes, *Études*, p. 432.

² Comp. Nourisson, *Philosophie*, &c. i. 277.

as to the Divine nature and attributes are interspersed by salutary reflections as to the impossibility of knowledge of such matters, though on ethical matters he carries the tendency too far. Our truest knowledge of God is confessed nescience, and our worthiest expression of our knowledge is silence. 'God is conceived more truly than defined, and He is truer than we are able to conceive Him.' The idea of God cannot be brought under any category, and no designation that we can employ is properly applicable to Him. In a word, all Augustine's *théodicée* is reduced ultimately to the knowledge of his ignorance of God. Still he does not maintain that God's incomprehensibility dispenses with all research into His nature on our parts. With a reminiscence of his Academic Skepticism he says that continual search if properly directed will bring new light, and a negative result if duly attained will be better than a positive one which may be erroneous.

But while Augustine's doctrine of God regarded in Himself, *i.e.* in His own being and attributes, deserves in many respects cordial recognition for breadth of view and fulness of treatment, his doctrine of man, or rather God's dealings with man, cannot be approved by any thinker who has a regard for justice and humanity. No doubt there is a point of view from which Augustine's conceptions on this point are justifiable; he was much too severe a logician to propound any conclusion or doctrine not based, as he thought, on sufficient premisses, whether originating in his imagination or engendered by his conception of the Christian revelation, or produced by the operation of the former on the latter. His doctrine of man is a consistent outcome of his excessive estimate of the Divine omnipotence. This he interpreted in such a manner as to deprive it of all conditions, and therefore of all morality. The Divine volition also he regarded as so immeasurably superior to all other subordinate wills as to be in reality irresponsible. He either did not see, or probably he failed to appreciate, the truth, that power unbounded by considerations of justice, mercy, and goodness is certainly arbitrary, and may well be malicious in its operations, so that instead of being obligatory on every thinking man it may justly rouse his indignation and excite him to resistance. Hence, according to Augustine's theory, God becomes a despot and tyrant—a horrible kind of Divine Nero or Louis XIV.—insisting on the fulfilment of his behests without the least regard to their injustice or the misery they may produce. On the other hand, man becomes the helpless victim of a caprice which is the more unjustifiable as it is connected with supreme omnipotence. He is a slave, with the added refinement of cruelty

that his slavery is not only not of his choice, but that no efforts on his part can in the least modify his *status*. By an arbitrary decree he is deprived of every ability and power, not only for knowledge, but even for action. The liberty he apparently possesses is a figment and pretence, like the gilding of chains which, though they appear ornamental, confine the movements of the wearer just as effectually as if made of coarse iron. It merely consists of the freedom of fulfilling the destiny worked out for him, and which under no circumstances would it be possible to evade.

But while on the Divine side Augustine deliberately sacrifices human liberty to God's foreknowledge on the human side, it is still more effectually abrogated by his interpretation of the Fall of Man. One cannot help wishing that Augustine had employed the allegorical method which he found so useful in interpreting other of the Bible narratives to the records of that event. As it is, he construes it in such a manner as to involve the moral attributes of the Deity, the laws of the universe, and the welfare of humanity in one common and irreparable ruin. By the disobedience of its ancestor the majority of the whole human race has become totally incapacitated for knowing or doing what is right and good. The faculties of every man, both of soul and body, have become perverted and misleading. It is needless to dwell on the theological aspects of this momentous doctrine; our present concern is with its philosophical bearings. We here see, as I have already suggested, the Augustinian theology in intimate relationship with Skepticism. With one voice the Greek Skeptics had declared the senses to be untrustworthy, the reason to be perverted, all the natural powers of man to be insufficient to attain knowledge, and precisely the same conclusions were arrived at by Augustine with the portentous extension of the incapacity to all right and good action. The latter fact renders, in my opinion, Augustine's theological Skepticism much more mischievous than any amount of mere speculative theoretical unbelief could possibly have been. Like the man in the gospel, the elimination of one evil spirit only made ready a swept and garnished abode for the reception of seven others 'more wicked than himself.' That man with all his efforts is unable to attain truth may conceivably be an unavoidable necessity of the only possible *modus operandi* of his faculties, and therefore the fact may not in the least detract from the beneficence of his Creator; but the moment we make his creation and fall, and perhaps his consequent eternal misery, indissoluble parts of

the original intention of Omnipotence concerning him, that moment God is shorn of His attributes of goodness, man becomes the hapless victim of a caprice as unreasonable as it is irresistible, and the creation, so far as the majority of human beings is concerned, is a stupendous act of despotism and cruelty.

Nor is it difficult to trace the motive-influences which induced in Augustine this pernicious excess of dogma. The outcome was natural to a fervid rhetorician borne along on the wings of imagination. Those elements of Christianity which might have impeded his progress in this headlong career, viz. the humane spirit and simple character of the teachings of Christ, were perfectly unheeded. Augustine, like too many of his congeners, was more struck with the superstructure than with the foundation of Christianity. He paid more regard to the Church of the fourth century than to the Christ of the Gospels.¹ His evidence of Christianity, as I have remarked, was less its own inherent truth than the political and material prestige it had (I had almost said accidentally) acquired by its incorporation into the Roman Empire. The facts of the gospel were hence not Christianity. The teachings of the Founder were not enough to guide men to salvation. They merely supplied the rough unhewn materials with which Christian theology had to be erected, and which apparently had first to be manipulated, and afterwards selected or rejected according to the caprice of the builder. Instead of being the completed history, they were only *mémoires pour servir*. To Augustine as to Calvin the majority of the teachings of Christ—the Sermon on the Mount and the Parables—were not only superfluous, they were absolutely embarrassing. They imported into their neatly constructed scheme not a few discordant elements in the shape of insistency on Divine love, the perfect impartiality of God, the rights of humanity and

¹ Compare, on this subject, the excellent remarks of Neander (*Church History*, Bohn's translation, iii. p. 510): 'It is necessary to add here . . . that Augustine assumed, as that on which faith must fix, and from which it must take its departure, *everything given in the tradition of the Church*; hence he was led to admit into his *ratio* many foreign elements, as though they were given by *fides*, and his well-exercised, speculative, and dialectic intellect made it easy for him to find reasons for everything—to construe as necessary everything which had once become fused, although originally composed of heterogeneous elements, with his life of faith. His system of faith wanted that historical and critical direction whereby alone, returning back, at all periods of time, to the pure and original fountain of Christianity, it could *make* and *preserve* itself free from the foreign elements which continually threaten to mix in with the current of impure temporal tradition.'

the human conscience with which they would gladly have dispensed. Augustine, *e.g.* can only reconcile Christ's behaviour to little children with his own opinions as to their terrible destiny if unbaptized by the most transparent perversion of the text.¹ A few of the chapters in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans served them as the only basis for their scheme of Christianity. To this foundation Augustine applied his powerful imagination—feelings and expressions which his calling of rhetor always kept at a boiling-point of excitation—together with his irresistible dialectic which crushed whatever opposed its progress, and hence deduced that system which has, to the misfortune of Christianity, occupied so high a place in its after-history. This leads me to note that there is in intellectual as in physical and organic processes a curious principle of compensation. The tendency repressed in one direction immediately seeks to make its way in another, doubtless in that of 'least resistance.' The curtailment of an organ or the diminution of its functional activity is supplemented as regards mental faculties, as well as physical tissues, by an addition to its volume or increase of its energy in some other manner. Augustine had long been a teacher of logic. Dialectical processes were his customary verifying tools. These he had no doubt employed in the region both of imagination and reason. Perhaps the dialectic of the latter may have been used in modifying the natural excesses of the former. On his reception of Christianity authoritative Revelation became the substitute for reason. There was no further room for purely rationalistic logic. His dialectic was therefore transferred to the region of imagination, and assumed by its transference a double force and activity. Augustine was hardly conscious of the change on account of the common tendency of such transcendental logic to counterfeit the ratiocinative processes of the intellect, and simulate the validity of their conclusions. For this reason neither Augustine nor others who have allowed themselves to be thus beguiled have probably ever realized the undemonstrable character of their conclusions. The speculative theologian, like the poet and the mystic, does not readily brook what seems an arbitrary limitation to his aërial flight, and scorns not only the caution of the rationalist and the doubt of the Skeptic,

¹ The reason why Christ blessed little children, and said, 'Of such is the kingdom of God,' as revealed by Augustine, was that He regarded their tender age as a *symbol* of humility! ('quod humilitatis similitudinem in parva ætate posuerit')—*De Peccat. Remissione*, i. c. 19. Compare *Confess.* i. xix, p. 16.

but even the reverent awe of the Pietist and the benevolent feelings of the humanitarian. Mounted on the daring Pegasus of his own imagination, sustained and directed in his flight by a few texts of St. Paul, Augustine proceeds on his course, little recking the goal to which he himself was impelled, and to which those who pin their faith in him or his method will also be urged. On the recondite problems of the Being and attributes of God, the origin and destiny of man, he takes his stand on certain principles, and thence proceeds to deduce one marvellous conclusion after another, without dreaming of stopping to verify any single one of the successive stages of his argument. It is nothing to him if the final conclusion of his ratiocination conflicts with elementary notions of God as a moral Being and with our conceptions of His attributes. It is nothing to him if his scheme of Divine Providence robs God of His goodness and man of his liberty. It is nothing to him if the government of the universe is consigned to a tyrant, only differing from the worst of earthly despots in that his malicious power is infinitely greater. It matters not to him that his proposed disentanglement of human affairs has only added immeasurably to their original perplexity. He clearly considers that his province is not to satisfy the incompatible wishes and expectations of the crowd who watch his logical flight. All he has to do is to pursue undeviatingly his own course. Like Berengarius, perhaps he is persuaded that 'God is a dialectician,'¹ and hence is inclined to regard his own ratiocination as a copy of the thought-evolution he assumes to have taken place in the Divine mind. At least, he is too convinced of his own infallibility to listen to any such suggestion as that the subjective operations of his *individual* reason do not necessarily lead to all truth. He would no doubt have disputed the still more radical objection that all purely dialectical methods, even when they start from intellectual and rational principles, generally end in negation.

Sainte Beuve has remarked² that Augustine 'perfected the method of reasoning by imagination.' If by perfection he meant the highest conceivable limit to which a given tendency may be carried, this is doubtless true. Augustine's is the perfection of excess—devout imagination *in excelsis*—transcendentalism rampant—pious logic carried to the very sublimity of extravagance. But it certainly is not the perfection which consists in the recognition of the *modus in rebus*, it is not the perfection of reverent

¹ See Ampère, *Hist. Lit. de la France*, vol. iii. p. 333.

² *Port. Royal*, ii. 384, note.

caution, calm wisdom, and restrained passion. The worst of it was that this reliance on dialectical methods in the region of intuition and religious sentiment was calculated to deceive not only Augustine but many of his disciples, who were so taken by the form of his teachings as to be careless of their matter. It is only by bearing this in mind that we are able to account for the prodigious influence exercised by Augustinianism, especially after its intensification by Calvin. Men of sober intellects, devout feelings, and warm human sympathies would never have surrendered themselves so completely to the merciless doctrines of Augustine had they not been beguiled by the seductive glamour of his dialectic. The consequences for after-Christianity were nothing less than disastrous. On how many noble intellects has the remorseless logic of men like Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, &c. weighed like a dismal and oppressive nightmare they have utterly been unable to throw off? For how many has the Augustinian ideal of deity spread a dark veil over the heavens and intercepted the natural trust of the creature in the goodness of the all-wise Father? How many has his representation of earth and creation filled with despair for the destiny of humanity? To how many ingenuous thinkers has his description of heathen virtues as 'splendid vices'¹ revealed the customary arrogance and exclusiveness of religious dogmatism while disclosing in his own case a fundamental incapacity for true ethical perception? How many have involuntarily shuddered at the cold-blooded sentence which would fain have consigned innocent children to endless torments for a mere ritual privation of dying unbaptized?² How many have exclaimed, either tacitly or openly, at the perversion of Divine Providence involved in making the narrow limits of the Christian Church the

¹ Of this marvellous opinion Liebnitz says, briefly but needlessly: 'Nec in Sacris Pandectis fundamentum habet, et rationi adversatur.'—*Op. Dutens*, i. p. 322.

² It was entirely owing to Augustine's influence that the Council of Carthage, in 418, finally condemned the doctrine of a 'limbus infantum,' or infant purgatory—like the first circle in Dante's *Inferno*—which the theologians of a preceding age had devised to escape the alternative of attributing to the Divine Being the obvious injustice of sentencing children to endless infernal torments. Augustine, however, 'Durus pater infantum,' disdained to be influenced by feelings of maudlin pity for the hapless babes. He insisted upon their sentence to hell, and upon their actual torture! It were to be wished that the inhuman and unchristian prescription—itself a relic of Augustinianism, which forbids a clergyman to read the Burial Service over an unbaptized infant—might, in this enlightened nineteenth century, be finally and speedily abrogated. [These words were written in 1876. The Burial Bill of 1880 is a partial response to this wish.]

sole boundary of truth? What holocausts of martyrs and confessors have suffered from the unwarranted divorce of liberty of conscience from Christianity? What disasters have followed on the heels of the maxim, as impudently mendacious as atrociously cruel, 'Extra ecclesiam nulla salus'? No doubt there are few evil influences dominant in nature or history which are absolutely devoid of all utility, and Augustinianism may so far boast of conferring a residuum of indirect advantage on humanity. 1. Its numberless perversities and immoralities have taught mankind the lesson, though acquired at terrible cost, of the extreme lengths to which religious dogma is capable of proceeding. Taken in connection with other similar extravagances, they serve to show that there is no truth so unquestionable that dogma may not for its own interests trample it under foot; that no feelings or instincts are so sacred that it will not endeavour to pervert or crush them; that no beliefs are so improbable, no action so detestable, that it may not find a method of consecrating them. We shall have ample opportunities during our Skeptical enterprise of marking some of the many cruel deeds and portentous misbeliefs which Christian dogma of different kinds has sanctioned, and not a few of these are owing to the fanaticism and hierarchical pride of the Bishop of Hippo. 2. A second and incidental advantage greatly overrated by thinkers of the Augustinian type has been the suitability of his dogmatic scheme for certain persons of peculiar, to my mind diseased, sensibilities and temperaments, men, *e.g.* of despotic instincts and of hard unsympathetic feeling.¹ Because it was the chief agency in the evolution, *e.g.* of Cromwell and his Ironsides, or because it contributed to form such ornaments of the human species as Knox, Edwards, Baxter, Whitfield, its influence is assumed to have been on the whole beneficial to Christian humanity. For my part, I am Skeptic enough to believe that there are no religious or political systems so inherently false or mischievous as not to be adapted for some few among the numberless varieties of human idiosyncrasies that exist. In my professional experience I have known persons so anomalously organized as to thrive vigorously in hygienic conditions that would have proved fatal to ordinary healthy constitutions. It is no plea for the merits of Augustinianism—indeed it constitutes its sufficing

¹ Grotius well contrasts the characters evolved respectively by the creeds of Melancthon and Calvin: '*Melancthonis* ac *Johannis Arndi* discipulos ferme videas bonos ac lenes: contra *Calvini* asperos, et tales qualem in maximam partem humani generis Deum esse sibi imaginantur. Tantum refert quo utaris doctore.'

condemnation—that it is a scheme for the eccentric few rather than for the normally formed many—for those who are so infatuated by the idea of overmastering law and force as to be willing to sacrifice human liberty at its shrine. A parallel to the argument would be a proposal to assimilate the ordinary life and usages of a free and rational community to those which exist inside a lunatic asylum or a prison. Happily it could only emanate from one who merited the judicious restraint of the former institution, or, if he attempted to carry it into practice, who deserved the penal treatment of the latter.

But it was not only on the history of the after-Church that Augustine exercised a baneful influence. A marked feature in his career is the gradual deterioration of character that progressed step by step with his dogmatic development. The certainty he had conceived himself to have attained in Christianity became towards the end of his life a harsh, narrow, exclusive feeling, which found expression in arbitrary and intolerant words and acts. Paradoxical as it may sound, it is none the less true that Augustine, the Academic Skeptic, was nearer to genuine Christianity than the aged Bishop of Hippo. In his former condition he was compelled by his very uncertainty of truth to cherish an eclectic sympathy for the various opinions with which he came in contact, which must have borne some affinity to tolerance and therefore to charity; while he unhappily found but scant room for these sentiments in his later years. Augustine is in this respect a type of a large number of thinkers, philosophical and scientific as well as religious, who suffer from chronic dogma-induration. As an endemic we find this complaint not uncommon in societies both ecclesiastical and other, and its symptoms are the same as in an individual case. It is a mental disease of the same kind as the physical ossification of some of the vital organs. In many respects it is even worse than its corporeal analogue, for the dogma-induration of the intellect invariably entails a corresponding petrification of the feelings. I have often thought that if mental and emotional processes induced naturally and inevitably a similar condition of the physical organs wherein we generally localize them, and if they could be made the objects of dissection, what ossified brains, callosed sympathies, and petrified hearts would an autopsy of such men as Torquemada, Hildebrand, and other inhuman tyrants and persecutors reveal. Among these victims of 'dogma-induration' must undoubtedly be classed the name of Augustine, not that he is in act the parallel of those monsters, but his principles are so formed, enunciated, and defended as in reality

to sanction their worse deeds. The difference between the Bishop of Hippo and the worst persecutors who have disgraced the name of Christianity is that which exists between any legislature and the executive power which carries the law into effect. The principles of Augustine are amply sufficient to establish the most exorbitant claims, and to justify the most atrocious acts that religious dogma in its worst form has ever put forward or perpetrated.

The consecutive stages of Augustine's 'dogma-induration' are marked with much distinctness in his works.¹ Few thinkers owed more than he did to the masters of Greek philosophy, especially to Plato and his successors. When he became a Christian, the sense of this obligation, so far from being extinguished, was for the time enhanced by finding that Platonic idealism was a useful ally in the interpretation of the records and doctrines of his new creed. He admitted that the Platonists had discovered the true God. Indeed, he not unfrequently, both with regard to the Platonists and others, maintained the Catholic doctrine of 'virtual Christianity,' i.e. that all truth pertained to Christ, and possessed an inherent Christian sanctity of its own, whether He were openly or by name confessed or not. But as his conviction of the exclusive truth of the Church became strengthened, partly by his own increasing hierarchical pride and love of domination, partly by continual controversies with heresiarchs, Augustine's sympathies for his old Gentile teachers began to wax more and more faint, until he arrived at the conviction that all Gentile philosophers were enemies of the truth; that whatsoever seemed true in their writings was a fraudulent possession of which they might be as justly despoiled as the Egyptians were of their jewels by the chosen people; ² that all that was meritorious in Plato was derived from the Bible; and that the very lowest and most ignorant Christian was superior to the greatest thinker of Greece. Nor is the change of sentiment less strongly marked in the case of contemporary sects. His nine years' association with the Manichæans might, one would have thought, have sufficed to insure consideration even for their errors, of which he had so long been a partaker. Indeed, on one occasion he professes his inability to be very wroth with men whose doctrines he had

¹ On the forcible contrast between the moderation of Augustine's earlier and the intolerance and fanaticism of his later views, comp. Ritter, *Gesch.* vi. 176, 177. The Abbé Flottes thinks that the change in Augustine's opinions on the subject of liberty of conscience took place about 404. *Études*, p. 411.

² *Confess.* p. 114. Comp. references in note *m*. Oxford translation.

formerly shared ;¹ but in his later writings he attacks the Manichæans with unrelenting animosity ; imputes to them every conceivable sin, impiety, and blasphemy ; calls their Bishop, Faustus of Mileve, to whose good qualities he had once borne ungrudging testimony, ‘*magnus laqueus Diaboli,*’ the great snare of the devil ; and is unable to discern in their faith anything but a wanton and mischievous perversion of the truth. And if Augustine could thus treat his own former creed, he was hardly likely to be more charitable to other sectaries with whom he never had anything in common. Against the Pelagians, *e.g.* who tried to preserve human liberty and responsibility from the operation of a degrading fatalism, the Bishop of Hippo rages, with all the ruthless ferocity of a grand inquisitor. No method is too base and treacherous, no cruelty too revolting, to be employed against the pernicious heretics. All Christians are expressly enjoined to become spies on their neighbours in order to detect the least symptoms of departure from a dogma which had never been heard in the Christian Church prior to the time of Augustine. Nor is he a whit more lenient to other independent thinkers, as Arians and Donatists. To his eternal disgrace he not only abuses the latter with a pen dipped in the bitterest gall of dogma, but he actually approved the cruel edicts passed against them² by Constantine and Theodosius, which, with the laws of the latter emperor against the Priscillianists, constitute the earliest precedents for the suppression of heresy by the secular arm—‘*stirps ac semen malorum omnium!*’—the malignant harvest of which we have not ceased to reap even in the present day. In a word, Augustine’s principles towards the end of his life were marked by an intensity of intolerance, narrow-mindedness, and fanaticism which has rarely been equalled by the most cruel and unscrupulous dogmatist that ever existed. The lesson of his life is in one respect useful ; it may exemplify for those who are willing to learn it the disastrous effects of excessive dogma-growth upon a mind and feelings not inherently incapable of wisdom and tolerance, common sense and Christian love. There are other aspects of Augustine’s dogmatic development—his ‘Soul’s Tragedy,’ as it may well be called. From the moment of his elevation to the Bishopric of Hippo³ the externalities of the Christian

¹ *Contra Epistolam Manich.* c. iii. ; *Op. om.* viii. 152 : ‘Ego autem . . . qui omnia illa figmenta et quæsi curiose et adtente audivi et temere credidi . . . sævire in vos omnino non possum.’ Comp. Beausobre, Liv. vi.

² *Op. om.* ii. 648.

³ The effect of this social and ecclesiastical elevation in accelerating

Church assume a profounder importance in his eyes. In proportion to the repression of liberty of conscience and human freedom becomes the exaltation of mere ritual acts. We need not ascribe to him any great influence in procuring the establishment of *ex opere operato* sacramentarian views. The history of the Church seems to show that both baptism and the Lord's Supper were already regarded as thaumaturgic rites and magical charms before the time of Augustine; but he certainly contributed to strengthen these opinions by his own superstitious and antichristian interpretation of sacramental efficacy.¹ There is also a marked growth in asceticism of a morbid and sickly kind, tending as much to an injudicious extreme in one direction as his licentious and immoral youth did in the opposite. Even in his methods of Bible interpretation we find the effects of 'dogma-induration.' From the moment when Ambrose's liberal culture suggested allegory as a convenient method of expounding the more difficult of Old Testament records to the end of his life, there is a downward progress in literalism and Bibliolatry. He finally becomes quite an adept in perverting the Bible text to hierarchical purposes, and his Biblical commentaries are a treasury of ecclesiastical exegesis, to the value of which succeeding dogmatists have not been blind.

A fanciful derivation of Augustine's name is 'Rem Christianam Auxit.' He increased Christian dogma. This is no doubt true. By his imaginative and metaphysical power, by unscrupulous dialectic, by a false conception of Church unity, and by hierarchical ambition, he contributed very largely to consolidate, though on unstable foundations, the enormous superstructure of ecclesiastical doctrine. If his own reckless impulsiveness made him an innovator in the field of Christian dogma, and his neologianism was frequently and with good reason made a charge against him²—this is no more than we might have expected from his mental constitution and temperament. Probably his perpetual controversies with sectaries

his intellectual and spiritual degeneration is pointed out by Ritter, *Gesch.* vi. pp. 174, 175. He refers to *Aug. Epist.* cxviii. *passim*.

¹ Neander (*Church History*, iv. 426, 427, Bohn) appears inclined to exaggerate the Protestant tendencies of Augustine's sacramental views. Undoubtedly there are passages in his works which make the efficacy of the sacrament dependent upon the faith of the recipient. But there are others in which the efficacy seems to be asserted unconditionally. If, on the one hand, his theory of grace inclined him to the former view, his ecclesiasticism and undoubted superstition would impel him towards the latter.

² Comp. *e.g.* M. Simon's *Histoire Critique*, &c., in which Augustine is proved, on several points, to have been the author of a new system.

of various kinds helped to confirm tendencies sufficiently rooted in his own nature. What we must especially deprecate is that his development took, as I have remarked, a wrong direction. Instead of looking back to Christ and to the rights of human freedom and conscience which he proclaimed, Augustine looked forward to the portentous development of Romanism. His perverted ideal of Christianity was not the peasant prophet of Galilee, but Gregory VII. placing his feet on the necks of kings and princes, and impiously arrogating an empire, secular as well as spiritual, commensurate with the limits of the habitable globe.

We are now in a position to sum up : I. Augustine's Skepticism ; II. his varied influence on the thought and history of the Christian Church.

I. As to the first, Augustine's intellectual unbelief while it lasted was characterized by a thoroughness and comprehensiveness which left little room for dogmatic conviction of any kind. Besides the teachings of the Academics and reliance on their 'probability,' he appealed also to himself for the grounds of truth and knowledge. Like his philosophical parallel, Descartes, Augustine deliberately scrutinized all his accumulated beliefs, and as deliberately rejected, or rather claimed the right of rejecting, each which could by any possibility be controverted. He penetrated to the inmost recesses of his being to discover a basis for truth that should be absolutely irrefragable. This he found where Descartes discovered it, in consciousness. The very faculty of thinking, or even doubting, presupposed the existence of thinker or doubter.¹ No legitimate Skepticism could assail that impregnable position. Starting from this point of unquestionable truth, he presently satisfied himself of the veracity of outward facts, of which his senses testified, and also

¹ Comp. the dialogue between Reason and Augustine, *Solil.* lib. ii. c. 1, *Op. om.* i. p. 369:—

R. Tu qui vis te nosse, scis esse te ?

A. Scio.

R. Unde scis ?

A. Nescio.

R. Moveri te scis ?

A. Nescio.

R. Cogitare te scis ?

A. Scio.

R. Ergo verum est cogitare te ?

A. Verum.

Compare the similar passages from other portions of his works collected by Ritter, *Geschichte*, vi. pp. 206, 207, note.

of the deeper inner life of which his consciousness was the perpetual deliverance. Ultimately all truth, being borne witness to by consciousness, became identified with it. So he exclaims, 'Do not go out of yourself, retire within, it is in the interior of a man that Truth has her dwelling.'¹ The careful examination he thus instituted into the grounds of truth, whether internal or external, is shown in his very remarkable book the 'Soliloquies,'² which was written about the same time and is animated by the same spirit as his books against the Academics. The 'Soliloquies' show what Augustine's inner life was between his abjuration of Gentile philosophy and his reception into the Church. It reveals the continual struggles of passion and feeling, the action and reaction of reason and intellect, the mutual contention of different modes of thought derived respectively from Paganism and Christianity. With his final acceptance of Christianity and deliberate substitution of authority for reason, the appeal to consciousness as the highest tribunal of truth ceased, or at least it became virtually inoperative. In a nature so susceptible as his of extraneous influences, the plan could at no time have afforded much expectation of permanent advantage. We may remember that even Descartes, a man much less constitutionally impressionable than Augustine, carried his touchstone of consciousness with him but a short distance in his philosophical career. Indeed, both the theologian and the philosopher reared up their respective superstructures without much reference to their ostensible foundation. The systems of both present to me the appearance of an inverted cone.

But Augustine's philosophical Skepticism—his alliance with the Academics—constituted but a transient episode in his mental career. What I have termed his theological Skepticism—the exaggeration of human incapacity for action no less than for knowledge—exercised a very profound influence both on the philosophy and theology of subsequent times. Duly analyzed, this utter moral imbecility seems to me more unfounded in its ratiocination and debasing in its consequences than either the total suspense of Pyrrhonism or the probability of Academic Skepticism, so that Calvinism—the natural outgrowth of Augustinianism—has in my judgment done more mischief in the world than all the systems of Free-thought put together. For the Skepticism of Pyrrhôn and Sextos was purely speculative, it professed to be engendered by theoretic

¹ 'Noli foras ire, in te ipsum redi, in interiore homine habitat veritas.' *De Vera Relig.* c. 72.

² *Opera omnia*, i. pp. 355-86.

considerations and to lead up to theoretic conclusions. But Augustine and Calvin extended it to human practice. The extreme disciples of the former exclaimed, 'Truth is unattainable; why waste your strength in bootless speculation and profitless research? Believe, and do what seems most probable and necessary—what you see the majority of men about you believing and doing.' Unsatisfactory as these directions might be to some, they were surely preferable to the dark creed of Calvin, who in effect said, 'Goodness is by the immense majority of human beings quite unattainable. No human strength avails for the performance of a single good act or the enunciation of a single good word. Do as you like, your lot is fixed from all eternity. If you are elect, you attain heaven; if not, you are doomed to hell.' And the disastrous influence of the latter unbelief was increased by the facts that it included not only human power but Divine goodness in its deadly grasp, and that it was promulgated on a religious basis. The conviction of complete moral helplessness was attained not by human experience—at least that of the race—but was asserted as a sacred and infallible revelation; whereas the intellectual feebleness of the Greek Skeptic only claimed to be founded on a philosophical basis, and did not pretend to a religious sanction or an infallible source. Further, Greek Skepticism no doubt left even the existence of Deity a doubtful question; but even if it had claimed to demonstrate Atheism, its influence would have been less immoral than the Skepticism of Calvin, which was founded on a dogma of a deity more lawless and bloodthirsty than the idols of the most degraded species of humanity. An Atheism which allows free play for the moral instincts of humanity, which indeed are in the last resort irrepressible, is surely preferable to a theology which endeavours to stifle and trample them under foot.

The influence of Augustine, in harmony with his curiously composite nature and varied activities, is of a very diversified character. With all his celebrity, his sincere though narrow piety, his metaphysical power, the titles of 'Saint' and 'Blessed' commonly prefixed to his name, it is very questionable to me whether the good or ill he has effected in the world preponderates. Perhaps the truest verdict concerning him would be the suspensive judgment which Andrew Fairservice pronounced on Rob Roy—'There are some things o'er bad for blessing and o'er good for banning.' We have already noticed his influence in elaborating and consolidating the dogmatic system of the Church. This induced not only innovations of doctrine in case of specific dogmas, but a definite mechanical standpoint as well as a complex method

of technicalities for all doctrines alike. To Augustine more than to any other Christian Father is Christian theology indebted for the numberless terms and endless definitions of which every Christian dogma has become the nucleus. It is generally assumed that Scholasticism began with Erigena. It appears to me that we have all that is most characteristic of its method and spirit in the works of Augustine.¹ There we certainly find the unlimited application of dialectics to theology, there we find its tendency to abtruse subtleties and refinements, there we have its endless terminology, its elaborate definitions, its unmeaning technicalities—the portentous seed, in short, which was destined in a few centuries to produce the copious harvest of scholastic jargon. So far as ecclesiastical Christianity is still suffering, as it undoubtedly is, from dogma-plethora, the needless complications, the self-evolved mysteries of sacerdotalism and excessive systematization—so far as our present-day terms and formulas are inherited, an *hereditas damnosa*, from Scholasticism, so far must we blame the too-subtle logic and the over-profound metaphysics of the Bishop of Hippo. Not that Augustine was completely devoid of all appreciation for simplicity in matters of religion, or that he was not sometimes weary of the perpetual argumentation in which he was involved. Like his disciple, Calvin, he had his ‘lucid intervals’² of wisdom and Christian apperception. In one of his epistles he says that no disputations, philosophical writings, or political enactments, are to be compared to Christ’s twofold injunction of love to God and man.³ Unfortunately the ‘lucid intervals’

¹ Bossuet has pointed out the influence of Augustine on Peter Lombard, and through him on the Schoolmen. *Défense de la Tradition*, &c. book v. chap. 24. Compare, also, Nourisson, vol. ii. p. 153, &c. On the Protestant side, Schröckh (*Christ. Kirchengesch.* Th. xv. p. 527) calls him ‘Der Stifter der Scholastischen Theologie.’

² Some of Calvin’s ‘lucid intervals’ are thus described in a note to Nichol’s *Works of Arminius*, i. p. 663: ‘. . . It is a circumstance for congratulation that the invincible force of truth sometimes extorted from him (Calvin) a true expression.’ In the confession which he wrote for the Italian Churches, and which was published in the year 1558, he declares ‘that the Confession of Faith, which is comprised in the Apostles’ Creed, ought to be sufficient for *all moderate Christians!*’ In the first book of his *Institutes* (cap. xiii. 5) he extols St. Hilary, who, in a passage of his book on Councils, calls the French bishops *happy men*, ‘because they had neither invented, received, nor had even known, any other confession than the ancient and very simple one which, from the time of the Apostles, had been received by all Churches.’—*Calvini Op. om.*, ed. Amstel. vol. ix. p. 25.

³ *Epistolæ*, cxxxvii. cap. vii.: ‘Quæ disputationes, quæ litteræ quorumlibet philosophorum, quæ leges quarumlibet civitatum duobus præceptis ex

were only rare occurrences—peaceful and sacred interludes in the dogma-mania which became towards the end of his life part of his second nature.

Even more disastrous than his needless entanglement of Christian teaching was Augustine's influence on liberty of thought. He stands at the head of that loathsome band of bigots and persecutors who, in the name of the SON OF MAN, have outraged humanity. His works contain the whole iniquitous code of religious persecution as it has been defined and practised by its greatest proficient—I mean the Church of Rome. To him must be ascribed the first unhallowed attempt to coerce Christian Free-thought, and to repress liberty of conscience by physical force. He is the author of the wretched plea of the spiritual advantage of the persecuted.¹ He first suggested the mischievous perversion of the famous '*Compelle intrare*'²—'Compel them to come in.' To him must be attributed the application of Jewish massacres to sanction the extermination of Christian sectaries. He affords a precedent for the exaggeration of heretical opinions, and the intentional distortion of their obvious and natural implications. At his door, therefore, lies that heinous inversion of the humane spirit of the gospel, that detestable caricature of Deity, that substitution of speculative for ethical rectitude, that elementary maxim of religious persecutors—'the end sanctifies the means'—which have been plague spots on the history of the Christian Church. We cannot be surprised at the fell Nemesis which, following Augustine's teaching, has marked the course of that history with oppression and bloodshed. We cannot wonder that his precept and

quibus Christus dicit totam legem Prophetasque pendere, ullo modo sint comparandæ: "Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde, et ex tota anima tua, et ex tota mente tua, et diliges proximum tuum tanquam teipsum?" (Matt. xxii. 37, 39.) Hic physica . . . hic ethica . . . hic logica . . . hic etiam laudabilis reipublicæ salus.' Augustine is not less explicit in admitting the general recognition of these fundamental principles of Christianity: 'Et quis est quem lateant ista mandata? Nempe et omnibus fidelibus et plurimis infidelibus nota sunt.' (Serm. viii. in Ps. cxviii. *Op.* iv. 1294.) Nor does he underrate their importance and signification: 'Sed ne putetis hæc duo præcepta parva esse. In his duobus præceptis tota lex pendet et prophetae. Quidquid ergo salubriter mente concipitur vel ore profertur, vel de qualibet divina pagina exculpitur non habet finem nisi caritatem.' (*Enarr. in Ps. cxl. Op.* iv. 1562.)

¹ 'Sicut est aliquando misericordia puniens, ita est crudelitas parcens.' *Epist.* cliii.

² See Bayle, *Œuv. Div.* ed. La Haye, vol. i. p. 174; and compare chapter on Bayle in this work.

example were adduced by Calvin to justify the murder of Servetus,¹ that his name was employed to sanction the massacre of St. Bartholomew,² that his authority was invoked to countenance the revocation of the Edict of Nantes,³ that his teachings inspired such bigots as Dominic and Torquemada, that his writings became the Bible of the Inquisition. Few indeed are the scenes of intolerance which stain the page of history and discredit the name of Christ which cannot claim the name or the teaching of the Bishop of Hippo to sanction their excesses.

Hardly less important, though happily less injurious, has been Augustine's influence in our own subject of Skepticism. His own studies in and high appreciation of Gentile wisdom, in the early part of his life, was regarded as a precedent for free-research by some who declined to concur in the altered estimate of those pursuits which belong to his declining years. They saw, what is indeed patent to every observer, that Augustine's wisdom was not the exclusive product of Christianity. The best and most durable portion of it was due to other sources. His depreciation of reason in order to magnify authority was a lesson in ecclesiastical Skepticism which was not lost on a goodly company of successors, of whom Pascal, Huet, Le-Vayer, may stand as types. I have already suggested Pascal as presenting a striking parallel to Augustine. What Academic Skepticism effected for the latter, the essays of Montaigne did for the former. Both ending in a kind of mystic Dogmatism, attained it by passing through a course of philosophical Free-thought. Other Sceptics, of whom two, Glanvill and Hirnhaim, are in our lists, saw clearly the legitimate issue of Augustine's doctrine of human depravity,⁴ and deduced from it extreme Skeptical conclusions which we can hardly suppose he

¹ See the passages adduced by Calvin in his *Fidelis expositio errorum Michaelis Serveti*, *Op. om.* ed. Amstel. vol. viii. pp. 512, 513. Comp. Nourisson, *Philosophie*, &c. ii. p. 181.

² Nourisson, *Op. cit.* p. 185.

³ 'Il est certain,' says Flottes, 'que les principes de Saint Augustin justifiaient pleinement cette révocation de l'édit de Nantes, dont le prudent évêque d'Avranches, Daniel Huet, n'a pas craint de dire qu'elle avait été un obstacle à la réunion des communions chrétiennes et une occasion de troubles civils.'—*Études*, p. 542. Cf. Nourisson, ii. p. 181.

⁴ See chapters on Glanvill and Hirnhaim in this work, and, as to the latter Skeptic, comp. Barach, *Hieronymus Hirnhaim*, p. 64: 'Hirnhaim's Skepticismus und seine Polemik gegen alle auf menschliche Autorität gegründete Wissenschaft, gegen alle Philosophie und Theologie, ist die nothwendige Kehrseite dieser Augustinischen Lehre' (*i.e.* the Doctrine of Human Depravity).

would willingly have sanctioned. A common characteristic of all the ecclesiastical and original-sin Skeptics, one moreover which they share with Hindu Negation, is the mysticism to which they tend, and by means of which they secure a dogmatic position as rigorous and as infallible as if their system were founded on a basis of unconditional knowledge. The common terminus of the religious mystic, as of the determined uninquiring dogmatist, is, 'Credo quia impossibile.'

II. This leads me to notice Augustine's influence on Christian mysticism. Not only was he led in the direction of intuitional assurance by his Skepticism, both Academic and Christian, but his own imaginative and emotional profundity pointed to the same goal. His exhortation to his hearers was continually, 'Believe; for what can you know?' The conviction he took from them by Skepticism and by the exaggeration of human impotence he attempted to restore by spiritual apperception and supernatural feeling. Hence his writings have been a storehouse of devout imaginings and tender emotions, of which most Christian mystics have freely made use. But no mysticism can exist without an individualism of a marked type, and it is one of many incongruities in Augustine's system that, side by side with the autocratic claims of the Christian community, are the rights of the individual man as standing in a direct and immediate relation to God. Doubtless in his own case as in others, mysticism served to intensify his bigotry and intolerance. It partook of the harshness of St. Bernard rather than the tender quietism and sympathetic gentleness of Madame Guyon and Fénelon. In his treatise *De Vita Beata*, which is a kind of postscript to his books against the Academics, he proclaims God as the *Eternal Certainty* he had failed to discover in the systems of philosophers—the ultimate fact of the world without, as consciousness is the final truth of the world within. This absolute verity he embraced with a passionate enthusiasm which permitted no intercepting influence of any kind. The defects of the reason were to be compensated by the passionate certitude of the feeling. God was not meant to be known but only to be felt, and in proportion to the increase of this feeling in fulness and intensity was the spiritual advance of the Christian. His ideal of ultimate Christian perfection is becoming merged and lost in the Divine personality. 'God,' he says, 'must be loved in such a manner as to produce in us complete self-forgetfulness.'

This passion in its undue fervency unhappily exceeded its bounds. His own identification with the Deity, and his consequent zeal in His (supposed) cause, became the criterion of his estimate of

other men, and the measure of the truth and value of their opinions. His opponents were God's opponents, his zeal against them was sublimated into a Divine and holy wrath. He attained finally that climax of passion—the incongruous mixture of love to God and malignity to man—of which we have an adumbration in the Psalms, while it formed a well-known principle of Hebrew political and religious life. 'Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against Thee? Yea, I hate them right sore even as though they were mine enemies.'

But allowing for the excess of a true principle, Augustine's mystic individualism operated beneficially in contributing to produce the Reformation. For in direct antagonism to his principles of sacerdotalism and ecclesiasticism are the independence and self-reliance, the sense of *personal* religion, which pertain to Protestantism. You will not need to be reminded how forcibly these principles were seized upon and applied by Luther, and in a somewhat different direction by Baius, Jansen, and Arnauld. So dangerous to the power of the Church were these aspects of Augustinian teaching that attempts were more than once made to dispute both his orthodoxy and authority, and in short to pull down his image from the lofty pedestal it had so long occupied.¹

At the present day such an attempt is needless. M. Nourisson, in his learned '*Philosophie de Saint Augustin*,'² with every inclination to prophesy nothing but good of the great Bishop of Hippo, is obliged to confess that his fame has fallen into discredit.³ Nothing less could, indeed, have been expected from the general diffusion of culture and tolerance, and from the proportionate decrease both of dogmatic assurance and bitterness which on the whole are prevailing influences of our time. Even Romanists⁴ of

¹ See, for example, the curious articles formulated against Augustine by the Spanish Jesuits in the seventeenth century, quoted by Nourisson, *Philosophie*, &c. ii. pp. 188, 189. It is impossible to withhold sympathy from a few of these articles. The 15th, *e.g.* runs thus: 'Augustin, comme couvert d'un nuage épais, n'a pas aperçu la vérité que les modernes ont trouvée.' The 17th is as follows: 'Ce n'est pas merveille que bien des gens jugent que les sentiments d'Augustin sont trop durs et indignes de la bonté de Dieu et de sa clémence.'

² *Philosophie*, &c. ii. 274.

³ Nourisson, *Op. cit.* ii. p. 274.

⁴ Compare Flottes, *Études*, 406-539. See also the article of M. Saint-René Taillandier, 'St. Augustin et la Liberté de Conscience,' *Revue des Deux Mondes*, vol. xx. p. 503, &c. The concluding paragraph of this paper seems worth quoting: 'Ce n'est pas ici une question de parti; la con-

high character and conspicuous ability now dissent from the intolerance which Augustine first preached and which their Church for so many centuries industriously practised. The 'dogma-induration' which Christian theology, especially in certain of its forms, derived from him is gradually undergoing a beneficial process of dissolution, like the ice of winter in the sunshine of spring. No longer do reasoning men believe in the celestial Moloch which the unrestrained imagination and imperious instincts of Augustine and Calvin conjured up. No longer do they suffer their consciences to be outraged by holding a gloomy fatalism which deprives them of their liberty and mocks at their persuasion of responsibility. No longer do they think that inherently virtuous actions can be essentially affected by the religious belief of the doer, and that all ethical excellence, unselfishness, generosity outside the limits of ecclesiastical Christianity, are only forms of vice. No longer can they accept or reconcile with the attributes of a moral Being the 'horrible decree' which consigns men and even innocent children to eternal torments for a fault committed centuries before their birth. . . . But even with these deductions of excessive dogma, Augustine must always possess considerable value as a metaphysical thinker, as a devout Pietist, and an eloquent Christian preacher. It is in the first of these capacities that his merit seems to me especially pre-eminent. The depth, keenness, subtlety, flexibility of his psychological introspection are truly marvellous. This characteristic, though common to all his writings, is an especial feature of his earlier works, which he wrote immediately before and directly after receiving Christian baptism. Not less conspicuous in this earlier

damnation de l'erreur de Saint Augustin ne doit pas être prononcée au nom de telle ou telle Église, mais au nom du Christianisme universel et de l'éternelle raison. On a reproché aux écrivains catholiques de n'avoir pas été assez prompts à désavouer les docteurs de l'intolérance. S'il a fallu pour les convaincre, les grandes épreuves de la révolution, ainsi que les vicissitudes de nos jours, n'oublions pas qu'ils ont réussi pourtant à se dégager de la tradition qui pesait sur eux. Leurs représentants les plus autorisés ont formulé sur ce point des déclarations définitives. Je ne parle pas seulement de M. Albert de Broglie, de M. l'Abbé Maret, du père Gratry, du sage auteur des *Études sur Saint Augustin* (l'Abbé Flottes), de bien d'autres encore : un homme qui, par l'âpreté de ses convictions et l'amertume de son langage, avait trop souvent pris plaisir à blesser le Christianisme naturel du genre humain, M. de Montalembert (*Les Moines d'Occident*, i. pp. 203, 204), a fini par repousser la tradition augustinienne de l'intolérance pour s'attacher aux premières doctrines de l'évêque d'Hippone, c'est-à-dire à la tradition de l'Évangile et des temps apostoliques.'

portion of his Christian career, before dogma-degeneration of brain and heart set in with all its force, is his eager disinterested desire for truth. We have already noticed the comprehensive sympathy, the charity and tolerance, which distinguish him at the same period. In a word, what is permanently valuable in the Bishop of Hippo is his Free-thought rather than his dogmatic system—his philosophical more than his episcopal labours. For in the former he approaches nearly to the humane, gentle, and liberal teaching of Christ, while in the latter he is a primary promoter of the influence most opposed to it—a harsh, narrow, imperious, and cruel ecclesiasticism.

ARUNDEL. Have you then really, Doctor, become Skeptical as to the advantages you are so ready to ascribe to Skepticism?

TREVOR. Not in the least—nor do I know what you mean.

ARUNDEL. You made, I think, Augustine's stress upon human weakness and imbecility a reminiscence of his Academic Skepticism.

TREVOR. I based it partly on that, and partly on the Pauline doctrine of original sin.

ARUNDEL. And yet you proceeded to point out the enormous mischief of Augustine and Calvin's practical Skepticism.

TREVOR. Certainly, for the reason that it was practical and founded on dogma. The Greek Skeptics, as we saw, did not really touch the question of ordinary human conduct, the suspense they advocated was in the domain of philosophical theory and speculation. But Augustine seriously propounded, not as a theory but as a positive indisputable fact, the utter helplessness of man in respect of action and practice. The former bid men distrust the absolute veracity of their senses and reason, the latter took away all power of self-movement. The one was a conscious imperfection in the performance of certain knowledge-functions, as, *e.g.* the senses, which could only have had the effect of inducing caution; the other was a complete paralysis of all the nervous centres.

HARRINGTON. Calvin's moral Skepticism not only deprived man of his liberty, but it went further—it robbed God of His justice. I have frequently tried to conceive the Deity of Calvin and his followers, and the conception has been so completely divested of every ethical and noble attribute, of everything that would sanction human love and reverence, that rather than worship (love is out of the question) such a lawless despot, I would choose to become an Atheist; and, to use the well-known words of Mill, 'If such a Being could sentence me to hell for not worshipping Him, to hell I would go.'

ARUNDEL. I am no more an admirer of Calvin's Juggernaut than you are, and I agree with you in thinking that no Deity is better than one who violates all our moral sentiments, and tramples our best instincts under foot. Still, we should remember what Trevor only incidentally noticed, that there are many men so constituted as to reverence such an incarnation of tyrannical and irresponsible power. I do not speak of Mahometans, whose ideas of freedom are unhappily engendered by the despotisms under which so many of them live, but of countrymen of our own. Indeed, I am not certain whether the ultimate ground of our assertion of human liberty is not, after all, a pure categorical imperative—the decisive protest of the moral and spiritual sentiment against the unlimited extension of the iron chain of cause and effect which appears dominant in nature. For that matter, all the modern results of science point more and more in the direction of a rigid uniformity, which it is impossible to discriminate from fatalism; so that man's feeling of liberty threatens to become a small island in the infinite ocean of causation.

HARRINGTON. You might have added that under the influence of determinism and other philosophical forms of the theory of causation even the island is gradually disappearing—by scientific denudation, we might say—not that I think there is much danger of the feeling of liberty being altogether extirpated from the human consciousness. This is just one of those cases in which instincts, if not primordial, yet by culture and reflection forming part of the inherited

mental possession of most civilized peoples, rise superior to all logic and science.

MISS LEYCESTER. The truth of your last remark and the non-truth of your observation that the island of human conscious freedom is disappearing are both confirmed by the fact that while fatalism in science is increasing, it is disappearing from theology, at least in modern Europe. Calvinism, if not extinct, is rapidly expiring, and I am told that Mahometan fatalism is abating somewhat of its vigour among those followers of the Prophet who are brought in contact with Western modes of thought. This would seem to show that the feeling of human liberty is gradually separating itself from ratiocinative and analogical proof, and is becoming—as Mr. Arundel suggested—a purely spontaneous though indestructible instinct.

HARRINGTON. Of course we must be aware, and be prepared to face the fact, that in subordinating Divine omnipotence to human instincts and feelings, instead of, as Augustine did, adopting the opposite course, we are greatly limiting the Divine freedom.

TREVOR. Undoubtedly God's omnipotence cannot, in any humane system of thought, claim to be unconditional. His power is bounded by absolute impossibilities in nature and the constitution of the universe, besides being self-limited by its own wisdom and goodness. It is important to preserve the moral attributes of the Deity at whatever sacrifice of the authoritative and magisterial—a fact theologians are apt to overlook. No external violence or polemic has done so much harm to ecclesiastical Christianity as its own persistent ascription to Deity of acts and feelings which would be rightly qualified as partial, unjust, jealous, or revengeful, if done by one man to another.

MISS LEYCESTER. I was never so profoundly convinced of the immorality of Calvinism as when, travelling in the Highlands some years ago, I heard a peasant woman gloating over the eternal torments of the non-elect in a future world. In order to impress her with the unworthy conception she had formed of God, I told her of a parent inclined to partiality in treating his children, but whose injustice was

partly checked by the noble unselfish character of the boy he was disposed to pet, who, so far as he was able, refused on all occasions the indulgence that was not extended to his less-favoured brothers and sisters. The woman agreed that the father was wrong and the boy right, but failed to see that my argument would apply to God's dealings with men.

TREVOR. Human nature, you see, stronger than theological dogma!

HARRINGTON. Nay, Doctor! Theological dogma, triumphing over human nature! or rather perhaps an example of Twofold Truth—acknowledged injustice on the part of the earthly parent ascribed without scruple to the Father of mankind.

MISS LEYCESTER. But why should our human instincts and feelings so continually come in conflict with dogma?

HARRINGTON. Simply because men will rather trust *ab extra* definitions than rely upon the safer guidance of their own unbiassed and enlightened conscience.

MRS. HARRINGTON. But what, on the other hand, is to be said of the acknowledged impropriety of the finite judging the infinite?

TREVOR. That it is in its common acceptance one of those theological hobgoblins that have been set up to frighten thinking people out of their reason. It is just 'the right divine of kings to govern wrong' transferred from earth to heaven, from the finite to the infinite, and acquiring in the transition an appropriate infinity of criminality. No such abstraction as eternal, infinite, &c. can justify the slightest deviation on the part of a moral being from the obvious dictates of justice and goodness. The laws of morality have an existence more inherently eternal and infinite than can be conceived to pertain to any entity whatever. Hence when we estimate actions attributed to God from an ethical standpoint, it is not the finite judging the infinite, but one infinite judging the other—the infinity of truth, righteousness, and goodness, estimating the infinite of personal Deity. Of course I speak of ideal rather than actual priority.

HARRINGTON. I heartily concur with your assertion of 'eternal and immutable morality.' Augustine's ethical teaching, like his life, is not of the most satisfactory kind. Perhaps he adopted St. Paul's notion that ethical demerit is created by prohibition or penal law, and hence like so many other theologians regarded it as the contravention of an arbitrary command. But it is to me most certain that this purely theological conception of sin has operated mischievously both in Romanism and extreme Anglicanism. It has induced, *e.g.* a complete severance between Divine and human law, so that a transgression of the latter, even when most self-evident and obligatory, may not constitute sin, *i.e.* the contravention of the former. Hence we have J. H. Newman, in his 'Grammar of Assent,' saying, 'We have no remorse or compunction in breaking . . . mere human law.' The true philosophical idea of guilt is that of the old Stoics, *viz.* what is inherently and of itself evil, irrespective of prohibition or punishment whether human or Divine.

ARUNDEL. I was sorry to find, Doctor, that you did not place that value on Augustine's 'City of God' which I believe it deserves. Indeed, your remarks upon it appeared to me pervaded by a misconception. You considered it as a kind of map or plan of ecclesiastical conquest and aggrandisement to be interpreted prospectively by the extravagant claims of the Papacy under Gregory VII. or Boniface VIII. In my opinion we should regard it as a masterly effort of Christian imagination to construct out of such materials as were then available a comprehensive scheme of the Divine government of the world. It is a kind of prose-poem, and may be compared with the 'Paradise Lost.' I do not suppose either Augustine or Milton would have us take each incident or detail of their productions as veritable facts, or intended us to read their works as we should a book of history or science.

TREVOR. From that point of view I have no objection to allow the 'De Civitate' a high place among the magnificent dreams of Christian Utopia-founders, though I cannot help thinking that is not the meaning generally accorded to it. Indeed, I much doubt whether either Augustine or Milton

would have been satisfied with the relegation of their work to the domain of pure imagination. In both cases the outline is not merely dogmatic, but passionately and extravagantly so.

HARRINGTON. While I quite think that the dogmatic development of Christianity has been excessive, perhaps something may be allowed—(1) for the need of free-play for the constructive elements in its composition; (2) for the effect of that elaboration and consolidation on different departments of human knowledge and activity. You remember, I dare say, that rather rhetorical passage of ‘*La Génie du Christianisme*’ in which Chateaubriand enumerates all the magnificent achievements in architecture, painting, music, and literature which he says are owing to the inspiration and patronage of the Latin Church. The passage, I am aware, will not bear analysis, but something is to be said for that variedly cultured evolution of Christianity which necessarily accompanies, even if it is not the effect of, the higher stages of civilization. Of course the assumption among religious developmentists is that we cannot have the artistic and literary progress without an increased complication of creeds and dogmas, but to that I distinctly demur. The regions of pure sentiment and of intellectual conviction, though not altogether apart, are still so far distinct that the feelings which operate in the one may have no great effect on the other. When, *e.g.* I go to Salisbury or any other cathedral, the conviction I have of the imaginative power of the architect and the grandeur of his conceptions, or the beauty of Handel or Mozart’s music, is of altogether a different kind from the belief or perhaps unbelief with which I follow the Athanasian Creed, or listen to some preposterous doctrinal discourse from the pulpit.

MISS LEYCESTER. But you see, Charles, it is not every one that has the power or the inclination to discriminate between sentimental and intellectual convictions. Not a few of my own sex would, *e.g.* deliberately infer the truth of the Creed or the doctrine, from the magnificence of the building in which they heard it or the grandeur of the music employed as its exponent.

TREVOR. Chateaubriand's 'Genius of Christianity' is not the genius of Jesus of Nazareth, but of mediæval Romanism. There can be no intrinsic and inevitable connection between a form of worship and a style of architecture. The laws that ultimately determine architectural development are the climatic and other conditions of the peoples who adopt them, and there would be no inherent absurdity, so far as I see, in the celebration of any religious or, for that matter, any solemn secular act in a Gothic Cathedral. Indeed, the very fact that mediæval cathedrals are found to administer to the religious sensibilities of Protestants of various sects, and to modes of worship of different degrees of simplicity, as well as to the ornate services for which they were originally built, tends to show that they are capable of harmonizing with more than one form of worship. . . . Moreover, it is a mistake, and a mischievous one, to allow admiration for the imposing features of any despotism, ecclesiastical or secular, to overpower the consideration of its service to humanity in general. Take, *e.g.* the splendour of the court of Louis XIV., and the magnificent array of talent, literary and artistic, that surrounded it, and contrast that grandeur and culture with the miserable condition of the French people: they are only the gay trappings which adorn a corpse, and serve to hide the traces of incipient corruption.

MRS. HARRINGTON. I do not presume to make my own feelings a criterion of those of others, but I find that the need of simplicity of worship is in direct proportion to the reverential awe or impressive solemnity which engenders it. Nothing in art is so sublimely imposing as some of the grander aspects of nature. The most solemn and awe-inspiring temple in the world is the contemplation of the star-lit heavens on a summer's night from some commanding position, or, as I saw it on one occasion, from the deck of a yacht in the Mediterranean. On such occasions simplicity of worship, even to the extent of speechless adoration, seems infinitely more becoming than an elaborate ritual. Hence I should say the simpler the worship of the infinite the better.

MISS LEYCESTER. In his elaboration of Christian dogma,

both in the 'De Civitate' and afterwards, Augustine seems to me to have made a stupendous mistake; for, intending to build a cathedral *ad majorem gloriam Dei*, what he really did was to erect on the lines of the proposed edifice a huge and elaborate dungeon; and we might feel enamoured of the imposing elevation, the substantial masonry, the profuse ornamentation, the wonderful uniformity of the gigantic structure, if we could only forget the numerous dark cells within, or shut our ears to the groans of so many hundreds of our fellow-men imprisoned in them by the arbitrary fiat of a cruel Deity.

ARUNDEL. I think we are unanimous as to Augustine's excesses. At the same time, the 'dogma-induration' from which he suffered is not a purely theological epidemic.

TREVOR. Of course not: we have it in philosophy and physical science—in fact, it is the common exaggeration of every supposed knowledge, for which Skepticism is the appropriate remedy.

HARRINGTON. Perhaps so, within due limits; but undue Skepticism is itself a disease—a kind of atrophy or consumption, for which a certain measure of dogmatic induration would be beneficial.

ARUNDEL. It is because I feel that, that I am unable to coincide in Trevor's animadversions of Augustine's induration, though I think it was carried too far. The assumption underlying his remarks was that the process in itself was wrong: that a man ought to pass the whole of his life like an intellectual pendulum—oscillating between two extremes. Surely the more natural conception of intellectual growth is that it is an advance in certitude and assurance.

TREVOR. Well, for my part I should be glad of a philosophical reason why certitude should grow with age, and dogma-induration be the intellectual concomitant of grey hair. On some points, no doubt, age confers experience, *e.g.* in the practical concerns of life; but I cannot see that it renders the problems of the universe less puzzling than they were wont to be. Possibly one reason for thinking otherwise may be that we unconsciously transfer our enlarged experience of men and of social existence to the region of philosophical

speculation, where it has no right. Induration implies diminution, ossification of tissue is also a lessening of its actual bulk, and a dogmatist must *ex vi termini* be narrow-minded. Now all great minds, so far from becoming narrower with age, ought to expand. Take Goethe, *e.g.* His intellect never ceased to be, if not excessive, at least strongly impressionable. A Chinese philosopher said that 'he is a great man who never loses his child's heart.' Augustine certainly lost it; it either became petrified, or perhaps it was lost (no uncommon casualty) in the folds of his episcopal vestments.

HARRINGTON. Excuse me, Doctor, but I think you have been raising a false issue. The problems of the world do not, of course, lose their inscrutability because we get older, but it is we who, after patient research, arrive at certain convictions respecting them. It may be that our final conclusions are only acquiescence in enforced nescience, but mature years confirm this persuasion, whereas in youth we are not always satisfied with it.

TREVOR. Of course if grey hairs bring a feeling of ignorance and suspense, they confer wisdom. I was rather speaking of those who, in course of years, become capable in their own estimation of pronouncing *ex cathedrâ* on every conceivable subject of human investigation.

ARUNDEL. Your final doubt as to whether Augustine's merits or defects preponderate is not unworthy of a Skeptic, but I suspect you would not find many students of Augustine who would agree with you. With all deductions on account of his intolerance, the benefits he has conferred upon Christianity by stimulating Christian life and spiritual growth greatly exceed the ill-effect of his harshness, which was probably only temporary.

MISS LEYCESTER. I cannot at all agree with you, Mr. Arundel. I object to allowing religious emotion to override moral or human perception, or to devout and holy words being accepted as a substitute for evil selfish acts. I have heard of an old woman who, when told that the best Psalms were written by David, said she wished she had never known it; and being asked the reason, replied that she could never read them without thinking of poor Uriah deserted by his

comrades in the forefront of the battle. Similarly I object to Augustine's 'Confessions' or his 'City of God' being offered as a compensation in full for the mischief caused by his cruel dogmas and his inhuman perversion of Christianity. I also object to Calvin's 'Institutes' or any practical good he may have accomplished being proffered as a sufficing apology to outraged humanity for the murder of Servetus. Acts, in all such cases, seem to me of infinitely more importance than words and dexterously constructed systems. Nor do I entertain any doubt that the repulsion produced in some minds and the doubt evoked in others by deeds and dogmas irreconcilable with the first principles of justice and charity, have been more baneful to humanity than the pious thoughts, the imaginative rhetoric, or the exaltation of devout feelings oftentimes associated with them, have been beneficial.

HARRINGTON. I quite agree with you, Florence. Religious orthodoxy, so called, has much sentimentality of a sickly sort to answer for. The primary criterion of Christianity is, *Christo teste*, a moral one—righteousness to man consecrated as duty to a righteous God. The aftermath of religion, *e.g.* elevated sentiment, profound feeling, devotional excitement, mystical rapture, occupy only a subordinate position in the true estimate of a man's character. Nevertheless, we must not suppose that all persons feel alike on this subject. Some people seem to me devoid of spontaneous ethical perception, just as there are persons insensible to musical notes, or who suffer from colour-blindness; but they are still capable of having their religious or moral pulse quickened by reading works of devotion, or surrounding themselves with sensuous accessories. In such cases, religious sentiment seems a compensation for the absence of ethical perception, and often subserves, though I should say imperfectly, a similar purpose. After all, a crutch serves the same object as a sound limb, and it would be an act of doubtful justice to take away the artificial member in order to compel the cripple to use his infirm but natural limbs . . . Of course the Crutchites, on the other hand, have no business to insist that their wooden substitutes were originally designed by Providence as the only normal mode of

locomotion, and to require the rest of their fellow-men to undergo amputation in order to obey the supposed Divine behests.

MISS LEYCESTER. But that is exactly what not only Crutchites, but all makers and users of artificial limbs are anxious to do. I remember once hearing an amusing parable bearing on this subject:—In a certain country the art-limb makers entered into a compact—a kind of trades-union—with medical men and other persons interested, for their mutual behoof. It seems to have struck these ingenious artists that if all men were properly and adequately organized there would be no need of their different crafts. Artificial teeth, hair, eyes, noses, ears, arms, hands, fingers, legs, and feet depended for their sale on the real or supposed lack of these different parts of the human body. So they organized a kind of propaganda the object of which was to persuade people of the superiority in every case of artificial to natural limbs, &c. Now as the people of that country were religiously minded, it was clearly needful to convince them that these art-constructed members were providentially designed not only to be substitutes for imperfect, but even to replace sound, limbs. In other words, they tried to show that the original constitution of the world manifested a leaning towards human artifice and invention, just as the progress of civilization was marked by the advance of the imitative arts. Thus they pointed out the many children that were born deformed, or suffering from some other congenital privation; the liability of grown persons to accidents which deprived them of their bodily members and faculties; the tendency of various diseases naturally induced to cause the loss of one or other corporeal appurtenance or ornament; the effect of old age on different members and their powers, as, *e.g.* the eyes, ears, teeth, &c. They further urged the indestructible nature of the artificial substitutes. Was not a wooden leg more durable than one of flesh and bone? Were not the teeth, hair, eyes made by art more lasting than those supplied by nature? In addition to which they might be ‘made to order’ as to colour, size, &c., which was impossible in the case of natural productions. Were not

gutta-percha noses and ears not only more lasting, but more shapely and better coloured than those made of cartilage? What natural skin or complexion could vie with those of art? Besides, these artificial limbs were exempt from pain. Indeed, extreme partizans hesitated not to maintain that in every particular art was superior to nature. Well, to cut the story short, these astute craftsmen obtained the measure of success which usually attends unscrupulosity and audacity. They acquired wealth and power. Instigated by their persuasion and the example of their neighbours, many well-made people hastened to the surgeons to have their natural limbs removed in order to supply themselves with artificial. There was quite a rage for wooden legs and arms, for artificial ears, noses, and eyes.

But at last a reaction set in. Men became skeptical of the superiority of artificial limbs and of the disinterestedness of those who recommended them. On experiment, it was not found that wooden legs were better adapted for locomotion than those of nature, and the ears and eyes supplied by these artists were, as regards functions, well-nigh useless. Hence they determined to return to Nature and its Creator, whose intent, as they began to see, was clearly signified by the fact that the countless majority of mankind were normally formed, and it was worse than absurd to put aside the gifts of God for the poor substitutes devised by man. Such was the parable. It ended by saying that the last advices from that country maintained this reaction to be still in progress.

TREVOR. 'More power to it,' and to every similar movement.

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EVENING IX.

SEMI-SKEPTICISM OF THE SCHOOLMEN:

ERIGENA—ABELARD—AQUINAS.

‘ Toutes les religions et les sectes du monde ont eu la raison naturelle pour guide. Les seuls Chrétiens ont été astreints à prendre leurs règles hors d’eux-mêmes, et à s’informer de celles que Jésus-Christ a laissées aux anciens pour être transmises aux fidèles. Cette contrainte lasse ces bons Pères : ils veulent avoir, comme les autres peuples, la liberté de suivre leurs imaginations.’

PASCAL, *Pensées*, ed. Faugère, i. 265.

‘ La Théologie est une science, mais en même temps combien est-ce de Sciences ? Un homme est un suppôt ; mais si on l’anatomise, sera-ce la tête, le cœur, l’estomac, les veines, chaque veine, chaque portion de veine, le sang, chaque humeur du sang ? ’

‘ Une ville, une campagne, de loin est une ville et une campagne ; mais à mesure qu’on s’approche, ce sont des maisons, des arbres, des tuiles, des feuilles, des herbes, des fourmis, des jambes de fourmi, à l’infini. Tout cela s’enveloppe sous le nom de campagne.’

PASCAL, *Pensées*, ed. Faugère, i. 189.

‘ Bedenkt man wie relativ die Begriffe des Orthodoxen und Heterodoxen sind, wie, was einst heterodox ward, auch wieder orthodox wurde, und was als orthodox galt, die öffentliche Meinung für sich wieder verlor, so kann man nicht behaupten, dass das Orthodoxe ein grösseres Recht darauf habe, ein Object der Dogmengeschichte zu sein, als das Heterodoxe.’

F. C. BAUR, *Dogmengeschichte*, i. p. 24.

EVENING IX.

SEMI-SKEPTICISM OF THE SCHOOLMEN:

ERIGENA—ABELARD—AQUINAS.

TREVOR. By way of novelty, I propose to introduce our discussion on the chief types of Free-thought among the Schoolmen in an apologue or parable.

Once on a time three birds were, with many others, cooped up in a strong iron cage, which allowed only a limited space for movement, and was not too abundantly supplied with fresh air. Poor birds! They had been born in the cage and did not seem much to mind its bars, and its vapid atmosphere, and their stale and meagre provisions. Still, their nature was wild, their instincts and desires were free and unfettered. It was said that their ancestors had been induced to barter the joys of unrestricted freedom and to accept the confinement of the cage because they thereby thought to escape the enemies to which their native haunts of wood, rock, and mountain exposed them. Certainly their own faculties and powers clearly proved that they were not originally intended to pass their lives in an imprisonment, however honourable and in some respects advantageous. Nature, *e.g.* had gifted them with powerful wings, capable of ranging with great speed through the air, or of soaring upwards to almost any height. They were also endowed with an extreme lightness of form, which fully proved a primordial unsuitableness for remaining always in the same position. Even the powers of their senses, their range of vision and hearing, betokened a natural capacity for a sphere of action much greater than the bounds of their cage. Added to these physical indications of natural destiny, and pointing in the same direction, were certain feelings, desires, aptitudes, which were clearly congenital and not very easily

repressed. Especially were they gifted with an indomitable love of freedom, an almost uncontrollable impulse to urge their flight in whatever direction their fancy suggested. Perhaps their lot in the cage would not have been quite so hard if they could have overcome this innate propensity for liberty, and suppressed entirely those restless stirrings which kept their wings in an almost continual agitation. As it was, these pent-up activities and unsatisfied yearnings were occasionally the cause of much disturbance and unhappiness. With each of the three birds the strongest impulse was to gain his liberty, or, as he saw that was impossible, to assert and enjoy such a measure of it as the limits of the cage would permit. Accordingly, the first bird sat alone on his perch and amused himself by singing a low, tender, and plaintive song, which seemed addressed more to himself than to any other living being. He sang of green fields and lovely flowers, of blue skies and lofty mountains, he carolled of brilliant sunshine, the glow of which he seemed to feel to the extremest points of his feathers, and of a limitless aerial expanse in which he flew in imagination hither and thither on strong and untiring wing. Of these and similar idealities of freedom he sang in a soft, crooning tone, until, by the magic of his own bird-lay, the cage, with its cruel bars, its stifling air, its narrow bounds, and all its other inconveniences, seemed quite to disappear. Bird the second, though he could also sing and used sometimes to indulge in an air not unlike that of his tuneful fellow-prisoner, was, however, a bird of greater muscular power and of a much bolder spirit. He occupied his time chiefly in posture-making, first hopping on one leg, then on the other, and then on the two together. This was supposed to be his way of taking exercise. He would also flap his wings violently for some minutes at a time, in order to increase their strength and activity. But his favourite pastime was dashing himself with all his might against the bars of his cage, to try if they were really so strong as they seemed. Indeed, there was a weak point or two in the cage which he struck so hard by the propulsion of his vigorous wings and powerful frame that it seemed as if he must have made his escape. But it is doubtful whether

he quite intended this. He may have meant only, by producing a bulge in the iron bars, to enlarge in some slight degree the range of his own movements. There was, it is true, a report current in the cage that he had more than once boasted of his power to shatter the very strongest of its bars, but this may have been mere bravado on his part, for he was well known to be not devoid of vanity. What is more certain is that his plumage appeared to be always ruffled and disordered, by reason of his continual attacks on the walls of his prison. Bird the third was of a more contented turn of mind than the other two. Instead of always wanting to be free of his cage, he was inclined to think it might, if properly utilized, be large enough for a bird like himself. When he heard the first bird singing of the delights of freedom, he thought there might be dangers in the open country from which the bars of the cage and the constant supervision bestowed on its inmates afforded some protection. When he saw the second bird dashing himself against the bars, he deemed this an unwise and foolhardy experiment. Still he had the instinct of liberty as well as the other two, though he kept it in greater subordination. He, moreover, possessed the powerful wings of bird the second; and their restless energies continually demanded in his case also, some form of exercise which might satisfy them. Hence he acquired the trick of stretching out his wings in some free part of the cage, and keeping himself suspended for a long time in the air, just like a hawk hovering over its prey, so that he seemed almost motionless. — ‘Which things are an allegory.’

Now ‘Riddle me, riddle me, what is it?’

MISS LEYCESTER. In my opinion your riddle is easily unriddled. The cage is of course the Mediæval Church, and the bars are its dogmas. The crooning bird represents, I take it, idealism, transcending dogma, and finding a field for its energies outside the limits of the Church. The bar-breaking bird is clearly the intellect or reason, as exemplified in the case of an avowed Skeptic. I suppose the balancing bird may be an instance of what we have called Twofold Truth.

TREVOR. Well, you are nearly right, Miss Leycester, but not quite. The singing bird is the Mystic; the next is the logician or Rationalist; while the third represents not an adherent of Twofold Truth, but that tendency to equilibration which, though coming close to it in method, never quite relinquishes its hold on dogma. These three modes of asserting the innate tendency of the human mind to speculative freedom include all those which are most observable among the Schoolmen.

ARUNDEL. I always like to get from the abstract to the concrete. We shall judge better, I think, of the appropriateness of your class-denominations when we know the actual persons you have selected as typical of each. So instead of caged birds let us hear who are the living men—Plato's *unfeathered* bipeds—whom you wish us to take as birds first, second, and third.

TREVOR. Erigena as the mystic, Abelard as the logician, while the judicial or balancing Skeptic is Aquinas.

ARUNDEL. The first two are long-recognised examples of Scholastic mysticism and rationalism. As to the third, your assimilation of the 'Angel of the Schools' to a bird is of course right enough from a natural history point of view, but I shall be glad of further enlightenment as to the meaning of his judicial or balancing Skepticism, especially as you distinguish between it and the Twofold Truth we have already considered.

TREVOR. What I mean is, briefly, that his method is controversial, not dogmatic; and more provocative of doubt than certitude. Every truth of Christianity and philosophy is propounded by him as a centre of antagonistic opinion—a question of 'obs and sols.'

MISS LEYCESTER. 'Obs and sols,' Dr. Trevor! What do you mean?

TREVOR. 'Obs and sols' is an old English cant phrase for 'objections and solutions,' and describes the general method of Scholastic discussion. When we come to speak of Aquinas—the best representative of the method—you will better see the meaning of the phrase.

HARRINGTON. The contemptuous curtailment of words

which represent what is, after all, a necessary feature of all controversy, reveals both a popular acquaintance with Scholasticism in the ages after the Reformation, which we might have expected, and a supercilious disdain of the method, which I cannot help feeling to be unjust. Every discussion is surely a battle between 'obs and sols,' in which, as a rule, the 'sols,' as representing dogma and affirmation, are victorious.

MISS LEYCESTER. But the 'objectionists,' as our discussions show us, form a minority not to be despised, and they have also unhappily the constitution of the universe as well as of the human mind in their favour. Aquinas, I suppose, was altogether an advocate of the solutionists.

TREVOR. Certainly. But—and this is the characteristic of his on which I am bound to lay especial stress—he was a remarkably—some people would say excessively—fair one. That all objections, however originated, were destined to find their proper solutions was, in his opinion, as much the intention of the Author of the world as that men's eyes were made to see or their feet to walk with. Hence he insisted on objections and doubts as necessary complements of the affirmation and dogma which, in his view, was the final outcome of all controversy.

MRS. HARRINGTON. To me such a position does not seem to differ much from Twofold Truth.

TREVOR. I shall, by-and-by, have to distinguish between the two, and I think you will admit the distinction to be substantial. Aquinas was not only too orthodox, he was also too acute a logician to admit that two contradictories could both be true at once.

MISS LEYCESTER. He seems to have stopped short, by an arbitrary interdiction of further advance, on the very threshold of Skepticism. I have known persons with a precisely similar intellectual bent. They assume such a dogma, *e.g.* to be unquestionably true, but they are quite ready to appreciate and even to second attacks upon it as a kind of intellectual gymnastics, up to the very point of its destruction or subversion, when they immediately unfurl the white flag. I presume they feel the need of some outlet for their

mental energies, like the birds in the cage felt restless activities in their wings and legs.

MRS. HARRINGTON. The main difference between such posture-making and Twofold Truth seems to me to be that the latter is the more outspoken and honest of the two, and, whatever the effect of such perpetual equipoising on those who exercise it, its influence upon others must be Skeptical and disquieting.

HARRINGTON. That reminds me—— Where is your copy of Lamb's works, Doctor? I want the immortal 'Elia.'

TREVOR. Here it is (rising and handing Mr. Harrington a book from his shelves).

HARRINGTON. The assimilation of Lamb to the 'Angel of the Schools' is a quaint juxtaposition which would have been very exhilarating to the genial humourist. Nevertheless, Lamb was in his younger years a sucking Aquinas—at least he was influenced by precisely the same tactics which the great Schoolman employed. Here is an amusing and for our purpose not impertinent extract from his reminiscences of childhood: 'In my father's book-closet the History of the Bible, by Stackhouse, occupied a distinguished station. . . . I have not met with the work from that time to this; but I remember it consisted of Old Testament stories, orderly set down, with the *objection* appended to each story, and the *solution* of the objection regularly tacked to that. The *objection* was a summary of whatever difficulties had been opposed to the credibility of the history by the shrewdness of ancient or modern infidelity, drawn up with an almost complimentary excess of candour. The *solution* was brief, modest, and satisfactory. The bane and antidote were both before you. To doubts so put and so quashed there seemed to be an end for ever. The dragon lay dead for the foot of the veriest babe to trample on. But—like as was rather feared than realized from that slain monster in Spenser—from the womb of those crushed errors young dragonets would creep, exceeding the prowess of so tender a Saint George as myself to vanquish. The habit of expecting objections to every passage set me upon starting more

objections for the glory of finding a solution of my own for them. I became staggered and perplexed, a Skeptic in long coats. . . .’ There I think we have a fair illustration of the effect of ‘obs and sols’ upon minds of a certain type, though it should not be pushed too far. Lamb took a humorous pleasure in exaggerating the effect of the method upon himself. In reality it was very transient. He threw off the intellectual ‘measles’ just as easily as a strong child throws off the physical disease of the name.

ARUNDEL. I should be sorry to repress in any measure wholesome Free-thought, but an unrestrained presentation on every subject of ‘obs and sols’ seems to me very mischievous.

TREVOR. In mediæval times the mischievous tendency was on the side, not of discussion and publicity, but of repression. The aim of ecclesiasticism was then, as it is always, to annihilate the individual, to exterminate all mental originality and spontaneity. Human thought, no matter on what topic, must be run into its own mould. All research must limit itself to the form it deemed fit to prescribe. All human progress—like a modern locomotive—must advance only on the steel rails of its dogma and infallibility. Nothing more forcibly illustrates the thralldom of the human mind in the centuries preceding the Renaissance than the theological and ecclesiastical colouring of all its activities. All poetry was confined to sacred or semi-sacred subjects. The drama was a representation of sacred mysteries. Literature, a sombre collection of works on asceticism or manuals of devotion. Even the heathen philosophers, *e.g.* Aristotle and Cicero, could not reproduce their science or eloquence until each had received the *imprimatur* of the Church.

HARRINGTON. Most true, Doctor! Yet on the principle of a ‘Soul of good in things evil,’ the destruction of individualism and the consequent feeling of impotence and dependence impelled men to seek their intellectual pabulum from other sources, and to adopt other writers as models. This is in a large measure the signification of the Renaissance. The Church, for her own selfish purposes, had destroyed the individual both as to his intellect and conscience, but the

very dependence she had fostered found an outcome she had not foreseen in the revival of classical literature. By depriving her children of the power of independent judgment, she had made the influence of the secular and Skeptical tendencies of the Renaissance much greater than they need have been. This is, indeed, the inevitable result of all undue repression: it provokes and suggests an outlet for pent-up energies in other, probably forbidden, directions.

MISS LEYCESTER. This tendency of mediæval orthodoxy reminds one of the story which Racine used to tell with high glee. Suffering once from some slight illness, he had recourse to a medical man, who, after strictly prohibiting him from drinking wine, from eating any kind of food, and from applying himself to the least possible occupation, ended by saying, 'For the rest, enjoy yourself.' So ecclesiasticism, with cruel but unconscious irony, is equally liberal in its prescriptions: 'Don't think, don't inquire, don't read, except certain books; don't doubt whatever you do, but in all other respects be happy.'

ARUNDEL. Theology assumes, and most justly, that man must be governed—that a wild egoism is not only detrimental to the individual, but absolutely fatal to social life. When we come to consider the untamed spirits to which the Renaissance gave birth, we shall, if I mistake not, revert with satisfaction to the more restrained and orderly, even if commonplace, intellects which were evolved by mediæval orthodoxy. Moreover, I cannot help thinking that you exaggerate the repressive effect of the latter influence. Take, *e.g.* the three men we mean to discuss to-night, Erigena, Abelard, and Aquinas; they certainly evince a considerable amount of individuality, and that too of a striking character.

TREVOR. No doubt; but in entire opposition to the will of the Church, and at no small danger to their own lives. That Romanism has evolved a great variety of intellectual formations (or rather has possessed them within her pale) is a truth I have no desire to impugn, especially as it is the only good part in the system, regarded as a whole. But, in reality, even this claim is fictitious. The mental variety we

have in Romanism testifies only to the irrepressible self-assertion of all strong intellects—the inherent superiority of the individual over the system—and the phenomenon exists, not in consequence, but in spite of the teaching of the Church. It is the tritest of trite observations that the Church has in every age proved herself the enemy of sound learning, and of its parent Free-thought. What does not appear so generally acknowledged is that she is so necessarily and inevitably by reason of her excessive dogma.

MISS LEYCESTER. And yet I have heard Roman Catholics allege that during the Middle Ages the Church was the great protector of ancient learning, and that, had it not been for the literature stored away in monastic libraries, the Renaissance would have been impossible.

TREVOR. That incidentally and involuntarily the Church helped to preserve some valuable monuments of ancient learning no candid student of history would deny. But that the Church generally as an ecclesiastical corporation, *i.e.* in the person of her popes, her ruling authorities, and councils, has ever been anything but virulently hostile to all secular learning, is abundantly proved. The keynote to her conduct in this particular was given by Tertullian when he called the ancient philosophers ‘the Patriarchs of Heretics.’ This was the spirit that animated the Church in her long warfare against Aristotle. Nay more, the mediæval Church unhappily preached a crusade of ignorance against every kind of secular enlightenment. With a perverse ingenuity she conceived it her mission (it was certainly her interest) to interpret the words of St. Paul, ‘God hath made foolish the wisdom of the world,’ as inculcating a propaganda of obscurantism and self-stultification. As an illustration of her general animus, listen to this ‘Encomium of Folly’ by an influential Catholic centuries before Erasmus, who unluckily does not use irony or sarcasm, but is grave, simple, earnest. The writer is Leo, Abbot of St. Boniface, and Apostolic Legate, who wrote in the tenth century. He says: ‘The Vicars of St. Peter do not want as masters, neither Plato, nor Virgil, nor Terence, nor any of the other herds of philosophers (*neque ceteros pecudes philosophorum*).

St. Peter knew none of these things, and nevertheless was chosen to be doorkeeper of heaven. . . . God from the beginning of the world has selected, not orators and philosophers, but the ignorant and rustics.' Gregory the Great also thought it behoved him 'to hate grammar for the love of Christ.'¹

ARUNDEL. By a curious coincidence, the argument of Leo, Abbot of St. Boniface, was employed only last Sunday in my parish by a Methodist preacher, who, I was told, railed vehemently at Church priests for their University education, their book-learning, their Greek and Latin, and other scholastic disadvantages of the same kind, saying in effect that the more ignorant a man was the greater was his likelihood of being accepted by God.

HARRINGTON. We must, I think, concede that there is a point of view from which both Abbot Leo and your itinerant evangelist may have been right. There is what Bacon calls a '*pars destruens*' to every scheme of teaching—an initiatory nescience—a kind of weeding and deep-ploughing process requisite for the reception of new seed. In the recognition of this fact there is little difference among the great teachers of the world: Sokrates, Jesus Christ, St. Paul, Descartes, Bacon, are all agreed on this point. However variously expressed, a preliminary condition of *receptivity* is postulated by all. Moreover, the exaltation of ignorance on these occasions may also be explained and justified by the instinctive self-assertion of morality as against a domineering and, perhaps, immoral intellectualism. The world's experience has not altogether confirmed the Sokratic dictum that knowledge and virtue are identical. By the way, the text of St. Paul just quoted has always been a favourite with Skeptics.

TREVOR. I quite differ from you as to the failure of the Sokratic principle. There may be, I grant, many a case in which virtue is based upon and sustained by not only ignorance and misbelief, but even by gross superstition;

¹ St. Ouen, in his *Life of St. Eloi*, speaking of Homer and Virgil, calls their poems '*Sceleratorum nœniæ Poetarum.*' Comp., too, Gregory, *Epp.* lib. ix. l. iv., and lib. xi. l. liv. See, also, A. Bartoli, *I Precursori del Rinascimento*, p. 31 note.

just as vice may occasionally be found in alliance with great intellectual gifts. Unhappy marriages of this kind are not unknown. But as a rule applicable not to individuals and particular systems, but to the progress of collective humanity, I have not the least doubt that true virtue does increase in proportion to complete thorough many-sided knowledge. . . . I am aware that the knowledge-despising expressions of St. Paul are often quoted by Skeptics. Indeed, one of our Free-thinkers, La-Mothe-le-Vayer, is almost inclined on their authority to bring him in a Skeptic. But obscurantists, we must remember, find it convenient to confound two quite opposite kinds of ignorance—one unrealized, unconscious, apathetic; the other enlightened, inquiring, and conscious—the former the foe, the latter the friend, of civilization and human progress. It is the latter that is eulogized by Sokrates and St. Paul.

MISS LEYCESTER. Virtual obscurantism seems to me confined to no sect or system of belief. I fear it is just as common with extreme sections of the English Church as among Romanists and Nonconformists. Indeed, considering the unlimited power it confers on demagogues, whether lay or ecclesiastical, the wonder is that its advocacy is not more frequent; perhaps the reason is that it is self-destructive. The plea of the utility of ignorance before our Maker was well met by the remark of some bishop—I forget his name—who replied to an argument of that kind, that ‘if God did not need our wisdom, still less need had we of our ignorance.’

ARUNDEL. According to my experience, pleas of that kind rarely do much hurt in the present day. The practical common-sense of mankind is quite strong enough to push the alleged advantages of ignorance to a *reductio ad absurdum*. The moment piety becomes identified with imbecility it loses most of its attraction for thoughtful people. The mischievous effect of the argument was greater when it was allied with the Calvinistic theory of supernatural grace; but as that article, together with the rest of Calvin’s creed, is happily now moribund, Ignorance is compelled to stand alone, and her native ugliness is therefore recognised in all its manifold repulsiveness.

TREVOR. I wish I were able to agree with you, but the principle of supernaturalism seems to me to be as rampant as ever, though in a slightly different form. It is, *e.g.* the mainspring of sacerdotalism; indeed, both the suicidal character of the argument and its opposition to the spirit of modern progress are lost sight of in every claim of the individual to supernatural authority. The world seems slow in realizing that every system of priestcraft and excessive dogma must be stationary if not retrograde. Meanwhile we must console ourselves with the reflection—one lesson of our present subject—that no system of authoritative and repressive dogma can ever annihilate the individual characteristics and self-assertory power of vigorous intellects. The reason of humanity in its highest capacity and fullest perfection is really greater than any inclusive system. The bird is after all larger than its cage, the prisoner than his cell. Another reflection that will suggest itself to our notice will be the endless variety and subtlety of intellectual processes. Imagination, devout sentiment, ordinary feeling, reason, intuition, present themselves, not as coefficients, but as possessing each of them the complete distinctness and independence of one whole mind. Further, when these qualities coexist, as often happens in the same mind, we shall find a kind of plastic energy, by which the stronger will discharge the functions normally pertaining to the weaker. Reason, *e.g.* will take on itself the office of imagination, and imagination will perform the functions of the reason—a mental analogy, in short, to the interchange of physical functions often observable in our bodily organization. I think, too, another conclusion—though I have little hope of carrying my auditory with me on this point—is suggested by our present topic, and that is, that the primary instinct of all normally constituted minds is towards liberty; and that this instinct is more marked in direct proportion to the richness and variety of intellectual endowment, whence I should draw the inference that Free-thought on all subjects is the natural legitimate condition of the human reason.

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*John Scotus Erigena.*¹

Few chapters in the records of humanity are more painful than the history of the Church from the fourth to the ninth century—the period usually denominated ‘the dark ages.’ With the exception of a few fitful and transitory gleams, the light of Christ’s own teaching had quite disappeared, and in its stead dogmatism and hierarchical ambition had usurped their pernicious sway. Looking back from our present standpoint—the end of the ninth century—we can see that growth, development, had taken place, but, like some other kinds of increase in bulk, the process was, to a great extent, diseased and morbid. The simplicity of the gospel had become swollen into a gigantic mass of incomprehensible and self-contradictory propositions, just as in ascites the normal bulk of the human frame is enlarged and all its functions impaired by the progress of the disease. Councils had assembled under the boasted guidance of the Holy Spirit, and had formulated decrees and sanctioned deeds which might more reasonably have claimed diabolical suggestion. Heretics had been punished for daring to use their intellectual faculties, and champions of orthodoxy had avenged their peculiar Christianity in a manner utterly alien not only from the spirit of its Founder but from the ordinary dictates of humanity. The spirit of the Bishop of Hippo in its later stages of dogma-deterioration, cold, pitiless, domineering, and

¹ The authorities quoted on Erigena are the following:—

Opera omnia, Floss’s edition in Migne, *Patr. Lat.* vol. cxxii.

Johannes Scotus Erigena, &c. Von Dr. Johannes Hüber. This is a supplement to the same author’s admirable *Philosophie der Kirchenväter*.

Leben und Lehre des Johannes Scotus Erigena. Von Dr. Christlieb.

Johannes Scotus Erigena und die Wissenschaft seiner Zeit. Von Dr. F. A. Staudenmaier.

Möller (N.), *Joh. Scotus Erigena und seine Irrthümer*.

Scot Érigène et la Phil. Scholastique. Par St.-René Taillandier.

Hauréau, *Hist. de la Phil. Scholastique*, vol. i. new ed. 148–76.

Gesch. der Scholastischen Philosophie. V. Dr. W. Kaulich. Th. i. pp. 65–216.

Hist. Lit. de la France, vol. v. 416–29.

Rousselot, *Études sur la Philosophie dans le Moyen Age*, i. 28–82.

Hist. Lit. de la France sous Charlemagne. Par J. J. Ampère. Chap. vii. p. 115, &c.

The Schools of Charles the Great. By J. Bass Mullinger. Chap. v.

Gesch. der Philosophie des Mittelalters. Von Dr. A. Stöckl. Vol. i. pp. 31–128.

Prantl, *Gesch. der Logik*, vol. ii. pp. 30–37.

ambitious, became the accepted model of episcopal autocracy and infallibility. No wonder that there was a development of dogma, an increasing elaboration of the Christian Creed. The Church, to give her her due, had neglected no means of securing notional unanimity and, in her own opinion, correctness. Her astuteness in the effort was equalled only by her perfect unscrupulosity. If she proved exigent when verbal abstractions and refinements were involved, she showed herself no less complaisant in regard of the mere dictates of morality. Not only was orthodoxy superior to right conduct, but might be accepted as a compensation for moral error; while no rectitude of conduct or purity of life could absolve the conscientious thinker who might chance to become, in Boileau's expressive phrase, the 'martyr of a diphthong.' To peccant humanity and an immoral age no discrimination could have been more agreeable. What laxly minded king or courtier would not readily exchange a few verbal propositions (the import of which he did not affect to understand) for a licence to sin? If the sale of such 'indulgences' was at first limited, it was only by the number of those able to pay for them. The open traffic of the sixteenth century was in the fifth somewhat secret, and what any man's money could effect in the latter epoch was in the former restricted to the few possessors of worldly power and ecclesiastical orthodoxy. How far the spirit that truckled to the passions of immoral kings and queens, in order to secure their support of a given creed, was different from that which filled Tetzels money-boxes is a question of casuistry needless to determine. Impelled by such agencies, as well as by the natural effects of controversy on a number of speculative, indemonstrable articles of faith, there was a large development of ecclesiastical dogma. It seems, indeed, to have proceeded *pari passu* with the increasing corruption and decrepitude of the Roman Empire, and to have thriven on the elements of moral decay and disorganization, just as a poisonous fungus thrives on the decaying roots of a tree. It need hardly be added that during these dark centuries no truly original mind emerged from the combination of barbarism and bigotry that constituted the State and Church. There was no standpoint on which the human reason might be placed, no subject-matter for the exercise of its powers. Nay, what need was there of a truth-searching faculty when truth itself, ready made, authoritative, infallible, was the boasted possession of the Christian hierarchy? As we saw on a former occasion, the Church had long since condemned classical studies. The inhibition had doubtless subserved the purposes of its obscurantist authors. Depriving their victims of the only

possible independent and educational exercise of their faculties, they were rendered more completely the bond slaves of ecclesiastical rapacity and superstition. The irruption of the barbarians which served to complete the destruction of classical learning already begun by the Church had its own compensatory elements in the simplicity of life and purity of manners wherein they greatly excelled the effete Christians of the Roman Empire.¹ Unfortunately, however, these primitive virtues were as quickly corrupted by contact with the vices of the Church, as barbarous nations now are contaminated by intercourse with professedly Christian communities. With other diseases of an emasculate civilization these, too, caught the dogma mania of ecclesiasticism. Together with the language of Latin Christianity they acquired the Shibboleths of her sects, they divided themselves into orthodox and heterodox, and vituperated and slew each other for minute divergences of faith with as great readiness and pious zeal as if they had been brought up within the Church itself.

But amid all this darkness of religious fanaticism, sacerdotal ambition, and popular ignorance, there was at least one spot in Christendom in which liberal culture asserted its power, where Homer and Virgil were read and commented on, where intellectual freedom maintained its hallowed sway, and that single bright spot amid the darkness of the sixth century was Ireland. 'I do not know,' says Hauréau,² 'in the beginnings of modern science, another fact of equal importance and meriting equal attention.' From the 'Holy Island,' as his eponym Erigena implies, bringing with him the classical and liberal teaching of the Irish schools, and the intellectual vigour and audacity of the Celtic race, came John Scotus to the court of Charles the Bald, somewhere about the year A.D. 845.

Besides the fact just mentioned—Erigena's migration to Frankland, and the high honour in which he was held by its philosophic monarch—little is known of his personal history. His birth is dubiously assigned to the first quarter of the ninth century, and his death is variously placed between 872 and 895. Of the conflicting traditions of his destiny it would be hopeless to attempt a reconciliation. That he imparted new fame and lustre to the 'School of the Palace' instituted by Charlemagne, that his influ-

¹ Comp. the well-known passage of Salvian, *De Gub. Dei*, iv. 12, and vii. *passim*. See also p. 154 of this volume, and Mr. Mullinger's work below, p. 23.

² *Singularités Historiques*, &c. 'Écoles d'Irlande,' pp. 1 and 2. Comp. Mr. Bass Mullinger, *Schools of Charlemagne*, p. 174.

ence extended beyond the confines of Frankland; that his teaching was esteemed true and therefore dangerous by the Roman hierarchy—all this is undoubted; and thus much of his history is verified by his works. But before examining the system contained in these works, and thus determining Erigena's relation to Scholastic Free-thought, it will be expedient to glance at his principles and method.

Foremost among the former, constituting the basis of all his thought, as Professor Prantl has remarked,¹ is the axiom, 'True philosophy and true theology are identical.'² Erigena thus demands a unison of all the intellectual activities of humanity on the sole basis of reason. Though the principle had already been avouched by the more deeply thinking among the Fathers, *e.g.* Augustine, this was only in a half-hearted manner—oftentimes it was no more than a grudging compliment to heathen philosophy wrested from Christian dogmatists against their will. But by Erigena it was avowed fully and without reserve. The consequences of this axiomatic principle were of the utmost importance. 1st. Theology and philosophy were immediately assimilated in method. Hitherto each had claimed her own: theology had appealed to authority, philosophy to reason, and the respective domains of either had been regarded with suspicion and mistrust by the other.

Especially had ecclesiastical Christianity denounced Gentile philosophy, as we have repeatedly seen. Nay, the very attempt to discover truth outside the Christian creed was held to be pregnant with danger. Erigena's position was therefore irreconcilable with the dominant thought of his time, and was all the more dangerous from being to reasoning beings absolutely impregnable. It was a mistake, said Erigena, to suppose that authority and reason were enemies. 'True authority is not opposed to right reason, nor right reason to true authority. Both emanate from the same fountain of Divine wisdom.'³ Hence he exhorts his disciple: 'Let no authority frighten you from the conclusions which the true persuasion of reasonable contemplation teaches.'⁴ Of the two, he further remarks, reason is prior in its nature, although authority is prior in time, and to the first must be conceded the superiority due to it on that account. Authority has its own ultimate ground of validity in reason, but reason never in authority, for all autho-

¹ *Logik*, ii. p. 24, note 101.

² *De Prædest.* i. 1, Floss, p. 358: 'Conficitur inde, veram esse Philosophiam veram religionem, conversimque veram religionem esse veram philosophiam.'

³ *De Div. Nat.* i. 66.

⁴ *Ibid.* ch. 68.

rity not approved by reason appears infirm, whereas true reason fortified by its own excellences and thus rendered immutable has no need of the confirmation of authority.¹ Hence in all matters reason must be employed first, and afterwards authority.² Such was both the basis and the primary moment of Erigena's thought-system. When the general condition of Christendom in the ninth century is borne in mind, we cannot feel surprised at the glowing eulogiums historians of philosophy bestow on the Irish 'Regius Professor' of Charles the Bald. De Gerando, *e.g.* strikingly compares the apparition of such a man at such an epoch to 'finding a monument of art standing upright in the midst of a sandy desert.'³

2. Another outcome of the same ground-principle is Erigena's appeal to heathendom as a coequal fount of truth with Christianity. Philosophy in the ninth century was a synonym for Gentile culture, and its assimilation to Christianity presupposed some acquaintance with its sources. Erigena's attention was accordingly, as William of Malmesbury expressed it, 'turned towards Greece.' Across the intervening darkness he cast a fond retrospective glance to the masters of Hellenic enlightenment, foremost of whom he esteemed Plato, while even his authorities among the Christian Fathers seem to have been valued in proportion to their sympathy with Greek freedom and Platonic idealism.⁴ Although Erigena laboured to prove that this intercrossing of Gentilism with Christianity was a legitimate process, grounded on true reason and a comprehensive estimate of Divine agency in human history, it was a principle that the Church had always regarded with mistrust, and not unfrequently visited with malediction. But this alliance of theology and philosophy—

¹ *De Div. Nat.* ch. 69. Comp. Kaulich, pp. 89; Hüber, pp. 132-34.

² Dr. Hüber remarks that the reason thus eulogized by Erigena is not the natural reason of humanity, but a kind of supernatural reason imparted immediately by Divine grace. The natural reason of man was, according to Erigena, corrupted by the Fall. This is, no doubt, true, but Erigena admits that the ill-influence of the Fall on the reason was only partial, and he allows 'the supernatural reason' to be a possession of all thinkers, heathen as well as Christian. It is clear, in short, that Erigena held *all reason* and its exercise to be Divine. Hüber, p. 133.

³ *Hist. Compar. des Systèmes de Phil.* iv. p. 354.

⁴ Erigena's favourite philosophic and patristic authorities, in the order of importance he himself attached to them, are as follows: the Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, Maximus the Confessor, Plato, the two Gregories Nyssa and Nazianzum, Origen, Basil, and Augustine. He calls Origen, 'Magnum Originem diligentissimum rerum inquisitorem.'

unblessed by the Church—had yet another implication. The instrument of philosophy and of reason is dialectic: the same instrument must be employed by theology: the dogmas of the Church must become the theses of the Schools. In this demand was involved, I need hardly say, the whole history and significance of Scholasticism, as well as the subsequent analysis, nominalistic and Protestant, that accomplished its destruction. Ecclesiastical theology was a matter of quite another kind. It vigorously repudiated the aid and resented the investigation of dialectic. It demanded, not the criticism, the discrimination, the analysis of logic, but unquestioning, undoubting assent. But this ordinary Church-theology was altogether alien from Erigena's thought. He had no conception of anything which could claim exemption from ratiocination and the deliberate approval of the verifying faculty, and for this especial reason, that dialectic was not conceived by him as a human science formed by mechanical arts, but as a process involved in the very nature of things. He thus adopts the scope and definition of the subject employed by Sokrates,¹ and makes the laws of thought identical with the laws of being or reality. To the operation of these laws in nature and history we must ascribe the rich variety, the infinite manifoldings of development, we discern both in one and the other.² Dialectic has, moreover, a specially sacred significance as being the reason of God, the Divine *Logos*. Erigena therefore applies it to theology as its sole and appropriate method. He examines the being of God by the test of the Aristotelian categories, employs the syllogistic form for most of his theological ratiocination, and eulogizes dialectic as a gift undoubtedly conferred on man by God.³ He thus shares the instincts and methods of Scholasticism, and justifies the title often bestowed on him as 'the first of the Schoolmen.'⁴ But Erigena's conception of the Divine origin and sacred character of dialectic does not hinder his acknowledgment of its double-sided capacity. He admits that it may be employed perniciously for establishing error as well as demonstrating truth, though he denies that it was given to man for this purpose.⁵ Indeed, the

¹ Comp. Discussion on Sokrates, vol. i. Evening III.

² Dr. Hüber points out that Erigena has anticipated the speculations of Schelling and Hegel on the relation of dialectic to the physical universe; comp. his work, p. 160.

³ *De Prædest.* vii. 1, p. 382: 'Potest enim aliquis in disciplina disputandi quæ dicitur dialectica peritus, quæ nullo dubitante a Deo homini donatur,' &c.

⁴ On the dialectical form of his philosophy, comp. Prantl, ii. p. 24.

⁵ Prantl, *ibid.* p. 24, note 107; comp. Hüber, p. 152.

possibility of its misuse by falsehood renders it all the more needful that linguistic sciences—*i.e.* rhetoric and dialectic—should be cultivated by those who desire to defend the truth. For whatever be the incidental defects or possible perversions of dialectic, there is no other road to the discovery of truth. And here, perhaps, we should take some notice of the few passages in his writings in which a strong flavour of nominalism seems to be found, especially as he afterwards had the reputation of being a forerunner of nominalists. Some of the conclusions of that school are certainly found in his writings, though they have not yet acquired the complete differentiation from realism they afterwards attained:¹ we shall meet them in their full maturity when we come to Ockam. Erigena thus held that dialectic is the science which deals with mental concepts, and he admits that human language derived its power, as Aristotle said, not from nature, but from convention. He goes, however, far beyond Ockam when he maintains that ‘what we know in words we know also in the things signified,’ and thinks that the reasons of all things, while they are understood by the super-essential nature of the word, are eternal. We may, I think, take this occasional nominalism as a proof of Erigena’s intellectual comprehensiveness—his insight into other aspects of truth than those that met with his fullest concurrence. It also marks his standpoint in the coalescence of antagonistic thought-directions which preceded the dualism of the school-philosophy. Perhaps, too, he was induced to place a stress on names inconsistent with his general realism by the prominence he assigned the *Logos* as representing both ‘word’ and ‘reason.’²

Coming now to the system excogitated by means of this rationalism, idealism, and dialectic, it will be convenient to follow ‘the division of nature’ set before us by Erigena himself. Understanding by ‘nature’ the universe or sum of all existing things, he divides it into four kinds—

1. Nature that creates and is not created;
2. Nature that is created and creates;
3. Nature that is created and does not create;
4. Nature that is not created nor creates;

or, as they may be paraphrased—(1) God; (2) the world of ideas; (3) the Kosmos, or physical universe; (4) the consummation of all existing things.

¹ Prantl, ii. p. 36.

² Prantl, p. 31, note 124.

1. God is the centre of Erigena's philosophy, but in commencing the investigation of His nature and attributes we are met with a preliminary difficulty—He is the converging point of opposite methods. According to Erigena, there is an affirmative and negative theology. The former asserts what we seem compelled indirectly and metaphorically¹ to predicate of Deity; the latter, with greater directness and profundity of reason, denies all affirmations on the subject. To use his own words, 'It is more truly denied than affirmed that God is any of those things predicated of Him, for, being by nature super-essential, He should be adored super-essentially'—that is, undogmatically. 'In theological methods for investigating the sublimity and incomprehensibility of the Divine nature there is more virtue in negation than in affirmation.'² All the attributes commonly assigned to God, such as 'essence, goodness, truth, justice, wisdom, &c., which seem to be not only Divine but most Divine, and to signify nothing else but the very Divine substance or essence, are only metaphorical; in other words, they are translated from the creature to the Creator.'³ The result of Erigena's researches into the Divine nature and the logical outcome of his negative theology he gives in these terms: 'Nothing can properly be predicated of God, since He far excels all understanding and all definitions. He is best known by nescience, and ignorance of Him is true wisdom.'⁴ What then, we may ask, is left of God according to Erigena's teaching? Logically nothing; the Divine Being is absolute nothingness.⁵ His definition is formed by the elimination of all

¹ 'Translative' is Erigena's word. Baur, in his *Dreieinigkeit*, renders it by 'relativ,' vol. ii. p. 277.

² *De Div. Nat.* iii. 20: 'In Theologicis siquidem Regulis ad investigandum divinæ naturæ sublimitatem et incomprehensibilitatem plus negationis quam affirmationis virtus valet.' Comp. Hüber, p. 142.

³ *De Div. Nat.* i. 14.

⁴ *Ibid.* iii. 20. To those unversed in the abstrusities of ontological reasoning it may be well to note that Erigena's 'Non Being' signifies Pure Being, *i.e.* Being considered as devoid of relation, quality, condition of any kind.

⁵ 'Nil de Deo proprie potest dici, quoniam superat omnem intellectum omnesque significationes, qui melius nesciendo scitur, cujus ignorantia vera est sapientia' (*De Div. Nat.* i. 66). For similarly negative conceptions of God comp. Dr. Christlieb, p. 164, n. 2. Erigena agrees with the Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite in styling God *ἄνωνμος*, 'the nameless one'; but it should be added that he permits the ascription to God of His customary attributes, provided they are qualified by *ὑπερ*, or *super*, to denote their distinction from human qualities of the same name. Thus, though we cannot predicate truth, wisdom, or knowledge of God, we may

qualities and characteristics of every kind, with, as an arbitrary reservation, the exception of one—pure being or existence. ‘There is nothing,’ says Erigena, ‘contrary to God save non-existence.’ This exception is clearly purchased at some sacrifice of dialectical consistency as we should now understand the argument, though the process of abstracting all qualities in order to arrive at a higher generalization, such as essence, forms the ground-principle of all realism.

Erigena derives both his negative theology and his definition of Deity from prior thinkers, but it is impossible to avoid contrasting his rationalism with the positivism of ordinary Christian creeds. The methods were in point of fact antagonistic. The evolution of Church-dogma had been effected by perpetual definitions and determinations. Not only the being of God, but all His qualities and relations had been asserted categorically and definitively without the least shadow of misgiving, or apparently the faintest conception of the difficulty of the subject.¹ Erigena, therefore, did eminent service to the cause of philosophical Christianity by suggesting abstention from dogmatic theorizing in a matter where certainty was impossible.

But, as we shall soon see, he is able to erect with his single attribute of pure being a theology of no small dimensions. God is not only Being, He is all-Being; He sums up the whole of existence, spiritual as well as material. The very name of God expresses the immanence of all things in Him, whether it be derived from *θεωρεῖν*, to see, or from *θεῖν*, to run; for God sees all that exists in itself, while He discerns nothing out of itself, for nothing outside of Him exists; or, taking the other derivation, God runs through all things, sustaining them by movement and persistent energizing.² Thus God is identical with the universe, but without losing thereby His own independent existence. In the apostle’s words, He is ‘above all, and through all, and in all.’ Occupying this high ontological standpoint, Erigena has no need of evidences or proofs of God’s existence; that is presupposed in existence itself.

call Him super-wise, super-knowing, &c., a distinction of which it may be said that it is more realistic than real.

¹ Comp. *De Div. Nat.* iii. 2, where Erigena sneers at those who dogmatize on the Trinity, and, while allowing to those who investigate the nature of God to follow their chosen guides, avows his own intention of following only his own reason. Erigena so often sneers at dogmatizers that as a rule we may accept all reference to them as directed against his controversial adversaries.

² *De Div. Nat.* i. 15, 16; comp. St.-René Taillandier, pp. 98, 99.

Dr. Hüber remarks that throughout his works there is only a single echo of the teleological argument, -where Erigena, *e.g.* maintains that 'every creature is a light that reveals the Father.'¹

That the direction of this theology is towards Pantheism need hardly be stated. How far it is actually and consciously Pantheistic is not so easy to determine. Much of his language on the subject is metaphorical, and may be largely paralleled from the rhetoric of theology both in ancient and modern times. The whole tendency of Erigena's thought was undoubtedly averse to such an identification of God with creation as would imply the materializing of the Divine essence. 'It is not the creature but He Himself who is the aim of the creative energy. He realizes and glorifies Himself in it, as the artist does in his work.'² On the whole, I am inclined to agree with Dr. Hüber, that Erigena's 'absolute' is not that of Spinoza but that of Schelling.³ While allowing the essential connection of the Creator with the material universe, he is careful to preserve, at least in terms, both His spirituality and personality. A prominent position in Erigena's system is awarded to the second Person of the Trinity, but He is regarded almost exclusively from a metaphysical point of view. The Christ of the Synoptics almost disappears from his thought-scheme, and we have instead the Logos-doctrine of St. John. The Divine 'reason' or 'discourse' constitutes the dialectical process by which the Deity comes forth into self-manifestation in the external world. It is the 'world idea' or 'world power' by means of which we have the countlessly varied processes of nature, together with their innumerable results. By the same orderly evolution and agency we possess all the manifold effects of human ratiocination—the laws of the mind as well as the operations of nature being parts of the Divine reason. This is indeed the ground on which Erigena bases his contention of the superiority of reason to authority. It is needless to point out the enormous expansion of Erigena's idea by Schelling and Hegel, and I am far from wishing to deny the sublimity of the conception in itself; but it certainly renders the position of historical Christianity insecure both in Erigena's case and in that of his modern disciples. The life of Jesus of Nazareth thereby

¹ Comp. Hüber, p. 159.

² Hüber, p. 177.

³ Pp. 180, 181. Hüber proposes to distinguish the materialistic Pantheism of Spinoza from the spiritual Pantheism of Schelling by denominating the former Pankosmism. On the relation of Erigena to modern German transcendentalism comp. Christlieb, pp. 292, 293; Staudenmaier, chap. v. 'Über das Wesen der Speculativen Theologie,' pp. 299, &c.

becomes a mere temporary phase of an eternal process, a single moment in the lapse of countless ages. The Holy Ghost in Erigena's system is, like the other persons of the Trinity, regarded from the standpoint of His relation to the universe. He is the cause of the division, multiplication, and distribution of those primordial causes engendered by the Father through the Son, to their several effects, *i.e.* into genera and species, into numbers and distinctions. He is thus the immediate agency in the production of the various effects we see in nature, and He is similarly the distributor of the various gifts of grace in man. The procession of the Holy Ghost Erigena defines in a manner which proves his intellectual independence and his indifference to authoritative dogmas whence-soever they might originate, for he neither accepts the definition of the Eastern Church nor that of Rome, but steers a middle course between them, and takes as his own definition, 'From the Father through the Son.'¹

Of the Trinity as a whole, Erigena finds numerous analogies, some in human consciousness, others in nature. In itself the Trinity is a mystery just as the nature of God is a mystery, or the essence of any natural phenomenon is a mystery. We are merely able to affirm that it is so, without being able to determine the actual *modus operandi*, or to assign its reason. With his monistic aspirations Erigena is always careful to define the Trinity so as not to infringe on the unity of the Deity; most of his illustrations and metaphors indicate only a distinction of attribute and relation. Thus he remarks, *à propos* of the Trinity, that Abraham in relation to himself is called Abraham, but in relation to his son is called father; but no one supposes in such a case that the two titles are more than names, or that they denote a distinction of personality. The difference is purely nominal and relative. So also the operations of Father, Word, and Holy Spirit, though distinguished by theologians, are only different names of the self-same activity. They are 'multiple in virtue, not in number.'²

Passing over Erigena's second nature—'which is created and creates'—in other words, the primordial ideas which are both the antitypes and causes of all things, we come

3rdly, to the Kosmos or physical world. This is an emanation of the ideal world as it exists in the mind of the Father, formed by the wisdom of the Logos, and distributed by the agency of the Holy

¹ Comp. Hüber, p. 201. He thoroughly approves of Erigena's *via media* in the controversy.

² *De Div. Nat.* iii. 22: 'Illud unum multiplex virtute est non numero.'

Ghost. In the creative act which is eternal God realizes His own being, becomes conscious of Himself. This is the meaning of the common dictum of theologians, that God formed the world of nothing, the nothingness being in reality Himself.¹ The phenomenal world is eternal, but it is also created, the antinomy being necessitated by the nature of God and His relation to the universe. Although the whole framework and substance of his thought is ontological, Erigena recognises as fully as a modern physicist the order of the universe and the infinite multiplicity of its operations. The laws of the world are eternal truths. They all originate in God, who is the law of all laws, the reason of all reasons. An illustration of the process by which God becomes self-conscious in the phenomenal universe Erigena finds in the formation of the human consciousness, which in the act of conceiving creates; while he compares the countless ramifications of natural phenomena all deriving their being from God to the evolution of numbers, every number consisting of additions or variations of the initiatory unit. The laws of the universe are irreversible. God Himself cannot change them, because they are all irradiations or expressions of the Divine mind or will, for with God freedom and necessity, or being and willing, are one and the same. So solicitous is Erigena to preserve Deity from all imputation of mutability that he refuses to accord Him the category of motion, and therefore says that God cannot love, and that He cannot be loved, for either conception would imply movement.² Love is merely the passive principle which conjoins every part of the universe. At the same time the effective operation of God on the physical world is continuous. He is perpetually creating, realizing His own thought, or, in relation to the Logos, He is perpetually begetting in accordance with the old dictum of Origen—‘Semper gignit Pater semper nascitur Filius.’

The knowledge of the phenomenal world is called physics. It investigates nature, on its sensible and intellective side. This knowledge is, however, superficial and imperfect. Phenomena tell us nothing of real truths. Every phenomenon is indeed an incomprehensible accident,³ serving to hide and distract our attention

¹ *De Div. Nat.* iii. 22.

² St.-René Taillandier, pp. 102, 104.

³ On account of their Skeptical implication the words are worth quoting: ‘Quicquid autem in omni creatura vel sensu corporeo percipitur, seu intellectu consideratur, nihil aliud est, nisi quoddam accidens incomprehensibile per se, ut dictum est, uniuscujusque essentiae.’—*De Div. Nat.* i. 3, and *passim*.

from the essence or substance of things by obtruding on our senses their mere qualities and relations. We know nothing of what anything is in itself and apart from our modes of cognition. No doubt natural knowledge may be supplemented and corrected by higher sources of cognition, *e.g.* by Holy Scripture or the divinely imparted enlightenment of the mystic. Erigena thus seems to share in the dualism of Aquinas, which distinguishes between natural and supernatural knowledge, and he is so far a maintainer of double-truth. But it is not easy to reconcile with this discrimination his oft-repeated conviction of the Divine and autocratic character of all reason and its superiority to every authority, even of Holy Scripture itself. Perhaps we may take this as an instance of the inconsistencies remarked on by Dr. Hüber, in which the logical sequence of his thought is occasionally interrupted by the claims of ecclesiastical orthodoxy.¹ On the other hand, Erigena is careful to assert that Divine authority, even when legitimately alleged, must not be employed, he might have added, 'as it is by theologians,' to prevent independent research into the reasons of visible and invisible things. Indeed, St. Paul exhorts men to the study of things seen, on the ground that they lead up to the knowledge of things unseen. Man, therefore, by means of his senses is led up to God just as the creation leads us to the Creator.

The chief position in Erigena's physical universe is occupied by man: he represents the point of junction between the spiritual and material universe. On the one hand, his reason assimilates him with angels, heavenly spirits, and with God Himself; on the other, his body connects him with material existence. In virtue of this position man is a *microkosm*, in whom is found on a small scale a reflection of the whole universe. The Trinity finds a parallel in his mental faculties; the self-realization of Deity in creation is illustrated by the formation of his intellect, generated as it is by its own conception of ideas. There is no being, material or immaterial, which does not subsist in man: he sums up the universe. This dignity man derives by the subsistence of his own soul in the Divine consciousness, for 'the knowledge of things that exist (*i.e.* as existing) implies and causes their existence,' as Dionysius the Areopagite affirmed.² But as man's conceptions are real existences, the same attribute of reality must be assigned to his names. Erigena proves this realistic hypothesis by the

¹ Hüber, p. 252.

² 'Cognitio eorum quæ sunt, ea quæ sunt, est.' A clumsily worded assertion, which may be regarded as the *ne plus ultra* of ontology. Comp. St.-René Taillandier, p. 139.

passage which represents God as submitting the objects of His creation to Adam, 'to see what he would call them.'

Few subjects show more forcibly Erigena's occasional embarrassment in reconciling with his scheme of nature the dogmas of the Church than his treatment of the Fall of Man. Not that his speculative ardour is the least impeded by the literal narrative in Genesis, for of that, as of all other inconvenient passages of Scripture, his allegorical method furnishes a never-failing solvent; but he seems especially awake on this point to the antagonism between his system and a prominent dogma of the Church. Erigena's conception of God required that His omniscience should not be frustrated by an event He could not control, and his monistic idea of the universe was averse to a recognition of evil as a positive entity. Besides which, there was an obvious incongruity between his contempt for matter and his view of the material universe being an emanation of Deity. Thus man before the Fall possessed no body, and his knowledge was then acquired not by the mediate instrumentality of the senses but by direct intuition. Beset by these difficulties—inseparable from the application of ontology to solve the problem of a material universe—Erigena minimizes the consequences of the Fall, maintaining boldly that evil cannot be said to exist except as the privation of good, and that man's reason, though injured, was only partially a sufferer for Adam's transgression.¹ I may add that our idealist has anything but a firm grasp of Adam's personality regarded as the common parent of mankind. He finds the first mention of man in an earlier passage of Genesis, viz. in the firmament which divides the upper from the lower waters—a symbol of man's position both separating and joining the two worlds of matter and of spirit.

As to man's power of acquiring knowledge and the validity of that acquirement, we have already noticed incidentally what Erigena's opinion seems to have been. The senses are unable to attain more than surface and unreal cognition, and their infirmity is not compensated by any external means of truth-discovery; nor outside of the reason and imagination is there any valid authority to which men may appeal. Ecclesiastical dogma, though awarded a kind of professional and customary deference, is distinctly subordinated to the dictates of reason and idealistic ratiocination. In the same spirit are treated the *dicta* of the Fathers, to whom he owes so much in the way of suggestion. The conflict between his reverence for his instructors and the irrepressible impulse of his

¹ *De Div. Nat.* iii. 35; comp. Hüber, p. 150.

own independent reason is set forth in the following words, which I quote the more readily as they supply a clue to his standpoint in other cases of divided allegiance. 'It is not our part to judge of the intellectual conclusions of the holy Fathers, but to accept them with piety and veneration. We are not, however, forbidden to choose what on reflection may seem to accord best with the Divine utterances of reason.'¹ The same right of rationalistic selection is extended to Holy Scripture. Theoretically he maintains that Scripture is or contains the Divine utterance. Its teaching, together with the intuition of the mystic, he regards as superior to the instruction derived from nature.² It must, therefore, be received with submission, but the submission accorded to it by Erigena himself seems somewhat problematical. He points out that it has of necessity many and various senses; being as it is an emanation of the Divine mind, it must share with its companion-emanation, nature, the characteristics of diversity and multiplicity. Of its different senses Erigena prefers the mystical or symbolical as the essence of Scripture truth, of which literal interpretations are just as much a mask as are outward qualities in the case of physical phenomena. Its study demands therefore the exercise of reason and judgment; that condition of self-knowledge and mental independence which is itself the outcome of ratiocination. Nor again must Scripture be accepted as rendering needless research into the physical universe; for Abraham, long before Scripture came into being, found God by the course of the stars. Indeed, he frequently allows nature an entire equality with Scripture as a source of Divine light.³

Coming lastly to his 4th nature, we find that Erigena, like other thinkers occupying the same standpoint, was probably reconciled to the imperfections inherent in a material universe by bearing in mind its destiny—in other words, the final return of all created beings to God.⁴ To his vivid imagination and spiritual aspiration the material world appeared to be passing through its predestined changes in its path to final absorption. It was needful that it should perish in order to be regenerated in the final cause of its existence, *i.e.* man; while in his turn man dies in order that he may be

¹ *De Div. Nat.* ii. 16.

² *Comp. Hüber*, p. 148.

³ Hüber, pp. 130, 131, and Kaulich, p. 88.

⁴ Ampère compares with this opinion of Erigena's the Hindu speculation of the return of all creation into the bosom of Brahma. But in truth Erigena's thought has many affinities with Hindu and Buddhist speculation. Sometimes these are so striking as forcibly to suggest a common origin. *Comp.* vol. i. p. 410.

revivified, renewed, transfigured in the primordial causes existing in the *Logos*. That death which men die as terrestrial beings is the progress to a higher condition—reabsorption in the infinite reason. It is possible, however, to attain to this state of self-annihilation, like the Buddhist Nirvana, even in this life, by the sublime raptures of contemplation. This is the state of Divinely imparted knowledge in which Erigena, like other idealists, takes refuge from the doubt, mutability, and transitoriness of ordinary terrene existence. This is his sole conception of unquestionable knowledge. He looks forward, therefore, to a future in which matter with its illusions, dogmas with their materialistic self-contradictory implications, knowledge with its inevitable imperfections, shall be lost in the being of infinite, all-embracing truth. The irony of history often presents us with a singular, sometimes a most pathetic, contrast between the ideas and dreams of the solitary thinker and the grim actualities of his surroundings. I know few cases in which both the singularity and the pathos are more strongly marked than in Erigena's conception of the destiny of creation compared with its actual characteristics so far as man is concerned in the tenth century. Amid the wars, social disturbance, ecclesiastical bigotry and depravity, popular ignorance and misery, which are the most striking features of Christendom at the time, our Irish enthusiast is dreaming of a return of all things into the bosom of the Creator, prospecting a millennium of infinite knowledge, truth, and love.

Although Erigena's thought-system critically examined reveals inconsistencies, inseparable perhaps from an intellect more intuitive than discursive, these are fewer and less important than might be supposed: a general uniformity marks most of his speculations. Hence all his heresies, or rather his antagonisms to the dominant creed of Christendom, are so far the natural outcome of his idealistic principles that they might be easily inferred by any one starting from his own standpoint. Thus his conception of the Divine unchangeableness necessitates the inference that He can neither love nor be moved by love. For a similar reason he infers that God is in some respects both ignorant and impotent. His idea of the absolute sovereignty of God, as well as of the uniformity and spirituality of the course of His providence, readily accounts for his denial of evil and original sin, his belief in the salvability of devils, his refusal to admit the bodily resurrection either in the case of Christ or of men at the last day, and his interpretation of heaven and hell not as places but as states of consciousness. His repugnance to materialism induced a stress on

the spiritual aspects of all acts of worship, and disinclined him to recognise in the sacramental elements anything more than the signs of a spiritual presence. His conception of the sum of existence as one indivisible nature forced him to allow that the physical universe, no less than Holy Scripture, was an efflux of the Divine *Logos*, while both his rationalism and mysticism compelled him to assert the superiority of reason and intuition to Scripture, and induced him to emphasize its allegorical signification. Some of the points just indicated show an affinity between Erigena's speculations and the advanced religious thought of our time. To these may be added his belief that rewards and punishments are inevitable self-evolved results of human action, not arbitrary sentences imposed by any external power, and his pithy distinction between physics and ethics—that the former investigates the phenomenal aspects of nature, the latter its rational aspects.

Erigena is a remarkable example of what I should term, in relation to ordinary Christian belief, metaphysical latitudinarianism. He possesses the intuitive imaginative type of intellect which does not oppose dogmas so much as transmute and reshape them. The aid which this mental idiosyncrasy affords to the realization of Free-thought is unquestionable. We can see at a glance how much liberty in respect of the usual dogmas of the Church Erigena derived from his idealism, and he supplies an example of the singular fascination of realism on some of the great thinkers of mediæval times. When we come to Ockam we shall see that its tendencies, when intensified, elaborated, and hardened into dogmas, its ideal creations transmuted into concrete facts, were mischievous, as all dogmatic determinations of uncertain things must needs be mischievous; but in Erigena the realism, though distinctly marked, is as yet in an earlier stage, and is characterized by freedom, spirituality, and plasticity. No distinction could be greater than that between the Deity of the popular Christianity of the ninth century and Erigena's half-Pantheistic conception. The former was a crude materialized anthropomorphic being, portrayed in early Christian art and conceived in Christian opinion as differing neither in 'body, parts, or passions' from one of the sons of men; while Erigena's view, whatever its defects on the score of distinct apprehension, was much more suitable to the infinite and eternal God. The idea which the Church had propounded of the nature and mission of Christianity was narrow, meagre, and unworthy in comparison of that engendered by

Erigena's combined breadth and spirituality. The pious Catholic whose notion of the Supreme Being was derived from ecclesiastical paintings of a venerable old man seated on a throne with a Pope's tiara on his head, or whose conception of Christ was founded on representations of an infant in his mother's arms, would have had his horizon of spiritual apperception indefinitely enlarged by a perusal of Erigena's 'Division of Nature.' The same spirit of breadth and comprehension pervades, as we have seen, every portion of Erigena's Christianity. Hence, though he did not set himself against the dogmatic teaching of the Church, yet, by enlarging and refining, he did not leave a single article in the Apostles' Creed its ordinary acceptation. Immersed in his profound feeling, plunged, so to speak, in the fathomless ocean of human introspection, the popular faith became transformed. It might have been said of it—

Nothing of it that doth fade
But doth suffer a sea-change,
Into something rich and strange.

Nor in view of the prevailing dogma-induration was Erigena's principle unimportant of making all the dogmas of the Church without exception the objects of ratiocination. The effect of ecclesiasticism had long been to assert its pronouncements as superior to and independent of reason; but with all his mystic idealism, Erigena was far too much of a rationalist to allow such a claim to pass unquestioned. Reason was too sacred, too closely akin to the Divine Logos, to have its dicta set aside by any authority. The results of his dialectic on the accredited beliefs of Christianity we have already noticed. However much he is thwarted in his efforts, his evident impulse is not so much to accept received dogmas in their ordinary form as to analyze and verify them, or, if approved, to mould them anew after his own mental image and likeness.

Another beneficial tendency of Erigena's thought, and generally of realistic speculation in the mediæval Church, was its protest against the growing materialism of the Christian creed. Whatever mischief may attach to vague, undefinable conceptions of religious truths—and I am far from denying that there may be such—they are infinitely exceeded by the petty materialism which must needs realize all spiritual beings and verities in some tangible form or visible aspect, or which insists on tying down all religious influences to different forms of matter. This is the evil which assimilates so much of Romanist worship to a materialistic Fetichism, and exercises so narrowing and benumbing an effect on its uncultured votaries.

Philosophically considered, realism was a reaction from the crude materialism of the popular creed, the natural antagonism of metaphysical against physical religion. If it created idealities and supersensuous entities in lavish profusion, this was the inevitable result of its refusal to yield deference to inanimate matter. No consistent realist could have credited, *e.g.* the dogma of transubstantiation, or could have believed in the efficacy of relics and images. We shall, however, have to touch on this subject again. Mediæval theology did not attain its extreme grossness of materialization until after the time of Erigena. We had better, therefore, defer its consideration till we arrive at the predisposing causes of the Italian Renaissance.

With regard to Erigena's more distinctly marked Skepticism, it is evident his intellectual conformation was negative.

His favourite truths were generalizations attained by extreme abstraction. His idea of God, *e.g.* is obtained by eliminating all attributes and reducing His being to relative nonentity. His conception of man is an incarnation of the Divine reason, to be divested of all qualities and relations if we would attain a complete knowledge of him. His idea of the material universe is a progress from the absolute being that created to that in which it becomes absorbed. He shares the method common to extreme idealists and Skeptics of distrusting ordinary sources of knowledge. Whatever amount of dogma or definitive conviction his idealism might be credited with, it was founded upon a Skeptical basis, and it might be said of his system as of others similarly originated that the foundation was more real than the superstructure. Together with his stress on negative method must be included his perpetual use of disjunctive syllogisms, and his view of dialectic as the art of disputing. Not only, too, does he distrust the deliverances of the senses, but, as we have seen, human opinion, Church, Bible, all share more or less the same fate; and if reason seems to be specially reserved, we must remember that it is the somewhat peculiarly constituted reason of Erigena himself. A dualism is also perceptible in more than one direction of his speculation. Sometimes he makes the usual distinction between exoteric and esoteric teaching, as when he affirms that authority is the best mode of teaching for the ignorant, and reason for those able to employ it. Sometimes he affirms a higher and lower mode of cognition, as when he distinguishes between the natural and supernatural intellect; the latter being the intuition of the mystic, and constituting the sole infallible truth.

That the outcome of Erigena's speculation is destructive to

the dogmatic teaching of Romanism has long been attested by a succession of adversaries from his own time to the present day.¹ It is difficult to name a heresy which the zealous partizans of Rome have not discovered in the 'Division of Nature.' Pope Honorius III., some two centuries and a half after its author's death, anathematized the work as the source of the Pantheism which prevailed in the thirteenth century. Still later Pope Gregory XIII. placed it on the Index. The reception it has thus met with from dogmatists and obscurantists may be taken as showing their estimate of its Free-thought tendencies both by direct teaching and by suggestion, nor are we able to say that this judgment, so honourable to Erigena, is ill-grounded.

Parting now from our representative of mediæval Idealism and Pantheism, let me revert for a moment to my bird apologue. As a thinker, Erigena's main characteristic, next to his love of freedom, is his inwardness. His thought-system is a kind of monody—a plaintive philosophical crooning of ideas and aspirations far removed from as well as immeasurably superior to his actual surroundings. He contemplates nature and Christianity from the standpoint of a poetic and fervid imagination. The teachings of these twin revelations are transmuted in the glow of his feeling and the depth of his spiritual insight into internal processes and truths. He takes refuge in his idealism as in a sacred holy of holies from the ignorance, barbarity, religious materialism, and bigotry of his time. He there revolves all problems and solves all difficulties. He finds rest only in the absolute, in which he so far loses himself that all limitation, quality, differentiation, disappears; and, like the bird, the result of his song is that the cage with its cruel bars, its narrow limits and other inconveniences, share the fate of so much else—they are reduced to nothingness.

¹ Those who care to pursue the subject of Erigena's heterodoxy may be referred to Möller's work, *J. S. Erigena und seine Irrthümer* (Mainz 1844), the 'Commentatio de vita et præceptis J. Scoti,' prefixed to Floss's ed. of his works; Migne, *Patr. Lat.* cxxii. pp. 1-87; Dr. A. Stöckl, *Gesch. der Phil. d. Mittelalters*, i. p. 127; *Hist. Lit. de la France*, vol. v. p. 421, &c.

*Abelard.*¹

Few individual thinkers are better known, none have higher titles to their renown, than Peter Abelard; and yet his fame must be pronounced spurious, at least it is based upon what may be termed the accidental circumstances of his lot. It is rather as the lover of Heloise than the logician and Free-thinker that he is celebrated. The romance of his life has overshadowed and well-nigh annihilated its intellectual interest. M. Rémusat has indicated this truth with characteristic Gallican rhetoric when he sums up his career in the words: 'Il vécut dans l'angoisse et mourut dans l'humiliation, mais il eut de la gloire, et il fut aimé.' Whatever distinction may attach to the fact described in the last two words, they undoubtedly mark the chief source of Abelard's celebrity.

Now, were it in my power, I could wish to correct the popular estimate of this twelfth century Faust, so far as to show that his fame does not depend on his ill-fated connection with his Gretchen. Indeed, I am bound to confess that as a man, and in the relations of social life, Abelard does not stand very high in my estimation. He was selfish, cold-hearted, and ungrateful. His behaviour to his master, Roscellin, was marked with the same disregard of all feelings and interests except his own, which cha-

¹ The following are the authorities cited on Abelard:—

Petri Abælardi Opera, ed. Cousin. 2 vols. 4to. This edition is the one generally referred to, but the 'Sic et Non' is cited from the edition of Henke & Lindenkohl.

Petrus Abælardus, Hilaricus et Berengarius Abælardi Discipuli; Migne, *Patrol.* tomus clxxviii. This edition is valuable as containing the works of Abelard's disciples.

Ouvrages Inédits d'Abélard. Par V. Cousin. 1 vol. 4to.

Fragments Philosophiques, Philosophie du Moyen Age. Par V. Cousin. Pp. 1-217.

Sti. Bernardi, Opera omnia, ed. Mabillon. 2 vols. fol. Par. 1690.

D'Argentré Coll. Judiciorum, vol. i. *passim*.

Hist. Lit. de la France, vol. xii. pp. 86-152.

Abélard, sa vie, sa philosophie et sa théologie. Par M. Charles de Rémusat. 2 vols. 8vo. Par. 1855.

Hauréau, *Hist. de la Philosophie Scholastique*, vol. i. last edition.

Kaulich, Dr., *Geschichte der Scholastischen Philosophie*.

Die Dogmengeschichte des Mittelalters. Von Dr. Josef Bach. 2 vols. 8vo.

Prantl, *Geschichte der Logik*, vol. ii. pp. 160-204.

Rousselot, *Études sur la Philosophie*, &c. vol. ii. 1-108.

Other works employed are referred to in the footnotes.

racterized his conduct to his too faithful mistress, Heloise.¹ On the other hand, as an independent thinker, a genuine searcher for truth, Abelard deserves his fame. He was a rationalist and Free-thinker when both reason and free-speculation were proscribed. He dared to question ecclesiastical dogma when its arrogance and tyranny were at their height, and to be branded as a heretic when heresy involved the gravest possible dangers.

Abelard's position in the history of philosophy is precisely that which he has in our present subject. He represents the action of pure dialectic, just as Erigena typified the influence of idealism and devout imagination upon the dogmas of the Church. Abelard was an Aristotelian, as Erigena was a Platonist. The intellect of the former was discursive, while that of the latter was intuitive. No mediæval thinker is therefore so well fitted as Abelard to portray the struggle of rationalism with ecclesiasticism. He must always be regarded as the most striking example of that general movement of Free-thought which I have denominated the 'semi-Skepticism of the Schoolmen.'

We have already noticed the hostility of the early Church to the writings and methods of heathen philosophers. Now of the two chief schools of Greek thought, that of Plato and Aristotle, it might be said that their methods survived the knowledge of their actual works. In the 'dark ages,' when both the idealist and the dialectician were hardly more than the 'shades of great names,' the spirit which animated them—the respective directions of their thought-systems—were not forgotten; especially was this the case with Peripateticism. Logic, the instrument of reason, was soon recognised by the Church as its most potent enemy. No doubt both Platonism and Aristotelianism exercised in the long-run an influence adverse to dogmatic stringency and uniformity. For if the former dissolved the articles of the Christian creed in a tender glow of mysticism, and rendered their outlines indistinct by the agency of pious imagination, the latter made them mere *problemata*—theses which, however formally authoritative, were still objects of ratiocination. Of the two, the antagonism of the latter was the more direct and unequivocal, and this serves to explain the Platonic affinities of the early Fathers, who were desirous of finding some ground of *rapprochement* between heathenism and Christianity. Platonism even as a system had much in common with some of the chief dogmas of Christianity, while idealistic sentiment was a

¹ Comp. Roscellin's letter to Abelard in *Op. om.* (Cousin) ii. 792, and Hauréau's 'Documents Nouveaux sur Roscellin de Compiègne,' in his *Singularités Historiques*, pp. 216-30.

mode of thought infinitely more plastic and amenable to manipulation than a stern self-reliant rationalism. Besides, the early Christian heretics had based their dissent from ecclesiastical dogmas upon grounds of reason and logic. It was therefore only natural that Aristotle and his method should have become the bugbears of so many of the early Fathers.¹ Men from whose liberal culture and appreciation of Greek thought better things might have been expected, conspired to taboo and to exhort others to renounce the Stagirite and all his works. 'The Christian,' according to Gregory Nazianzum, 'knew nothing of terms of speech, of the rhetorical arts and enigmas of Sophists; the objections, suspenses, or antitheses of Pyrrhôn; the solutions of Chrysippos's syllogisms; and the craftiness of Aristotle's craft.'² Some check, however, to this anti-dialectical prejudice was induced by Boethius's translation of the logical treatises of Aristotle, as well as by his application of dialectic to some of the chief doctrines of the Church. Christian theologians began to comprehend that if logic might be employed by heretics as the science of thought and reason, it might also subserve the purposes of dogma. In itself dialectic was only a method—the ordinary procedure of the reason, and was in theory independent of all conclusions. If Arius, *e.g.* had employed it for purposes of heresy, it might be used by his orthodox adversaries in placing their *credenda* upon a reasonable basis. One incidental result of this dressing up ecclesiastical dogmas in the garb of Greek dialectic was to impart to them a tincture of philosophy, and to prepare the way for that amalgam of philosophy and theology which we call Scholasticism. No doubt during the 'dark ages' Aristotle's logic shared the fate of all kinds of culture, especially of Gentile origin, but it sprang into renewed life with the revival of learning in the tenth century. The 'Trivium' required a knowledge of the elements of the Organon, and this formed the more important moiety of the curriculum in the schools of Charlemagne. Alcuin himself insisted that Christian dogma could not be comprehended without the help of Aristotle's categories,³ so that the Organon came gradually to be regarded as a propædeutic to theology. To this, with other subsidiary causes, the influence of Abelard being one of the latter, we must attribute the advance of Aristotelian learning in the tenth and following cen-

¹ Comp. Prantl's collection of passages in his notes, *Logik*, ii. pp. 5 and 6.

² *Greg. Naz. Orat.* xxvi.

³ *Op. om.* i. p. 704. Comp. Ampère, *Hist. Lit. de la France*, iii. 120; Tennemann, *Geschichte der Phil.* viii. pt. i. p. 45.

turies. But the progress was soon opposed by the Church. One main feature of Abelard's heterodoxy was his allegiance to Aristotle; while after his death the anti-Aristotelian feeling greatly increased. In 1209 the great Stagirite was transplanted somewhat curiously into the category of a Christian heretic, and his works were condemned to be burnt. Four years later, this prohibition was renewed with regard to his metaphysics and physics, while the logical treatises were allowed to be taught in the schools. In 1231 Gregory IX. reversed this decree of the University of Paris, and forbade altogether the reading of Aristotle 'until he could be corrected.'¹ But, notwithstanding ecclesiastical opposition and repression, Aristotle and his works continued to flourish. To the stream of Western Peripateticism was added the Eastern confluent, which took its rise in Arabic culture. Translations of new works from Greek, Arabic, and Syrian sources continued to be made.² Aristotelianism participated in the general awakening of the Renaissance, now commencing in France and Italy. It acquired no small support from the general recognition of double-truth, inasmuch as it formed the authoritative antithesis to the dogmatic teaching of the Church. Finally, in 1366, the opposition of the Church could no longer be maintained, and the cardinals delegated by Pope Urban V. to reform the University of Paris expressly permitted the reading of most of Aristotle's writings. An opportunity for considering the further progress of Aristotelianism in its decline and fall will be afforded us when we come to Peter Ramus.³

Returning now to Abelard, this great dialectician of the twelfth century was born in 1079, in Le Pallet, in Brittany. His parents were of noble descent, and he, like other scions of noble houses, was destined for the profession of arms. This profession he may be said to have pursued, but in a different manner from that intended by his parents. His life was a warfare, in the interests of Free-thought, with most of the established systems of his time, philosophical as well as theological. After his home

¹ D'Argentré, i. p. 132; comp. Dr. Schneid's work cited in the following note, p. 23.

² On the whole subject see Jourdain, *Recherches sur les trad. d'Aristote*, chap. iii., and Dr. M. Schneid, *Aristoteles in der Scholastik*, pp. 8-44. The latter writer belongs to a school of modern liberal Catholics, which is anxious to prove that the real reason of the Church's opposition to Aristotle was its enlightened zeal for his textual purity. Comp. p. 24. The hypothesis has certainly the merit of novelty. Perhaps, after this, we shall be told that the reason why the Church places independent works on her Index is entirely on account of their *critical* deficiencies.

³ Comp. chap. on Ramus in a subsequent volume.

education he seems to have started, like a philosophical knight-errant, on his travels, prepared to cope with the giants of dogma, prejudice, and falsehood, wherever he might discover them. While yet a youth, he came under the teaching of Roscellin, the celebrated nominalist and heretic,¹ and received from the quickening influence of his teaching an impetus destined to affect more or less the whole of his subsequent thought.

About the year 1102 Abelard came to Paris, whose schools—for the University did not as yet exist—were the rendezvous of all the youth of Europe. There he came in contact with William of Champeaux, the disciple of Anselm, and the greatest realist of his time.² Abelard began to attend his lectures, and was at first disposed to receive his teaching with submission, if not with actual concurrence. But, as he himself naïvely expresses his innate restlessness and critical forwardness, ‘he did not long remain quiet under his shadow.’³ The student soon became not only the critic but the adversary of the master. With his keen insight into the implication and sequence of philosophical principles, he discerned the remote consequences of extreme realism, and knew how to refute them by reductions to absurdity.⁴ He thus not only disconcerted his master, but compelled him to alter his opinions. Nor was this the whole of his triumph: he assumed the office of a rival teacher, and in that capacity drew off the followers of the great realist, and made them disciples of his own.

Abelard was now, in his early manhood, a professor and lecturer in philosophy in the greatest seat of learning in Europe, and his doctrine soon matured into the particular form which rendered it obnoxious to orthodoxy; and when he applied it later in life to theology, brought on him the condemnation of two Church councils, and the undying fame of a Free-thinker and heretic.

To this method, as the matter of our chief concernment, we will now turn.

The chief feature in Abelard’s intellectual standpoint is its complete independence. He belongs, properly speaking, to no

¹ New light on the subject of Roscellin and Abelard’s intercourse is thrown by the above-quoted article in Hauréau’s *Singularités Historiques*. The learned author places the date of this intercourse about the year 1096, and its place in the little town of Loches, in Tourraine (pp. 228–29).

² On Abelard’s intercourse with this teacher, comp. Rémusat, vol. i. pp. 11–29, and the Abbé Michaud’s *Guillaume de Champeaux*, chap. viii. pp. 220–35.

³ Rémusat, i. p. 36.

⁴ Comp. Hauréau, *Hist. de la Phil. Scol.* i. p. 366.

school. He has been declared a nominalist, more generally proclaimed a conceptualist, traces of realism are occasionally perceptible in his teachings; but in reality he was neither one nor the other, or rather all three are found in different proportions in his intellectual conformation. True, he admitted that universals were in words, or rather in their mental concepts, and did not exist outside the mind, but he nevertheless regarded words as inherently adapted to express such generalizations, and therefore possessing a potency other than that assigned them by conventional usage. Thus he defined a universal as 'what is fitted naturally to be predicated of many things,'¹ not that the generalization or logical judgment contains the thing, for it *contains* only the thought, but it treats of and refers to things as such, *i.e.* as external realities passing into the stage of mental concepts.² His position might, perhaps, be defined as nominalism passing into conceptualism, but always qualified and corrected by an appeal to actual facts. This standpoint, as Dr. Prantl points out, is confirmed by an epitaph, probably composed by a disciple who appears to have entered thoroughly into his master's method. As the Latin is easy I need not translate it:—

Hic docuit voces cum rebus significare
 Et docuit voces res significando notare.
 Errores generum correxit, ita specierum
 Hic genus et species in sola voce locavit
 Et genus et species *sermone*³ esse notavit
 Significativum quid sit, quid significatum
 Significans quid sit prudens diversificavit.
 Hic quid res essent, quid voces significarent
 Lucidius reliquis patefecit in arte positus
 Sic animal nullumque animal genus esse probatur
 Sic et homo et nullus homo species vocitatur.⁴

¹ Prantl, *Logik*, ii. p. 174.

² *Ibid.* p. 185: 'Das Urtheil aber sodann *enthält* nicht die Dinge, sondern enthält den Gedanken, hingegen *handelt es über die Dinge*, nicht aber etwa indem es die Dinge bezeichne, sondern indem es den vom Denken erfassten Zusammenhang der Dinge mit dem Creationsproceſſe enthält.' Prantl thinks that in this distinction between *enthält* and *handelt* consists the centre-point of Abelard's philosophy, and that by missing it the French scholars have exaggerated his conceptualism.

³ On the peculiar sense of *sermo* in Abelard's philosophy, comp. Rémusat, ii. p. 103. It implies the word (*λόγος*) in its discursive, conceptual, and denominative aspect. It therefore comprehends the distinctions of the two following lines: the *significative*, or the word, the *significatum*, or the thing signified; and the *significans*, or person naming. Comp. Prantl, ii. 184.

⁴ Rémusat, ii. 104; Prantl, ii. 187.

Prantl remarks that Abelard's position is characteristic of the eclecticism of his time. That there are grounds for the assertion we have already seen, but I contend that they really prove not what eclecticism mostly implies—a desire to converge and amalgamate divergent standpoints—but a determination to remain aloof from all of them. The very position of a conceptualist—and Abelard was more this than anything else—implies self-reliance, a stern individualism which makes all knowledge radiate from its own centre. In his case this philosophical egoism was only qualified by a direct appeal to truth and external reality. Names, with all their admitted power, their innate fitness for predication, derived their value from their expressing real things; to use his pregnant phrase, they were 'natures designated by names.' Here again, therefore, there was an appeal to external truths. We may also note, as illustrating Abelard's stress on individuals not only as objects but as subjects of knowledge, that he suggests the addition of 'individuum' as a sixth to Porphyry's Five Predicables.

Abelard's real mistress, therefore, was reason, regarded in the double aspect of a Divine faculty, and reasoned (verbal) discourse. Dialectic as its instrument was queen of all sciences. To Aristotle, as its great human legislator, deference must be paid. 'Nothing,' he exclaimed in an access of peripatetic fervour, 'is valid against Aristotle,' except, we must needs add, the well-founded and verifiable reason of Abelard. For with reason we must combine, in Abelard's standard of truth, reality. Abstractions were only false and delusive, unless authenticated by things. It was not enough that they should take their departure from things, nor even that they should be founded upon things¹—the extremest abstractions of the realists claimed some connection with external objects—but they must be continually verified and authenticated by collation with the outer world. This indissoluble connection of words and things, and the *à priori* and semi-divine fitness of the former to stand for the latter, is a fundamental point of Abelard's system which must not be lost sight of. Thus, to take an example, the universal 'humanity'—a term 'born' to include conceptually the different individuals of the human race—could only be true when verified and its legitimacy ascertained by reference to the human units of which it was ideally composed. The same vivid sense of truth and reality also ruled his conceptions of

¹ Rémusat defines Abelard's 'universals,' 'expressions de conceptions fondées sur les réalités,' i. p. 34.

theology. He was not content to receive the usual definition of God as a nexus of incompatibilities, but he aspired, by the aid of reason, to realize His being in a form agreeable to his intellect. Hence his efforts, as we shall by-and-by see, to define the Trinity so as to preserve intact the undivided Unity of God. Hence, too, his stress upon rationalistic interpretations of other ecclesiastical dogmas by which the moral conceptions of mankind appeared somewhat strained. As he collocated, according to the epitaph above quoted, words with things, so he similarly conjoined the doctrines of the Church with natural and reasonable views of the course of Divine Providence and the character of the Deity.

But even this stress on reality is only another form of his high estimate of reason. For external reality, like truth of every kind, is apprehensible only by the reason and by the instruments she employs for its determination, though from another point of view reason herself (conceptualism) is conditioned to a certain extent both by language and by external phenomena. Abelard calls dialectic, as I have said, the queen or mistress of all things. She possesses more than a mere human character. When we find, he says, that Jesus Christ, the Word of the Father, is in Greek called *Logos* and the Father's 'wisdom,' that 'science seems especially to pertain to him which by name and derivation is styled Logic. For as Christians are so called from Christ, so from *λόγος* is logic properly derived. So much the more truly are lovers of that science called philosophers as they are more genuine admirers of that higher wisdom'—a thought which Abelard shares, as we have seen, with Erigena. But if the instrument and essence of knowledge—for reason (*λόγος*, *sermo*) is both one and the other—be thus Godlike and Divine, the excellency of knowledge itself cannot be overrated. All knowledge, says Abelard, is good and sacred. No man would dare to call any knowledge evil, not even that which concerns evil, for a good man needs the knowledge of evil in order to avoid it. There is no criminality, he elsewhere remarks, in knowing, but only in doing, and it is to action that all evil must be referred—a dictum that may be compared with his definition of heresy, viz. that 'it consists, not in ignorance, but in obstinacy.'

On the other hand, Abelard's predilection for reason must not be overstated. Though the sole method of truth, reason was not infallible, any more than the reality of external phenomena was absolute. In singular things truth was obtainable by questioning—the activity of reason, of which dialectic was the law; and the preliminary of questioning was doubt. In his logical writings

also, Abelard asserts that view of the science which regarded it as purely critical or discriminative. He shares, according to Prantl, the conception of it maintained by the Stoics and by Cicero, which was largely Eristic, and which made probability rather than certainty its ultimate goal. Abelard, too, makes categorical judgments premisses to hypothetical, assigning to the latter only the attribute of necessary truth. Though he believes words to be naturally qualified to express things, he holds, not quite consistently, that they are imposed by human convention, and in the necessary relation they bear to men's minds, that their significations must be various. He also distrusts human opinion, and contrasts it to its own disadvantage with the pronouncements of the individual reason. A practical proof of this distrust is his own isolation from all the leading philosophies of his time. We shall find shortly that he occupies a similar position with regard to the dogmas of the Church. In a word, Abelard displays in his method and intellectual character most of those instincts and tendencies we have learnt to identify with Free-thought.

It may be said of many thought-schemes that they are clearer in application than in method. Abelard's is one of these. To define precisely and completely his philosophical standpoint from his logical writings is not easy, but we gain a pretty clear insight into his intellectual formation when we examine his chief theological works, viz. the 'Sic et Non' and his 'Introduction to Theology.' Abelard tells us that he was urged by his disciples to turn his attention to theology. We may fairly surmise that the advice was unneeded. He had already put to flight the philosophical schools of his time, and, like another Alexander, he desired new worlds to conquer, but only theology was left. Accordingly he determined to try what effect the free-inquiry he found invincible in the schools would have on the dogmas of the Church. No doubt he knew that he was venturing on sacred ground, but to his Breton impetuosity a spice of danger acted more as an incentive than as a deterrent. He had vanquished Roscellin and William of Champeaux, and thereby had attained European reputation. Might he not be able to conquer also the champions of the Church, *e.g.* a St. Bernard? At least he was quite ready to enter the lists. The work in which he does this, and which may be taken as a general index of his position to every kind of established doctrine, is the celebrated 'Sic et Non,' or 'Yes and No.' Hauréau ingeniously supposes that it was Abelard's reply to the ordinary ecclesiastical demand, lately emphasized by Anselm, of

unconditional, uninquiring belief.¹ Whether so intended or not, it certainly subserves such a purpose; the very name of the book considered as a theological treatise was, his enemies alleged, monstrous and unheard of.² Who before Abelard had ever conceived the authoritative utterances of the Church to be fit objects for dialectical exercitation? Who besides him would dare to make the great mysteries of Christian theology, the prime articles in her creed, mere shuttlecocks perpetually knocked to and fro by the counteraction of divergent authorities? The whole policy of the Church had been to assert an unconditional affirmation. She had announced her dogmas as eternal verities that permitted no shadow of hesitation—not to say negation; whereas the very title of Abelard's work postulated an indifference between affirmation and negation. No doubt dialectic had already been applied to theology. Every attempt to co-ordinate the beliefs of the Church into a harmonious system presupposed ratiocination of a certain kind. The arguments of heretics, the replies of the orthodox, postulated some recognition of reason. But the subordination of dialectic to theology as the slave to her mistress was a fundamental principle the Christian hierarchy never lost sight of; whereas the peculiarity in Abelard's new standpoint was the equal indifference (theoretically) of affirmation and negation. It seemed to pronounce the validity of suspense even in matters of theology, and to claim for doubt a share in the determination of dogma.³ Nor does Abelard attempt to blink or disguise this position. The keynote of the work is contained in its remarkable prologue. Here Abelard propounds, as the justification of his work, his own suspensive attitude in face of conflicting determinations. He is compelled, he half satirically remarks, to have recourse to the opinions of others, both by reason of his own incapacity to enounce what is true, as well as by the antagonisms he finds in authoritative writings. Not that such diversity, however, is displeasing, for in all things, as Cicero remarked, 'uniformity or identity is

¹ *I.e.* Crede ut intelligas, *Hist. de la Phil. Scol.* i. p. 384.

² William of Thierry, in his denunciation of Abelard, thus speaks of the titles of some of his writings: '*Sic et Non, Scito te ipsum, et alia quedam de quibus timeo ne sicut monstrosi sunt nominis sic etiam sint monstrosi dogmatis.*'—Rémusat, ii. 178.

³ Rémusat maintains that the purport of the *Sic et Non* is not Skeptical but controversial (ii. p. 171), but he forgets that the admission of free controversy into dogma has an implication distinctly Skeptical. Comp. his further remarks, p. 179. Cousin has rightly apprehended the Skeptical nature of the *Sic et Non*; see his summary, *Ouvrages Interdits*, Introd. p. cxc. i.; so also has Dean Milman in his *Latin Christianity*, vol. iii.

the mother of satiety ; in other words, it generates repulsion ¹—a naïve admission which throws a flood of light on Abelard's intellectual idiosyncrasy. It is right, he thinks, that there should be a divergency of words in relation to the same subject-matter, because such a characteristic harmonizes with the diversity of moods, aspects, qualities, and relations to which they are applied, as well as with the infinite variety of minds that use them. Every man must admit how rash it is to judge of the meaning and understanding of another from his words, their precise intention being known only to omniscience. Nor are we able to pin our faith on writings purporting to be authoritative, for oftentimes apocryphal works are falsely called after some distinguished name. Indeed, we find discrepancies even in Scripture, as, *e.g.* the different time of the Crucifixion given by Matthew and Mark, and the thirty pieces of silver mentioned by the former evangelist, but which are not found in Jeremiah but in Zechariah. Self-contradictions abound also in the writings of the Fathers, as we see in Augustine's 'Retractations.'² In the Gospels, too, we find another phenomenon—the opinion of men deliberately preferred to actual truth, as in passages which term Joseph the father of Jesus Christ ; so that human opinions are in all things diverse, just as natural phenomena are diverse, while truth remains hidden and the same. Abelard produces many examples of this distinction between truth and human opinion out of sacred and profane authors, and in the usages of common speech. It is because men must needs have recourse to opinion—truth being unattainable—that Abelard thinks right to set before his readers the catena of divergent authorities contained in the 'Sic et Non.' There would soon, he wisely observes, be an end of controversies if men would agree to recognise the inevitable nature of such divergences, and if we were able to defend the use of the same words with different implications.³

It follows from these premisses that a final determination of a controversy by means of reason cannot be expected, *i.e.* in beliefs externally imposed. We must, therefore, compare authorities, and retain what seems to us best. Conflicting opinions, even in an

¹ *Sic et Non* (Henke et Lindenköhl), p. 2. The maxim also occurs elsewhere in Abelard's writings, *e.g.* in his 'Introd. to Theology,' *Op. om.* (Cousin) ii. 92.

² *Sic et Non*, p. 7. Comp. Cousin, *Ouvrages Inédits*, Introd. cxcii.

³ *Sic et Non*, p. 10 : 'Facilis autem plerumque controversiarum solutio reperietur, si eadem verba in diversis significationibus a diversis auctoribus posita defendere poterimus.'

inspired writer, ought not to surprise us. It is evident that the gifts of prophets and holy men varied at different times, and we may be certain of finding their various moods represented by corresponding expressions. Even assuming that we find in them an unworthy concession to another's weakness, we must remember that God judges men more by their intentions than their actions, or, if they enunciate what seems demonstrably false, we dare not accuse them of falsehood, for, as Augustine admitted, no man can be accused of falsehood who utters what he believes to be true. Lastly, the exercise of one's own individual judgment in all difficult questions, if a painful, is a wholesome, intellectual labour. Both Scripture and the Fathers enjoin us to this work. 'He who reads many books,' says Jerome, 'is like the man who is well versed in coins, and who can readily detect a false piece of money or wrong inscription;' and St. Paul tells us that we are to 'Prove all things and hold fast only to what is good.' Abelard concludes his prologue with a few sentences which seem worthy of translation. 'After these preliminary remarks we will commence, if you please, to collect the various *dicta* of the Fathers as they occur to memory, presenting the question of which they seem to treat from a different aspect. This method may incite young readers to a greater effort of search for truth, and may make them more acute in the inquiry. Perpetual or frequent questioning is, indeed, defined as the first key of wisdom; and Aristotle, that most perspicacious of philosophers, in his "Predicament of Relation" exhorts students to its earnest acquisition, saying: "Perhaps it is difficult to determine confidently of such things unless they are often treated." Doubt, in any case of particular things, will not be useless. By doubt we attain to inquiry, and by inquiry we perceive truth, according to the saying of Him who is very truth, "Seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." This lesson He also taught us by His own example, when at twelve years of age He was willing to be discovered sitting in the midst of the doctors and asking them questions, presenting to us the likeness of a disciple by His interrogation rather than that of a master by His instruction, although He shared the full and perfect wisdom of God. Since also there are other passages of Scripture pointing in the same direction, they ought to excite the reader, and attract him to truth-search so much the more as the authority of Scripture is esteemed the greater.'

When we pass from the prologue to the work itself, we find the individual freedom and independence on which Abelard insists abundantly exemplified. A number of theses are propounded on

every conceivable subject connected with theology and morality, while around each are concentrated admitted authorities both for and against. Thus he adduces evidence that faith should be based on human reasons, and the contrary; that God alone ought to be believed, and the contrary; that the Divine Persons of the Trinity differ among Themselves, and the contrary; that even philosophers have believed the Trinity or the Word of God, and the negative; that nothing happens by accident, and the contrary; that our first parents were created mortal, and the negative; that Christ, after His resurrection, showed cicatrices, not wounds, to His doubting disciples, and the contrary; that without baptism no one can be saved, and the contrary; that James I., the brother of our Lord, was the first Bishop of Jerusalem, and the contrary; that marriage is good, and the contrary, &c. These propositions, amounting in all to 158, Abelard throws down like a challenger's glove at a tournament, to be decided among a number of well-known writers, both Christian and heathen, for Ovid,¹ Virgil, and Seneca are adduced by the side of Christian Fathers and bishops. But in every case the problem remains unsolved; whether the *sic aut non*, the 'ay' or the 'no' 'has it' is left to the reader's own judgment and discrimination. All that Abelard professes to do is to produce authorities, to juxtaposit their various deliverances, to give materials for judgment and selection; indeed, the very motive of his work would have been rendered nugatory had he undertaken to guide the inquirer in his choice; while his own standpoint of indifference would have made such an undertaking self-contradictory and impossible.

We must not, however, suppose that the general result of Abelard's 'Sic et Non' is an open denial of Christian doctrine. In most cases the so-called negative of the thesis is not the logical contradictory of the affirmative. Oftentimes it is only a variation, and that not profound, of the orthodox formula or the accustomed standpoint. No doubt a bigoted and narrow-minded dogmatist would esteem the variation as heretical as a more pronounced opposition, and probably more seductively dangerous. This was the view which St. Bernard took of Abelard's teaching. Its ground principles of rationalism and individualism were more prejudicial to ecclesiasticism than even his actual conclusions. The main issues of the 'Sic et Non' were undeniable, too much so for the application of its own 'yea and nay' argument. Abelard

¹ 'Un seul poëte,' says Cousin, 'est cité, et ce poëte est Ovide, et Ovide dans *l'Art d'aimer*.'—*Ouvrages Inédits*, Introd. p. cxc.

had dared to apply to theology, without qualification or restriction, the Dialectical method of philosophy: the authoritative dicta of the Church were set forth as objects, not of passive acquiescence, but of inquiry—not as determinate, infallible propositions, but as approximations more or less to a given standard or formula. This was, in effect, a return to Erigena's maxim of the identity of true religion and philosophy. Abelard not only reasserted that principle for others, but made it the common basis of his method. His relation to the Church and her various authorities exemplified in the 'Sic et Non' had already been foreshown in his attitude to realism, conceptualism, and nominalism. He had no more idea of contravening of set purpose the dogmatic system of the Church, than of denying that either of the great Scholastic methods might not have its measure of validity. 'Sic et Non' was the Skeptical instrument he had applied to Roscellin and William of Champeaux. All he wished for in theology, as in philosophy, was to assert that measure of independence that best agreed with the free exercise of his reason. A further outcome of the 'Sic et Non' was to suggest that complete identity of faith among thinking men—even if desirable, and Abelard, as we have seen, thinks it is not—is utterly impossible. Neither the nature of words in formal confessions of faith nor that of minds permits such a dogmatic uniformity. In a word the 'Sic et Non' is a manifesto of Free-thought, not, indeed, unconditional, but extensive, a proclamation amid the comparative darkness of the twelfth century of the rights of human reason, a precursory and unhappily abortive claim of the religious liberty which marked the Reformation.

Abelard has been styled the Sokrates of the twelfth century. The appropriateness of the name is justified by the 'Sic et Non.' In method and object the work resembles the Sokratic 'Dialogues of Search.' Both the Greek and the Breton philosopher were animated by the same impatience of the real ignorance and fancied knowledge of men about them. Under different conditions of life and civilization they discovered the same passive, indolent acquiescence in long-accepted formulas and definitions of truth. Both thinkers are anxious to train men in the exercise of independent thought. Both regard truth, not as superior to, but as the issue of criticism and verification. Both regard dialectic as the most potent instrument for attaining this purpose. Both disclaim for themselves absolute knowledge of truth, and *à fortiori* any direct purpose of communicating truth. In one respect they differ, and the difference illustrates the distinction between an age of comparative Free-thought and one of dogma and ecclesiastical repression. The only

limits Sokrates acknowledged were those imposed by the laws of reason, while Abelard, notwithstanding his deference to reason as 'the mistress of all things,' only dared to assert that measure of liberty which is evolved and justified by clashing authorities.

As representing his method and intellectual idiosyncrasy, the 'Sic et Non' is the most important of Abelard's works; but it is in no sense a systematic treatise. It partakes of the discursive character of the 'Quodlibetæ'—those informal receptacles of the odds and ends of mediæval thought of which it might be styled the literary precursor. To obtain some knowledge of the practical application of his method to theology we must turn to the more important of his dialectic treatises, I mean the 'Introduction to Theology.' Here the great dialectician sketches a scheme of rationalistic doctrine intended as a kind of prolegomena to the study of Scripture. He defends his project by its obvious utility and by alleging the insistency of disciples who were continually urging him to give them some guidance in theology as he had in philosophy. The value of such an attempt is shown by the need which theology, in common with every branch of human science, must have of dialectic, 'the mistress of all knowledge.' The enemies of Christianity employed dialectic to attack her, and Abelard is anxious to show that the same weapon in skilful hands may be wielded for her defence. Indeed, the greater the difficulties which beset Christianity, the greater ought to be the support accorded it by reason.

Man's salvation, according to Abelard, depends upon three things: faith, love, sacraments. Faith is the conviction of the unseen, as truth is the conviction of the seen. Among the dogmas of the Christian faith, the chiefest is that which affirms the nature and attributes of God, *i.e.* the doctrine of the Trinity. 'Christianity holds,' says Abelard,¹ 'that there is but one God, the only Lord of all, sole Creator, principle, light, sovereign good, infinite, omnipotent, eternal, one in substance, immutable and simple in essence, in Whom can exist no subdivision or anything which does not share His own existence, possessing in all respects undivided unity excepting in what pertains to the diversity of Persons. For in this simple, individual, and pure substance, the Christian faith truly admits three Persons altogether coequal and coeternal not in number but in diversity of attributes, *viz.* God the Father, as it is said, and God the Son, and God the Spirit proceeding from both. One of these Persons is not the other, though He may be what the other is. Thus the Father is not the Son, nor the Son the Holy Ghost, but the Son is equally what

¹ *Op.* (Cousin), ii. p. 10.

the Father and Holy Ghost are, being one in nature and one in number, as well as one in substance. This distinction of Persons arises from the diversity of their properties, just as one man differs from another personally and not substantially.

Such, in terms, is Abelard's doctrine of the Trinity, which he proceeds to expound and illustrate. For 'what is the use,' demands our rationalist, 'of speaking of doctrine unless it is explained so as to be comprehended?' It is precisely in this effort, so characteristic of himself, that Abelard excites the distrust and indignation of the dogmatists of his time. As a rule we may estimate the extent of a man's secret devotion to reason by the anxiety he manifests to account for, or at least to illustrate, the mysteries of his faith, to bring them within the limits of the verbally comprehensible. Every such attempt to the genuine dogmatist is fraught with danger. What right has a man even to wish to understand the authoritative utterances of the Church? It is sufficient that he accept the customary formula and ask no further. That such an imposed dictum may be self-contradictory or even palpably absurd is so far from being disadvantageous—rather the reverse. The very impulse of reason to inquire is repressed by the startling non-rational form of the dogma presented for its acceptance. Besides, men commonly accept these self-contradictions as necessary constituents of a mystery. Not so Abelard. He applied his dialectic to the usual ecclesiastical definitions of the Trinity, and pointed out the consequences of such an application. He desired to prove that the self-contradictions in the dogma were either destroyed or at least greatly minimized by his own interpretation. We shall presently see what reception this rational theology was destined to receive at the hands of extreme dogmatists. What they especially resented was Abelard's latitudinarian construction of the doctrine; his determination to find illustrations and analogies of it in nature; his appeal to Gentile teachers for its confirmation; his identification, *e.g.* of the second Person with the *νοῦς* of Greek philosophers, and of the third Person with the 'anima mundi' of Platonism. This tendency to place Gentile on a level with Christian authors is indeed a general characteristic of his method, but it was regarded with so much suspicion by the leading hierarchists of his time,¹ that he always thinks himself compelled to apologize for

¹ William of St. Thierry wished that Abelard 'would read the gospel of God with the same predisposition (*benevolentia*) with which he read Plato' (quoted in *Bach's Dogmengeschichte des Mittelalters*, vol. ii. p. 44); and Bernard observes that 'in labouring to make Plato a Christian, he proved himself a heathen.'

his Catholicity. For this purpose he quotes Jerome's exhortation not to despair of the salvation of all the philosophers who lived before Christ, Augustine's admission of the religious and moral restraints inculcated by philosophy, as well as Plato's recognition of the propriety and efficacy of prayer. Abelard pleads that the light that illumined the Gentiles—the prior and universal Revelation, belief in which he shared with many of the Fathers—was in certain respects fuller than that which lightened the Jews; for the Sibyl's prophecy of the birth of Christ was more explicit than the vaticinations of Jewish prophets.¹ He finds the mystery of the Christian Trinity in ancient philosophers and poets, especially in Plato and Virgil. That Plato especially should have shared the Revelation of Christianity appears to him most reasonable, for, as he expresses it, it was just that the greatest of philosophers should bear witness to the supremest manifestation of Divine wisdom.

No small part of the first book of the Introduction is taken up with these ethnic confirmations and illustrations of Christianity, especially of the doctrine of the Trinity. These appear to have induced the accustomed suspicion, and Abelard commences his second book with a reiterated apology for his Gentile sympathies. He especially disclaims the imputation of Neology preferred against it. He urges that Moses was indebted to Gentile wisdom. Solomon distinctly recommended the cultivation of knowledge. St. Paul had cited Epimenides, Menander, and Aratus with the object of converting the Athenians. Abelard would right willingly make heathen learning serve the interests of Christianity. Alluding to the permission given to a Jew to marry a foreign slave after her head had been shaved, he says,² 'Thus I love heathen learning for her grace and her beauty, and from being a slave, a captive stranger, I would fain make her an Israelite.' It is observable as showing the extent of the erudition of the twelfth century, for it is universally admitted that Abelard was cognizant of the whole Scibile of his time, that with all his love of Gentile philosophers he knows little of their actual writings; his citations from them being derived from the Fathers, especially St. Augustine.³

No inconsiderable part of the second book of the Introduction

¹ Comp., on Abelard's belief in a universal revelation, Rémusat, ii. pp. 409, 410. His Free-thought on the relation of Christianity to Judaism and Gentilism finds most forcible expression in his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, a work which Rémusat describes as one of the fairest monuments of genuine Christian rationalism.—Rémusat, . p. 407.

² *Op. om.* (Cousin), ii. p. 63.

³ Rémusat, ii. p. 199.

is occupied with a noble vindication of knowledge, and a defence of its unrestricted communication. Abelard is the apostle of knowledge, as his great enemy, Bernard, is the champion of obscurantism. He has a firm, invincible belief that all knowledge is not only justifiable but deserving commendation. This indeed is a corollary from his rationalism. If the instrument were in its nature and origin Divine, it would be unseemly to blame the legitimate issue of its activity. While ecclesiasticism had long forbidden Christians to read the works of heathen authors and books on secular subjects, Abelard boldly avowed his conviction that the learning of no art or science ought to be prohibited to a religious man.¹ A rule of proportion might, he admits, be granted in this as in other matters, affirming the superiority of one kind of literature over another; but with this reasonable restriction the whole field of knowledge should be thrown open to the inquirer. Harm in knowledge- or truth-ascertainment is to Abelard, as I have already remarked, an inconceivability. Indeed, the knowledge of evil is itself not only beneficial but necessary; for without such knowledge obtained beforehand, how could men avoid it? Evil lies not in knowing or speculating, but in action. Were all knowledge evil, it would be impossible to absolve omniscience from its taint. Science in its fullest acceptation is illimitable, for it is 'the comprehension of all things that exist,' and is, therefore, the peculiar prerogative of Him who is 'the plenitude of all knowledge.' The property which God has in knowledge is further shown by the appellation given to the Holy Ghost, who is called by one of His titles, 'the Spirit of Knowledge.' As to the evil of knowledge, it is at most an incidental perversion; both the power and knowledge of evil are equally advantageous if used with discretion. 'We, therefore,' exclaims Abelard, 'approve of all sciences while we resist the fallacies of those who would abuse them.' 'They err,' says Cicero, 'in no small degree who blame knowledge for the vice of man;' and there is no kind of science that may not be turned to ill uses. Secular knowledge is indeed of peculiar advantage to those who intend ultimately to confine their studies to sacred subjects, for after their conversion the measure of Divine Grace bestowed upon them seems proportioned to the extent of their intellectual acquirements. Thus Paul the Apostle, though not in merit above Peter, yet after conversion had more grace in doctrine, in the same ratio as he possessed a greater knowledge of literature. To blame philosophy for the pride of its students, and

¹ *Op. em.* ii. p. 71.

to confound knowledge with its misuse, is, according to Abelard, to invoke the denunciation of the prophet against those 'who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness.'

Thus Abelard inveighs against the bigoted ecclesiastics and obscurantists of his time, those who, to use his own satirical phrase, 'found solace in their ignorance :'¹ while they in the true spirit of sacerdotalism deplored the audacity of the human reason, distrusted its impulses, distorted its conclusions, stigmatized its activities together with their results, as alike impious; acted towards it, in short, like a tyrannical despot towards the meanest of his slaves. Abelard, as an apostle of enlightenment and free-thought, lifted up his solitary voice in behalf of the God-given faculty, asserted the sacredness of knowledge as well as of its instrument, denounced the iniquitous but interested machinations that traduced the greatest of God's gifts, and was bent on perpetuating ignorance, superstition, and intellectual stagnation as the supremest attainment of humanity.

One main point of Abelard's introduction, still further illustrating his implicit trust in reason and in the inherent virtues of truth search, is his theory of belief, and as a result his definition of Revelation. Why should men, it might be asked, adhere to Christianity? The customary answer of the Church was, because it is a Revelation of God: man must believe what God asserts, and because He asserts it. To claim the exclusive right of affirming what the Divine dictates might or might not be was the very essence of ecclesiasticism. But Abelard was averse to taking anything on trust. No mere *ipse dixit*, claiming authority as such, satisfied him. He not only questioned the dictum, but altered its terms into an opposite implication. 'We believe what God says not because He says it, but because we are convinced of its truth by our own reason.'² The immediate import of such a bold assertion was immense. It was nothing less than a death-blow to dogma and sacerdotal dictation. The independence of reason, the supremacy of its criticism and verification, was announced unconditionally. All the dogmas of the Church were thereby deprived of their inherent validity, and were submitted for authentication to another and independent tribunal. Nor was its ulterior purport of less consequence; it was equivalent to the proclamation of Protestantism and the right of private judgment; it affirmed the main

¹ He uses the phrase repeatedly; comp. *e.g.* *Op. om.* ii. pp. 73, 77.

² *Op. om.* ii. p. 79.

principle of the Reformation some four centuries before the time of Luther. That the outcome of such a maxim was denounced as Skeptical is only what might have been expected. In truth, the standpoint which Abelard thus took up against mediæval Christianity resembled the attitude of Greek Skeptics against Greek dogmatists, for in both cases belief was proclaimed not on extraneous authority but on internal conviction. Abelard supports his position with most of the arguments generally employed for the purpose. He quotes Ecclesiasticus xix. 4 ('He that is hasty to give credit is light-minded,' &c.) to show the mischief of credulity. He points out that unless this antinomy of the 'verifying faculty' be conceded there can be no criterion or appreciation of truth, and therefore no reliable truth at all. That a sense of truth (rationality) should be in some degree a universal possession, is more in accordance with reasonable conceptions of God's goodness and His impartial government of the universe than that it should be restricted to particular times and peoples. Indeed, without this universal possession more or less of mankind, all attempts to convert the heathen world would be bootless, and the Church would seek in vain to fulfil her divinely ordained mission. Nor does this definition of the true basis of conviction imperil genuine faith; on the other hand, it propounds its commencement. Faith, according to Abelard, is the estimate or appreciation of the unseen. It is not the condition of the passive receptivity generally described and desiderated by theologians, but an intelligent conviction founded upon and fortified by ratiocination, and by—what he always includes under the head of reason—the faculty of devout imagination.¹ No other definition of faith could discriminate between truth and falsehood, or between religion and superstition. We find that Abelard's conception of faith, as implying criticism and discrimination, was one of the incriminated features in his belief against which Bernard took especial exception.

The aim of the introduction is proclaimed in the same undogmatic terms as that of the 'Sic et Non.' Abelard disavows the intention of teaching truth; his object is only to defend it, to attain to that measure of probability which seemed to possess most affinity with human reason.² He takes up the weapons of reason and Free-thought against those false philosophers and

¹ Comp. his definition of reason, *Op. om.* ii. p. 115. When Dean Milman describes Abelard's character as 'utterly unimaginative,' he greatly exaggerates what was undoubtedly a defect of his mental conformation.—*Lat. Christianity*, iii. 263.

² Rémusat, ii. p. 200.

heretics who had employed them against the faith. He is desirous to show that reason is an instrument as well adapted to defend as to attack Christianity, and he protests against the monopoly generally accorded it for the latter purpose. He replies to a supposed objector who suggests that the Christian faith had been already sufficiently vindicated and asserted by pointing out the divergences of opinion still existing in the Church, and he believes in confuting heretics by persuasion, not by force. That mysteries exist in the Christian creed Abelard is forced to admit. He quotes with approbation and repeatedly the oft-cited maxim of Gregory the Great, that if all mysteries were comprehensible faith would be needless, but he does not allow such an admission to repress his search for truth. Hence he declines to acquiesce in the conclusion of some thinkers that the Trinity, *e.g.* was a dogma that could only be understood in a future life. Such a proposition appears to him a sharing of the Montanist heresy, which held that the sacred writers communicated their teaching in ecstasy, not knowing what they said.

Given the publication of two such revolutionary works as 'Sic et Non' and the 'Introduction to Theology' in the twelfth century, and the fate of their author would not be difficult to forecast. Abelard's conduct, no less than his writings, had throughout his life manifested that resolute independence which is of all human attributes the most obnoxious to sacerdotalism. It was, moreover, his fate to come into personal conflict with Bernard, a born dogmatic and hierarchical fanatic, just as Abelard was a Free-thinker and liberal-minded philosopher. The two men emerge from the comparative darkness of the twelfth century as renowned champions of rival causes, which had already begun to divide between them the interest and power of Christendom. They were typical embodiments—one of faith, the other of reason; one of sacerdotalism, the other of enlightenment. Bernard looked back with fond yearning to the ages of faith and intellectual submission, of whose approaching disappearance he saw no insignificant symptoms. Abelard looked steadily forward to the future of light and liberty which seemed ready to break over Europe, and of which the actual dawn was even now dimly perceptible in Italy. Through his friendship with Arnold of Brescia¹ Abelard can claim a relation direct and intimate

¹ Comp. Bernard, *Op. om.* i. 182; *Ep.* 189. He seems to allude to some intercourse between Abelard and Arnold, in the following choice

with those noble aspirations for freedom, political and ecclesiastical, which filled the minds of the teachers of the Italian Renaissance. Though living two centuries before Dante and Petrarca, he must have shared their intellectual hopes, desires, and sympathies. Bernard, on the other hand, rages impotently against the audacity of the human intellect. 'It usurps all things, leaves nothing to faith, lays its hands on what is highest, and defies that which is stronger than itself,' &c.¹ Of this revolutionary spirit Abelard appeared to him the especial incarnation. He was the Goliath of the new hordes of Philistines which threatened the armies of the Church, and Arnold of Brescia was his armour-bearer. The danger from this foe of ecclesiasticism was the greater in proportion to his celebrity. Long ago Abelard had achieved a renown without example in mediæval times, and which has been compared to the European reputation of Voltaire. For this he was indebted partly to the fame of his unhappy romance, but very largely also to his Free-thought. His works were read everywhere, even—as Bernard bitterly complains—in the Papal Curia itself.² It was of no avail that Abelard had been condemned as a heretic by the Council of Soissons in 1120 and his books ordered to be burnt. To the freer intellects of his time his heresy was a recommendation, and the committal of his works to the flames an imprimatur of their especial value. Since that date Abelard's fame had increased, and with his fame his philosophical indifference to purely ecclesiastical interests. Bernard compared him to the hydra, because for one head of heresy the Council of Soissons had cut off he had since shot up and developed seven others. Nor did Abelard spare his clerical enemies. He launches his invectives against the bishops, exposes their ignorance, their hatred of learning, their fictitious miracles, and their other unworthy means of maintaining their absolute ascendancy.

At last the constrained relations between Abelard and Bernard developed into open warfare. Relying perhaps on the presence of influential disciples and friends, Abelard appealed to an assembly of bishops about to be convoked at Sens, offering to submit his writings to their judgment. But the friends of Bernard were on the alert, and Abelard discovered that he had placed the cause of Free-inquiry before a tribunal altogether hostile

simile: 'Sibilavit apis quæ erat in Francia api in Italiâ, et venerunt in unum adversus Dominum et adversus Christum ejus.'

¹ Bernard, *Ep.* 188; *Op. om.* i. p. 181.

² See his *Epistle* above quoted, 188.

to its claims. Without caring to defend himself before enemies who were resolved on his condemnation, though their intoxicated state made its articulate enunciation a matter of difficulty,¹ he appealed to Rome. Here also the issue of his appeal was unfavourable. Bernard was at this time in the very zenith of his power, and possessed more influence in Europe than even the Pope himself: moreover, Innocent was a personal friend of the Abbot of Clairvaux, so that unless his friends in the Roman Curia were more numerous than we are aware of, it seems difficult to see the prudence of the course adopted by Abelard; but for some reason he appears to have expected a different result, and his consequent disappointment accelerated his death.

But the Council of Sens is important to us as bearing on the nature and extent of Abelard's Free-thought, for it is admitted by the fairest of his modern apologists that the various points 'articled and objected' against him by Bernard may be legitimately deduced from his writings. Of the seventeen counts of his indictment fourteen were admitted to have been proved. In these Abelard was held to have been guilty of the chief misbeliefs which from its earliest development had distracted the Church. We may glance at a few of these incriminated opinions by way of epitomizing the chief directions of his Free-thought.

Abelard's primary deviation from ecclesiastical orthodoxy for which he had been condemned at Soissons, as well as at Sens, was connected with his interpretation of the Trinity. Not that he disputed the dogma, but he claimed the right of explaining it so as to make it more comprehensible. He refused to grant—the standpoint of extreme dogmatists—that the presentation of a religious truth was most acceptable to humanity when formulated in terms the most opposed to human reason. Accordingly he so stated the doctrine as to allow a subordination of persons in respect of origin and substance, and he manifested a tendency to resolve the distinction of persons into a difference of attribute or property.² Bernard, moreover, disliked Abelard's illustrations of the Trinity. They

¹ See Berengarius's vivid description of the drunken, semi-somnolent condition of Abelard's judges, *Op. ed. Migne*, col. 1859, and comp. Milman, *Lat. Christianity*, iii. p. 265.

² For a full exposition of Abelard's doctrine of the Trinity, comp. Rémusat, ii. p. 303, &c., and Baur, *Lehre von der Dreieinigkeit*, ii. p. 462, &c. Baur admits that Abelard's distinction of persons is purely nominal (p. 477). On the Romanist side comp. Stöckl, *Gesch. der Phil. des Mittelalters*, i. p. 235, &c.; *Hist. Lit. de la France*, xii. pp. 119, 148, &c.; and Dr. Bach, *Dogmengeschichte des Mittelalters*, ii. p. 51, &c.

were attempts to prove what he would rather have had left as inscrutable mysteries, although Abelard was in this respect only following a precedent left him by all the Fathers of the Church.¹ One of these was specially offensive. This was what Bernard termed² the 'execrable similitude or rather dissimilitude' of a brazen seal, but Abelard does not seem to have intended more by it than to describe, perhaps more vividly than the case admitted of, the subordination in nature of the Divine Persons nearly as stated by the Council of Nice. He designated the three Persons, objecting, however, to their *numerical* differentiation,³ as power, wisdom, and goodness. He maintained also that the Trinity was one in operation, and must also be one in invocation.⁴ His design clearly was to emphasize the unity of the Godhead, and thereby to protest against the crude Tritheism into which the doctrine of the Trinity had degenerated in the Church, and which in the present day even characterizes too many Trinitarians.

The same intention marks another of Abelard's imputed heresies. The incarnate Son of God *as such* cannot be called a Person of the Trinity. This relation He can only claim as being the word or wisdom of the Father.

Abelard's doctrine with respect to the Holy Ghost was violently impugned by Bernard. His identification of the third Person with goodness was declared by his adversary to imply an exclusion of the properties of power, wisdom ascribed to the Father and the Son; this too, notwithstanding the fact that the Trinity of power, wisdom, goodness had long been a commonplace of patristic theology. More open to doubt on the score of rigid orthodoxy was Abelard's assimilation of the Holy Ghost to the 'anima mundi' of Plato. Here Bernard's reproach might seem to have some ground, that in 'trying to make Plato a Christian he had only succeeded in proving himself a Pagan.'

I have already alluded to Abelard's definition of faith as estimation, intellectual appreciation. Its drift undoubtedly was to impart into the idea a certain measure of rationality, of criticism, of volition, to make it less the blind impotent subservience to eccle-

¹ See on this point Rémusat, ii. 314-16.

² Comp. Bernard's *Tractatus de Erroribus Abelardi*, *Op. om.* i. 639, 640, &c.; Rémusat, ii. 334.

³ 'Non numero rerum sed pluralitate proprietatum,' *Op. om.* ii. 10. In denying number in its ordinary sense to the Trinity, Abelard errs in good company. Cf. Rémusat's learned note on the point, ii. 191.

⁴ 'Sicut trium personarum est indivisa operatio, ita et eorum sit inseparabilis invocatio.'—*Op. om.* ii. 16.

siasticism than its ordinary acceptation had rendered it. But the attempt was odious to a fanatic like Bernard, who thus describes its effect: 'As if every one might think and say what he pleased, or as if the sureties of our faith depended uncertainly on vain and various opinions, and was not rather founded on certain truth.'¹ 'Perish the thought,' he adds, 'that the Christian faith should have such limits. These are the appreciations (probabilities) of the Academics, whose creed is to doubt of all things, to be certain of nothing.' Bernard here displays, I may parenthetically observe, the usual inconsistency of the *odium theologicum*, for he elsewhere reproaches Abelard with too great positiveness in his opinions: 'Who of all things in heaven above and in the earth beneath deems himself ignorant of nothing, excepting only his own *nescio*.'²

In defining the relation of God to man, Abelard insists on the Divine impartiality and human freedom. God does not do more for the man who is saved than for the man who is not saved. By his own innate freedom and the impulse of his reason man may search for and obtain grace, so that it is not needful that a *specially* Divine impulse must be supposed in order to account for his incentive or for its success. Here too we may detect the attempt to reduce supernaturalism to the customary laws of Divine Providence, as well as to free Deity from the imputation of favouritism which, as a primary article of the Christian creed, has probably done more mischief to genuine Christianity than all the Skepticism with which it has ever had to contend.

Another of Abelard's inculpated opinions related to the Atonement effected by Christ's death. As might be inferred from his general intellectual tendency, he lays especial stress on its moral aspect. Christ saves us by His example, by those perfections of which He has given us a Divine pattern, and by the love which such a sacrifice is naturally adapted to create. He rejects the theory of vicarious substitution as contrary to human instincts of justice.³

He is also inclined in the very interests of the Divine perfection to limit God's omnipotence. Had God been able to create a universe in which evil would have been impossible He would doubtless have done so. Abelard on this point is an optimist. He is persuaded that this is the best, if not of conceivable, yet at least of

¹ See his *Epistle to Innocent*, ii., *Op. om.* i. col. 649.

² *Op. om.* i. col. 644.

³ Comp. Rémusat, ii. p. 411, &c., and Baur's *Christliche Lehre von der Versöhnung*, pp. 194, 195, &c.

possible worlds. Moreover, evil has oftentimes its mission for good. The blessings of the Atonement, for example, were secured to man by the envy and malignity of the Jews who crucified Him.

Finally, our rationalist believes that sin lies not in the act, but in the will and intent, or rather in the wilful consent to sin.¹ Hence, sin is annulled by the ignorance, &c. of its perpetrators. The Jews, for instance, who put Christ to death were not blameworthy, for they knew not what they did. Abelard also holds that there is no transmission of Adam's guilt to his posterity but only of the penalty entailed by it.

The general import of these teachings, regarded as thought-tendencies, we can have no difficulty in apprehending. They are utterances of a theology which, if not based upon, is controlled by reason. They indicate a resolve to harmonize as far as possible the orthodox formulas of the Church with the imperative demands of human consciousness, experience, and moral sense. They signalize an opposition to some of the most cherished methods and influences of sacerdotalism. That such an attempt should have succeeded was too much to expect. The forces against which the champion of Free-thought 'set the battle in array' were too powerful to yield to his isolated attack, well planned and resolute as it undoubtedly was. Victor in the Schools, Abelard was worsted in the Church, and the vanquisher of philosophical heroes like Roscellin and William of Champeaux was forced to yield to a monkish obscurantist like Bernard, backed by the enormous influence of the Papacy. But if Abelard was persecuted, condemned by two councils, compelled to burn his books with his own hand, enjoined to perpetual silence, and finally 'done to death' by his clerical opponents,² it must be admitted that their antagonism had not been unprovoked. In addition to a method—diffused by his renown throughout Europe—which established reason on the throne so long occupied by ecclesiastical autocracy, Abelard was not blind to the demerits of his opponents, nor sparing in his exposure of them. He inveighs against their opposition to enlightenment, ridicules the 'solace they found in ignor-

¹ See Rémusat's exhaustive account of Abelard's Ethics, vol. ii. chap. vii. p. 451, &c.

² With Abelard's long and bitter experience of the *odium theologicum*, we can hardly be surprised to find him admitting that he was often minded to leave Christendom, in order, as he ironically phrased it, 'that he might lead a Christian life among the enemies of Christ.'—Rousselot, *Études*, ii. p. 5.

ance,' makes their credulity the outcome of a narrow intellect, contrasts their morality unfavourably with that of heathen philosophers, exposes the trickery and deceit by which their overwhelming power was attained. No priestly craft was more potent in the twelfth century than that which created and maintained false miracles. The flagrant imposture of these appeals to popular superstition he discloses in terms which have not yet lost their significance for priest-ridden communities. He unveils the pretensions of St. Norbert and others to cure slight cases of sickness by secretly mixing drugs with the patient's food or drink, withal pretending to cure them solely by their prayers. If the cure was accomplished it was held a proof of their own sanctity or the efficacy of their prayers; if not, it demonstrated the patient's own want of faith. Abelard ridicules the conduct of these saintly quacks by recounting the anecdote of an astute secular brother who recommended a female whom he had known in better circumstances, and who was begging alms of him, to practise the art of curing diseases by herbs as a lucrative profession. He bade her gather all kinds of herbs for the purpose, and assured her that if her medicaments succeeded her reputation would become spread abroad; if they failed, she could attribute the failure to the fatal character of the disease, and urge that against death all medicines are powerless.¹ Other superstitions of the time as well came in for his castigation. He agrees with the great humanist, Petrarca, in reprobating the claims of judicial astrology. He denies that the stars have power to predict the future, and says that the pretender to such stellar lore ought to be regarded not so much as an astronomer as a diabolical person.² The slight esteem in which he held mediæval legends is shown by his ridiculing the claims of the monks of St. Denys to have been founded by Dionysius the Areopagite.

Like other Free-thinkers, Abelard is inclined to go back to the origin of Christianity for the truth and simplicity he failed to find in the overgrown dogmatism of the mediæval Church. It is remarkable that throughout his works he invariably speaks of Christ as 'Truth' or 'Very Truth,' and he pays a deference to the utterances of Christ which he does not extend to any mere human authority.³

¹ *Op. om.* i. 590, 591.

² *Ibid.* p. 650.

³ See, by all means, the remarkable work, *De Inquisitione Summi Boni*, *Op. om.* ii. p. 715, &c. Here Abelard praises those Christians 'qui non a philosophis aut Judæis Christum ignorantibus aut reprobantibus sed ex ipso Christo veritatis doctrinam acceperunt. Ipsum audite, ait Pater Cælestis. Ipsum audite, aio et ego vobis quicumque me auditis. Ipsum

All his proposed modifications of dogma—and Abelard's heresies are no more than that—point in the same direction of a wish for greater simplicity, rationality, humanity, in their authoritative formulation. More truth and less sophistry, more reason and less authority, more freedom and less dogma, more evangelical Christianity, less ecclesiasticism, represent the chief object of Abelard's aspirations, the goal of his intellectual efforts.

Abelard must be pronounced a martyr of Free-thought. Though he did not share the fate of his works in being burnt as a heretic, he was nevertheless hunted to death by his implacable foes the clergy. After the unfavourable issue of his appeal to Rome, which appears to have greatly disappointed him, he wrote an apology,¹ which is not a retractation, but a defence of his views. The language of this document bears evidence to the mental serenity which always attends assured conviction, nor is its closing appeal to his great enemy Bernard without a dignified pathos—'If there be therefore any consolation in Christ Jesus, if any bowels of mercy, I entreat your fraternal piety, lest any one by staining with infamy my innocence, which love for truth redeems from crime, should come short of charity. It is, however, part of charity not to receive an accusation against a neighbour, to interpret doubtful things to his advantage, and always to attend to that maxim of Christian duty, "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned."' ² To add to the effect of his apology, and to prosecute his own cause before the Pope, Abelard started for Rome; but on his road he was seized with the premonitory symptoms of his last illness. He turned aside to the Abbey of Clugny, where he was received with all honour by Peter the Venerable, one of the most estimable characters of the time. Here he remained for some months as a simple but studious monk, until his illness

audite potius quam paganum philosophantem vel hebræum Judaizantem. . . . Ipsum audite Consiliarius est, Ipsum audite Præceptor est . . . Si vultis scire quid sit summum bonum, vel qua via sit ad illud progrediendum Ipsum audite dicentem "Ego sum Via et Veritas et Vita." Nam via qua itur, et Veritas ac Vita quo itur Ipse est: Ipsum audite . . . Legem naturalem quam paganus philosophus defendit, Ipse docet, Ipsum audite. Legem Moysi venit implere non solvere Ipsum audite.' Among the many appeals to Christ from the slavery of dogma and ecclesiasticism with which Christian literature abounds, it would be difficult to find one more direct or more eloquent than that of Abelard's, with its plaintive refrain 'Ipsum audite.' Compare, on same subject, Rémusat, ii. 222, and note.

¹ *Op. om.* ii. p. 739.

² *Ibid.* p. 722.

compelled his removal to another monastery, where he died in 1142. While under his charge Peter the Venerable exerted himself to obtain some kind of reconciliation between the moribund philosopher and his ecclesiastical foes. In this he was successful. In the decrepitude of a premature old age Abelard had lost somewhat of the resilient energy and vivacity which incite men to controversy. He was wearied with the incessant struggles, the recurrent defeats and disappointments, that rewarded the searcher for truth and freedom in an age of superstition and mental servitude. Bitterly does he bemoan his fate, though in his wailing a Promethean undertone of defiance of his enemies and contempt for their unwisdom is distinctly perceptible. He can never be brought to see that his attachment and deference to reason, the divinest of human faculties, is a crime against the Giver and Source of all reason. Among the last words he addressed to Heloise was a confession of faith pronounced by Rémusat 'noble and affecting,' and which Dean Milman declared would have 'satisfied the austerest orthodoxy.' This commences with the words—'Heloise, my sister, once so dear to me in the flesh, now still dearer in Christ Jesus, logic has made me odious to the world, for perverse and perverting men whose wisdom is perdition say of me that I am famous in logic, but am grievously mistaken in St. Paul. Affecting to praise my intellectual power, they rob me of my purity of faith. It is, I think, prejudice rather than wisdom that thus estimates me. I would not be a philosopher so as to be opposed to Paul, nor would I be Aristotle to be shut off from Christ.'¹

Abelard also recognises the lesson of his career that the time in which his lot was cast was unfavourable to intellectual liberty. The principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, authorities who dictated human beliefs as well as governed all human actions and interests, were too omnipotent to have their power questioned or its source examined by the Free-thinker or Rationalist. Abelard's recognition of this truth is pathetically manifested in his advice to his son to be more eager to acquire than communicate knowledge—

Major dicendi tibi sit quam cura docendi.

The usual gagging precept, we may term it, of an intolerant and Philistine epoch. Doubtless a little more observance of that salutary if not very noble maxim, a little more reticence, somewhat less too of what Milman satirically calls 'his imprudent

¹ *Op. om.* i. 680; Rémusat, i. 230.

passion for truth,' would have rendered his life easier and perhaps happier. But, in sooth, such wishes are unreasonable and absurd. Abelard's career, as the pursuit of that policy he recommended his son, is inconceivable. Nor must we regret his fate. It is the common lot of all independent thinkers in periods when free speculation is deemed a crime. I have already compared him to Sokrates. Alike in mental idiosyncrasy and aspiration, as well as in influencing the whole thought of their time, they also resemble each other in their final destiny. The Skepticism of Sokrates led to prison and death. The rationalism of Abelard led to his condemnation at Soissons and Sens. Thus history, in strange unforeseen ways, continually repeats itself. The Christian bishops at Sens were the lineal intellectual successors of the Athenian Dikastery that put the hemlock cup into the hands of Sokrates. The pious obscurantist Bernard may claim kindred with the heathen zealot Meletos. The theatre and accessories are different, with the broad distinction of sundered centuries: the drama, the actors, the plot, are in reality the same.

Nor is this all: Abelard also resembles the greatest of Hellenic thinkers by his confidence in the future. If Bernard and the other ecclesiastics of the twelfth century had proved too strong for him, he was no less certain that the future was his. Probably one of his last works in his retirement at Clugny was the revision of those theological writings that had stirred the world and brought so much obloquy on their author. If so, they do not disclose the least symptom of submission or repentance. In no case does Abelard alter the passages condemned at Soissons and Sens in the sense required by his enemies. What the exact nature of the reconciliation brought about by Peter the Venerable between Abelard and his adversaries was, we cannot tell; that it was a renunciation in terms of his expressed opinions is, however, certain. To a man possessed of Abelard's indomitable spirit, and his firm persuasion of the supremacy of reason, no repudiation of well-considered views would have been possible, except that equivocal submission to wanton and arrogant power ascribed by tradition to Galileo—that which is followed by a half-whispered '*E pur si muove.*'

Leaving now Abelard, I will glance for a moment at my bird parable. Abelard fitly symbolizes and illustrates the action of the human reason in its perpetual attacks on ecclesiastical autocracy. His object, we have seen, was not to oppose Christianity so much as to reform, simplify, and liberalize it. The caged bird did not so much wish for absolute freedom without, as enlarged limits, more

freedom of movement, within his prison-house. As we have seen, the contest was unequal. With broken wings and ruffled plumage, but with still undaunted courage, it was compelled to desist from the struggle; but the traditions of freedom survived him. Other birds of the same disposition secured in process of time, by persistent attacks on the bars of their cage, an enlarged space within, as well as, for those who desired it, free egress into the purer air and limitless expanse without.

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*Aquinas.*¹

To a considerable share in the religious intuition of Erigena, and a still greater proportion of the dialectical genius of Abelard, add an intellectual capacity, a multifarious learning, a many-sided sympathy greater than either of these possessed, but allow for a sense of intellectual congruity far inferior to theirs, and the result would be—Aquinas. He represents the class of intellect in which synthesis preponderates largely over analysis, and in which certitude is obtained not so much by eliminating so much as by minimizing discordant and antagonistic beliefs. He is an admirable illustration of the mental freedom which comes from eclecticism, from a thoughtful and genial appreciation of varying currents of thought, from a conviction of the multiple aspects of truth. The highest effort of his intellect is not a single determination, an arbitrary and infallible definition of truth, as much as a careful equipoising of its different constituents. For Aquinas, truth, like virtue, is a mean between two or more extremes.

Born about the year 1227, in Sicily, near the town of Aquino, St. Thomas, like Abelard and his own master Albert the Great, was descended from noble parents. Little that is both authentic and deserving of record seems to be known of his youthful life. At an early age, and in opposition to the wishes of his parents, he joined the Dominican order, and soon after went to the schools of Paris. After a short stay there he left for Cologne, where he fell

¹ Besides the general works on the Scholastic philosophy noted under Erigena and Abelard, the following are the special authorities employed or referred to on the subject of Aquinas:—

Opera Omnia, ed. Parmæ. 25 vols. folio. But the 'Summa Theologica' is quoted from the more convenient edition in Migne's *Patrologia*.

La Philosophie de Thomas d'Aquin. Par C. Jourdain. 2 vols. 8vo.

Histoire de la Philosophie Scholastique. Par B. Hauréau. Seconde Partie, Tome Premier (1880).

in with his master Albert the Great. In 1245 he accompanied him to Paris, where Albert had been appointed to lecture on the Sentences. The intercourse of 'the great' master and his still greater pupil, like every portion of Aquinas's life, is surcharged with stories of a more or less legendary character. The best known of these is the anecdote in which Albert forecasts the brilliant future of his disciple. On account of his silence and the sombre meditative expression of his features, his fellow-pupils had nicknamed him 'the Great Dumb Ox of Sicily'; but when on a certain occasion Aquinas had acquitted himself admirably in solving some hard questions of his master, Albert took the opportunity of prophesying that 'a day would come when the bellowings of the dumb ox would be heard throughout the world.' Having finished the three years' course of teaching imposed on him by his superiors, Albert returned to Cologne, whither Aquinas accompanied him. The latter, however, went back to Paris in 1252, and, having taken his degrees, commenced to give public lectures. About this time also he began that career of writing which is still the marvel of the world by its fecundity. After a stay of some years in Italy, where he was continually and arduously employed in teaching, he returned to Paris in 1257, and took his doctor's degree. From that date to the end of his life his time was taken up with his teaching and with the composition of his *magnum opus*, the 'Summa.' He died prematurely of over-work, in March 1274, leaving behind him the deserved celebrity of being the greatest theologian of the Romish Church.

Aquinas may be said to represent at its highest point of development that alliance of Aristotle with ecclesiastical Christianity traces of which we have already observed in Abelard. Aristotle was his authority in philosophy, as the Christian Church was in theology. There is thus a dualism in the first principles of his thought which is clearly manifested in his writings. Dialectic, the method of reason, is admitted to be also the method of theology. Christian dogmas the most sacred and most authoritative are regarded not only as absolute verities, but as questions to be investigated and determined so far as possible like ordinary truths. This at least is Aquinas's starting-point. How it becomes finally modified we shall shortly find. We can, however, already infer that Aquinas was a rationalist, or rather, perhaps, a semi-rationalist. No man could lay the stress he does on syllogistic methods and reasonings who had not a bias towards reason as the faculty of truth-discovery. Not that Aquinas, of all the Schoolmen, stood alone in this matter. Professedly, at least, all maintained the high

prerogative of reason. There was no difference in this respect between realists and nominalists, or between Scotists and Thomists. All were ready to make the teachings of the Church more or less subservient to reason. All were ready to preface its dogmas with an *Utrum*,¹ and to conclude them if possible with a Q. E. D. Aquinas's chief distinction was the unusual emphasis he placed on Aristotle and Peripateticism. Other Schoolmen were content to take the great Stagirite for their dialectic teacher, accepting his method and applying it to theology, but Aquinas accepted not only the method but, wherever possible, the conclusions of Aristotle as well. Doubtless this unusual partiality for Aristotelianism was explicable on grounds quite compatible with his orthodoxy. He might have urged, for instance, the proselytizing complaisance of St. Paul and said, 'To the Greeks I became as a Greek, that I might gain the Greeks.' In fact, this very plea has more than once been put forward in his behalf. 'According to you,' says the 'Christian Sokrates' of Balzac,² 'has not God sent St. Thomas to the Peripatetics of these times in order to deal with them according to their own humour, to convert them in their own fashion, to gain them by their syllogisms and their dialectic? This St. Thomas of the Schools, has he not been chosen the Apostle of the Aristotelians, who have never as yet been thoroughly tamed and subdued?—a presumptuous and mutinous race, which defers so little to authority, always seeks to base itself upon reason, is continually demanding Why a thing is? is so impatient of repose, such an enemy to peace, so inclined to novelties.' No doubt this was Aquinas's mission regarded from his own standpoint, but it is one that bears on the face of it marks of vacillation and incertitude. The very attempt to present the foregone and long-established truths of Christianity in the form of syllogisms savoured of Skepticism. The simple collocation of reason and faith as coequal or rival coefficients of truth itself imperilled

¹ The 'Utrum' of some of the Schoolmen is equivalent to the more Skeptical 'Non potest probari' of others. In Duns Scotus, *e.g.* we find the following 'Not Provens': 'Non potest probari Deum esse vivum—sapientem—intelligentem—volentem.—Non potest probari productio personarum divinarum in essentia divina.—Unam personam esse in alia probari nequit.—N. p. prob. animam rationalem esse immortalem, per consequens n. p. pr. resurrectio, nec vita æterna bonorum, nec pœna malorum.—N. p. prob. nos nasci cum peccato originali.—N. p. prob. Deum oportere pati propter peccatum homini remittendum.—N. p. prob. Deum oportere incarnari, &c.' Cf. Maywald, *Lehre von der zweifachen Wahrheit*, p. 19.

² *Œuvres de J. L., de Guez de Balzac*, par L. Moreau, vol. ii. pp. 40, 41.

the claims to absolute supremacy which faith had always asserted. Hence Aquinas's 'Summa'—the text-book of Catholicism—is a legitimate successor of the 'Sic et Non' of Abelard and the 'Sentences' of Peter Lombard, and, like those famous treatises, is better adapted for raising than for settling disputed points, whether of belief or of practice.

But if Aquinas's position was imperfect from a dogmatic point of view, it had its corresponding advantages as a mode of Free-thought. It was a distinct introduction into theology of the principles and procedures of reason at a time when that faculty was most enslaved by sacerdotalism.¹ Both Aquinas and his master Albert are indeed striking instances of the liberalizing, humanizing influences of the amalgamation. Both were essentially broad thinkers, when breadth and comprehension were the highest excellences of which Papal Christianity was capable. Both contributed in some measure to free theology from the extreme narrowness and exclusiveness of sacerdotalism by enlarging its borders and making it the crowning point of an encyclopædic science that included all the intellectual activities of humanity. Thus the greatest of the Schoolmen, by fuller sympathies with the sum-total of human knowledge, were unconsciously preparing the way for the Renaissance. Indeed, no doctor of the Church was studied so fully or so appreciatively by the foremost leaders of the Renaissance as Thomas Aquinas.

But there is another outcome of this combination of philosophical methods with theological conclusions which is very distinctly impressed both on Albert the Great and on his more illustrious pupil. Neither of them were consistent thinkers. Their thought-systems are inconsequent and incongruous. Professedly dialecticians, their logic was the instrument of single disparate conclusions rather than the animating or cohesive principle of their method regarded as a whole. Hence we can hardly proceed a step in the investigation of either thinker without encountering discrepancies and antagonisms without end. Confining ourselves to Aquinas, we discover in him a perpetual and studied equilibration, a balancing of conflicting views and interests in every question he discusses. Nominalists and realists were then waging their wordy warfare: Aquinas takes part with neither. He sees the strong points of realism and adopts them. With equal readiness

¹ Comp. *e.g.* Aquinas's noble saying: 'Totius libertatis radix est in ratione constituta,' an expression often occurring in his works. Elsewhere, *e.g.* he says that the 'Will is the object of Liberty, but its cause is Reason.'

he recognises what seems true in nominalism. He accepts finally a kind of conceptualism, as a mean between the two extremes. In the dichotomy between dialectic and theology or between Aristotle and the Church he professedly sides with neither, but adopts what seems truest in each. Though his general method is deductive, he frequently, as becomes an avowed Peripatetic, reasons inductively. A professed opponent of Arab thought, and especially of the system of Averroes, he does not scruple to adopt some of his teachings.¹ Though a defender of the Papacy, he denies that a Pope has power to frame new dogmas. While he admitted that the Church was superior to the civil power, he tries to place restrictions on ecclesiasticism, to prevent its injuring human liberty. In a word, his general attitude to all questions is that of a thoughtful but embarrassed mediator between contending doctrines and rival creeds. Nor is this his position only with regard to general questions or broad comprehensive aspects of truth; we shall find the same vacillation and uncertainty in the discussion of incidental and single questions, both of philosophy and theology.

Now the root-thought of these divergences—the cause of this perpetual oscillation—in a word, the keynote to Aquinas's intellect—is to be found in the fundamental dualism between faith and reason. Like so many other thoughtful Christians, Aquinas is by nature and mental idiosyncrasy a philosopher, and by education and circumstances a theologian. His first love is reason, even though he ultimately allies himself with faith. Aristotle commands his intellect though he permits his religious sentiment to be dominated by ecclesiastical dogma. As a consistent Peripatetic, he makes the starting-point of all knowledge to be the senses.² By means of the information they are adapted to supply, the reason or intellect is enabled to use its discriminative and judicial powers. This is the lowest stage of the reason, or that in which it apprehends purely physical facts. Soon, however, it rises above this elementary condition, and takes cognizance of mental processes as well. So far this faculty of the natural reason is common to the whole human race, and it is by its means that the heathen attained to that knowledge of God and Divine things which we find in many cases they acquired. But this natural reason is limited and imperfect.³ The senses, *e.g.* are only able to perceive external qualities; they cannot comprehend the essence or substance of things, still less are they

¹ On Aquinas's obligations to Averroes, comp. E. Renan, *Averroïsme*, &c. pp. 231-36, who, however, seems inclined to overstate them.

² Comp. Jourdain, *Philosophie de Thomas d'Aquin*, i. pp. 200, 311.

³ *Contra Gentiles*, lib. i. cap. iii., *Op. om.* vol. v. p. 3.

able to attain to the knowledge of the Divine essence of God Himself. Nay more, even in their own sphere of phenomena they only supply partial information, for it is clear there are properties of phenomenal things which the senses cannot discern.¹ Furthermore their deliverances, regarded in the aggregate, are by no means uniform and unequivocal, for they differ in respect both of individuals and of species of intelligent beings. A rustic, for example, cannot comprehend the subtle ratiocinations of a philosopher; and Aquinas believes that there is a greater difference between the intellect of men and of angels than between that of the greatest philosopher and the most ignorant rustic. Here, therefore, we are on the ground of Skepticism. The ratiocination of the angel of the Schools reminds us of that of Pyrrhôn, but Aquinas is neither here nor elsewhere consistent with himself. For this natural reason, with all its shortcomings and uncertainties, is still a Divine gift, a faculty which man shares with the supreme wisdom. Indeed, within its own sphere, reason is reliable and autocratic, although in matters of faith it is impotent and uncertain. At this point, therefore, we reach the main source of Aquinas's dualism. We have to determine the relation of a natural faculty common to all mankind, to a special and supernatural communication of God to man. How far, it might be asked, are the procedures and tests of reason applicable to faith? The answer to this question may be given in his own words: 'Our theological beliefs offer a *double method* of truth. There are Divine truths which surpass the power of the human intellect, as for example the Trinity. There are others which the natural reason may reach, as God's existence, His Oneness, &c. which even philosophers, guided by natural reason, have demonstrated.'² The practical effect of this dual relation is abundantly manifested in Aquinas's writings. It induces a subdivision of reason into two kinds, inferior and superior, the former being identified in its method and objects with natural reason, the latter becoming gradually merged in faith or religious intuition. You must not suppose that Aquinas states this dissidence in terms of avowed antagonism such as would bring it under the category of double-truth. Theoretically, faith is not contradictory but supplementary to reason, it does not contravene so much as surpass it. Taking up human wisdom and truth-discovery at the point where reason, in consequence of its weakness, is

¹ *Loc. cit.*: 'Rerum enim sensibilibus plurimas proprietates ignoramus, earumque proprietatum quas sensu apprehendimus rationem perfecte in pluribus invenire non possumus.'

² *Contra Gentiles*, i. cap. iii.; comp. Jourdain, i. 158.

compelled to leave them, it carries them forward into the region of the Unseen. Practically, however, faith is supreme. No methods of rational inquiry are held to be valid against the distinct utterance of Revelation. True, reason may, nay indeed ought to, examine, inquire, and prove, so far as it has ability, but it must not aspire to determine. The latter office is reserved for faith, whose pronouncements are therefore in every case reiterations or confirmations of foregone conclusions. Thus in the final stage of a process ostensibly founded on rational method reason ceases to exist except in its accustomed capacity of 'Ancilla Theologiæ,' and the conclusions of faith become in ultimate analysis arbitrary *fiats* of the will, in other words, categorical imperatives. Aquinas's real position is seen when he comes to examine such dogmas as the Trinity. Here reason is at once and peremptorily put out of court. The subject-matter is confessedly beyond its province. Its methods here are useless, and its authority ceases to exist. Proofs of the Trinity, according to Aquinas, are mischievous for two reasons: (1) they are derogatory to the dignity of the doctrine; (2) they are apt to turn men from religion by disclosing the weakness of its arguments. Conclusive reasons, he maintains, are not necessary for faith. To suppose them so would be to misconceive the sublimity of that Revelation which surpasses the understanding of men and of angels.¹

But Aquinas's final stress on the claims of Revelation must not make us lose sight of the leaven of rationalism with which he contrives to combine it. No Schoolman reputedly orthodox lays so much stress on the natural reason as Aquinas. He continually insists on its importance to faith, for without reason faith, as its highest development, would become impossible. He asserts in terms the Divine origin which is the common property of every kind of reason; maintains it to be the sole principle of worthy human action. Nor is this all. We shall presently find that, in his own systematic discussions on the doctrines of the Church, reason occupies a much larger place in his treatment than does Revelation. He assigns to its methods, its tests, and its conclusions a scope and importance which have often in the history of human thought satisfied the demands even of Skeptical philosophers. In short, Aquinas represents the equiposing intellect in its perpetual effort to balance, without injury either to reason or faith, their mutual antagonisms. Too much of a theologian to allow reason to exclude faith, he is too much of a philosopher to permit faith to

¹ Comp. Jourdain, vol. i. p. 173.

assert whatever it might choose on the subject of religion. Legitimately, the issue of such a dual position would be double-truth ; but an open advocate of this doctrine Aquinas is not. On the contrary, he devotes a chapter of his 'Contra Gentiles' to its refutation.¹ Virtually, however, the only distinction between himself and an advocate of dual truth is that after his ratiocination, often in spite of it, he affirms the foregone conclusions of the Church.

I am inclined to think that this duality, together with the general many-sidedness of his method, may partly be accounted for by the intensity of his thought. His eagerness in seizing and rendering apprehensible the separate details of his argument seems to make him negligent of its effect as a whole. He appears comparatively indifferent to the remoter issues of his reasoning, or its general homogeneity. He expressly acknowledges that truth is manifold. He admits that it has a double relativity, one pertaining to the thinking subject, the other to the object thought. He discriminates between its different kinds with the candour of a mind more eager to comprehend its totality than to seize on one only of its phases, however important. Hence I cannot help thinking that in his divided allegiance to faith and reason the latter possesses, spite of appearances to the contrary, the greater share of his affection. He introduces reason whenever he possibly can. He treats with it all the dogmas of the Christian Church, even those generally held to be most mysterious and ineffable. No doctrine receives such a warm approval at his hands as that which has the suffrages of reason as well as of faith. No doubt faith is outwardly the superior as the faculty that partly includes, partly transcends reason, but Aquinas's faith, as I have noticed, is often no more than a determinate affirmation, neither asking nor desiring corroboration, and over an intellect like his a definitive assertion dispensing altogether with ratiocination could never have obtained exclusive domination.

I have dwelt on Aquinas's judicial relation to reason and faith at some length, because I consider it the general clue to his intellect, and therefore as illustrating his versatile mode of discussing all questions, theological no less than philosophical, ethical as well as exegetical. I will now glance at a few of his philosophical theories, in order to show their eclecticism, their equipoising methods, and consequent incertitude.

I. Let us take first the great question of the Middle Ages, which we shall have to examine more fully when we come to

¹ Lib. i. cap. vii.

William of Ockam—I mean the controversy between realists and nominalists.

Aquinas, as we have observed, was on most points of philosophy, and on some few of theology, an Aristotelian. The commencement of knowledge he finds in the senses, and its after-growth he bases largely on experience and *à posteriori* reasoning. But the knowledge of the senses thus taken up into the intellect must needs be formulated and generalized by its processes, otherwise it cannot claim to be knowledge. In other words, the mind aspires on every subject to attain universal concepts. What then are universals? Are they independent entities existing apart both from the conceiving mind and the objects conceived? Are they pure products of the human intellect obtained by the exercise of its abstractive faculties? If the latter, are they innate and necessary, or only accidental? Aquinas discusses these different theories, and discards them. He prefers Aristotle's solution, viz. that universals exist in a twofold manner. First, they exist in the nature of many particular things. Secondly, they exist in an unified manner in the intellect, which has abstracted and collected them into a single concept. So far he is both a nominalist and conceptualist. But when he comes to consider the actual method employed by the mind in realizing universals, he is a realist as well, for he holds that the abstractions that constitute universals may be called images or likenesses of their objects, and thinks they may have a separate existence. He does not concede the doctrine of the Scotists, that sense-impressions are caused by the intermediate agency of their images, 'intelligible species' as they were termed, but he nevertheless asserts that they have an actual existence even prior to the creation of their correlated objects, *i.e.* in the minds of angels and supernatural beings, and he also allows that images and species may exist for men as modes of knowledge.¹

It would be absurd to represent these divergent ideas as altogether consistent, or to claim them as connected portions of an uniform system. Prompted by diverse motives, they pursue different thought-directions, and arrive naturally at discordant results. The most enlightened of all Aquinas's philosophical defenders is obliged to admit their mutual dissidence.² But they serve to illustrate his extreme eclecticism. Indeed, a simple definite determination of a moot point in any given subject-matter it would be impossible to find in Aquinas. If there are no objections to be made, at least there are distinctions to be drawn, qualifications to

¹ Jourdain, *Op. cit.* i. p. 314.

² Jourdain, *loc. cit.* comp. p. 322.

be suggested, conditions to be asserted. M. Jourdain accounts for this phenomenon by the excessive refinement induced by a long training in dialectical subtleties.¹ But we must also ascribe it to the *Zeitgeist*. It was the ordinary method of Scholasticism, and Aquinas was only guilty of an extraordinary extension of it in virtue of his abnormal intellectual capacity and comprehensiveness. Thus on the question of realism *v.* nominalism there is hardly an opinion on the subject, whether propounded by advocates of those opposite schools or by conceptualists as occupying a medium position between them, which you may not find somewhere in his writings. Nor is there anything to prove either that he recognised the dissonance between his various dicta, or made any effort to diminish or destroy it. The causes of this extreme syncretism we have in part already noticed. It was chiefly the attempt to combine Aristotle with Christian dogma as it existed in the tenth century. At that time every philosophical problem was complicated by theological inferences and correlations. No matter how far removed from the principles and methods of theology a speculation may have been in the first instance, the all-embracing activities of a Church that claimed to be at once both omniscient and infallible were bound to bring it within her grasp. Hence Aquinas could not consider the points at issue between realist and nominalist without coming in contact with the theory of creation as contained in Scripture, any more than he could formulate a definition of individualism without including the speculations of the Church on the nature of angels and spirits. So far as his own idiosyncrasy as a philosopher was concerned, we may assume that his sympathies were in favour of some combination of nominalism and conceptualism, but the anthropomorphic conception of God adopted by the Church, together with the supposed intellectual qualities of angels, demanded some recognition of universals *ante rem*, *i.e.* prior to creation. Accordingly, as I have said, Aquinas is a realist, a conceptualist, and a nominalist, the first as a theologian, the last two as a philosopher and disciple of Aristotle.

There is another question closely akin to that just considered, with which the name of Aquinas has been especially connected, and which still further illustrates the character of his thought—I mean his theory of individuation. No small amount of speculation was expended in the schools, on the principle that differentiates the individual from the other members of his class, *i.e.* the species to which he belongs. Aristotle determined the question

¹ *Op. cit.* i. p. 261.

by his well-known hypothesis of form and matter. The first was regarded as a kind of spiritual entity or a plastic energy which moulded and determined the latter, while Plato made an archetypal idea operating from without the cause of individuation. The distinction resembles in part that which is now current between teleologists and evolutionists. Aquinas decides the question on the side of Aristotle. Generally averse to the metaphysical generalizations of the realists, he was especially hostile to Averroes's theory of the indissoluble unity of the intellect with its Pantheistic implications. He therefore insisted that the true cause of individuation was matter, not, however, in the 'primary' form in which it was conceived by the Schoolmen, *i.e.* devoid of all qualities, but in its 'stamped' character (*materia signata*) as distinguished by the possession of definite properties. In his own words, it was a man's flesh, his bones as well as his vital principle or soul, that individuated him. But by his close adherence to Aristotelian materialism Aquinas involved himself in theological difficulties, for if matter were the sole cause of individual distinction, there could be no individuality in the case of pure spirits; but as Revelation assures us that such a distinction does exist, we are bound to infer that there are as many species as individuals among angelic beings. Indeed, he maintains that God Himself could not create two angels of the same species—a proposition which not only caused great scandal, but was formally condemned by the Archbishop of Paris, in 1276. A further difficulty arose from the application of his theory to human souls in their disembodied condition. He therefore has to modify his hypothesis in these different cases in order to make it harmonize with the opinions of theologians. This discussion is important for two reasons: (1) it illustrates the kind of 'hand-to-mouth' procedure so characteristic of eclecticism, by which Aquinas surmounts his difficulties, merely providing for them as they arise; (2) it manifests his intellectual independence in adopting a hypothesis considerably in advance of the theological thought of his time.

This leads me to notice another subject which, like those already considered, testifies both to Aquinas's speculative freedom and his Skeptical indifference to logical consistency. I have already observed that Averroes is the *bête noire* of St. Thomas. He terms him 'the destroyer of philosophy.' Now that which was especially obnoxious to Aquinas in the system of 'the great commentator' was the central idea of his teaching—the indivisibility of the intellect. This was at once an avowal of extreme Pantheism and a denial of the immortality of the human soul. We

shall find, when we arrive at the Italian Renaissance and Pomponazzi, that this was the great problem that exercised the intellects of all the foremost thinkers in Europe from the twelfth to the fifteenth century, and Aquinas was one of the first among the powerful antagonists which Averroism stirred up. He, however, approaches the question from the side of Aristotelian materialism. The soul he defines as the efficient, formal, and final cause of its body. With Aristotle, he terms it the form of its body.¹ The knowledge which the soul possesses of itself he esteems imperfect, because it is only general and confused knowledge. To acquire particular and detailed knowledge the soul must obtain experience, and this is only possible through the instrumentality of the bodily senses. Hence the soul, in order to acquire a higher grade in the scale of intelligences, must be united to the body, and the main function of the latter is to complete what is wanting in the former. To a Cartesian or Platonic philosopher, as M. Hauréau rightly remarks,² such a theory would be 'energiquement sensualiste.' It was quite opposed to those Christian metaphysics which based the perfection and immortality of the soul on its pure spirituality. Indeed, Aquinas's zeal for the physical affinities of the soul is so great as to betray him sometimes into expressions of complete materialism. Thus he terms the soul 'an act of the bodily organization,'³ calls its attributes 'energies of the organs of the body,' and states that 'it is educed by the power of matter itself.' It would be clearly wrong to push these isolated phrases to their legitimate issue, both because they are distinctly contravened by others of opposite implication, and because they express occasional and momentary phases of thought in a many-sided speculation; but they are useful as proving the latitudinarian character of his thought—the point on which I chiefly wish to insist.

Tending in the same direction of eclecticism and equipoise we have his doctrine of diversity of souls.⁴ Already we have noticed his unwillingness to grant as a possibility the existence of two

¹ See, on the various mediæval theories relating to this subject, Dr. M. Schneid's *Körperlehre des Johannes Duns Scotus und ihr Verhältniss zum Thomismus und Atomismus*.

² *Histoire*, &c. vol. ii. pt. i. p. 380.

³ This definition is derived from Aristotle, and was generally accepted by mediæval Peripatetics. Pomponazzi calls it 'the common definition of the soul,' and points out that its purport is to deny the doctrine of immortality. See his *De Immortalitate Animæ*, p. 13.

⁴ Comp. *Summa Theol.* i. dist. lxxvi. 2 (Migne's ed. vol. i. p. 1216); Jourdain, i. p. 285, &c.

spirits of the same species. This was in the case of angels. But a similar hesitation would be still more justified as to human souls, especially after investiture with corporeal organs, and with a distinct experience on the part of each individual. Thus his diversity of knowledge and of knowledge-methods fits in with his idea of the endless disparity of intelligences, and would result, if carried to its legitimate outcome, in a relativity which might be described as 'Quot intelligentiæ tot sententiæ.' Without actually insisting on it, Aquinas undoubtedly inclines to that belief. He affirms in express terms the variability of subjective knowledge, just as he does the mutability of all subjective truth. 'Certitudo,' he says, 'is found in different natures in diverse manners according to the different condition of each nature.' Indeed, the relativity of knowledge is more than once admitted by him, though, as in other instances, the doctrine is in entire contradiction to some of his remaining tenets.

II. Passing now to Aquinas's theology. Here, without previous acquaintance with his thought, we might have anticipated a somewhat different method. As a philosopher and Aristotelian, Aquinas had a perfect right to his free standpoint, his juxtaposition of rival authorities, his selection of them from all quarters indifferently, the calm equilibration of their arguments. Both in theory and actual origin, philosophy was pledged to no dogma or foregone conclusion, and theoretically the field was left open to any inference based on legitimate grounds. But in theology the case was different. Here Aquinas stood face to face with an elaborated scheme of dogma, to which he professed *ex animo* to adhere. His position was not that of Abelard, who, after exhausting philosophy, turned his attention to theology in order to ascertain how much demonstrable truth it contained. Aquinas accepted the dogmatic conclusions of the Church without any such preparatory scrutiny. If he was unable to establish them by reason, he could coerce his will to their reception. If there were no inherent compulsion, he could institute an arbitrary one, whose effect would practically be the same. But when we examine Aquinas's theology we find not the least distinction in method. He evinces the same dual tendency that we have noticed in his philosophy, the same readiness to subdivide distinctions already impalpable, the same balancing of arguments, *sic aut non*, as the case might be, the same habit of quoting indifferently from sacred and profane sources—Aristotle's utterances being put, *e.g.* on the level of Augustine's, or even Christ's. Nor can we discern any abatement of the magnanimous candour with which he states the views of opponents.

Striking examples of this ingenuousness may be found in any of Aquinas's controversial writings. Let us take, by way of illustration, his investigation of miracles contained in the 'Disputed Questions.'¹ Here we have no less than twenty-one reasons of more or less cogency against the possibility of miracles. Of these it might be said without fear of contradiction that had they been formulated by a determined adversary of the supernatural, they could hardly have been stated more forcibly. They include most of the arguments on that side of the subject that were known before the time of Hume. He inquires 'whether God can effect anything in creation against natural causes, or contrary to the course of nature;' and first it seems not, for

1, 2. God, as the creator of all natural things, can do nothing against nature. God can no more act against the laws of nature than against Himself.

3. The order of nature is derived from Divine wisdom, just as human justice owes its origin to Divine justice; but God cannot act against human justice and thereby cause crime, so neither can He act against the order of nature.

5. God cannot cause two mutual contradictories to be true. Hence He cannot effect what, *ex hypothesi*, are impossibilities in nature.

6. God cannot act by mutable volition against causes that He Himself voluntarily instituted.

7. Order is the good of the universe, but God cannot act against the advantage of His own creation.

10. According to Aristotle, nature is the cause of order in all things, but that God cannot do anything except in conformity with this order is asserted in Rom. xiii. 1, 'The powers that be are ordained of God.' Therefore He cannot do anything against nature.

11. The human reason is from God, so also is nature. God cannot act against the former, so neither can He against the latter.

12. The artificer cannot, unless by error, do anything contrary to his craft. Hence God, the artificer of the universe, cannot act against the course of nature.

13. All action presupposes a tendency to act, but we cannot ascribe to God a disposition to act against nature.

14. Anselm affirmed that the least inconvenience is impossible to God, and a change in the order of nature would be inconvenient. Therefore, &c.

15. Power is related to the impossible as knowledge is to false-

¹ *De Potentia*, qu. vi. *Op. om.* viii. p. 122.

hood, but God cannot know what is false in nature. Therefore He has no power to effect the impossible.

19. This urges the inconvenience which would result if God produced effects of nature without the intervention of natural causes.

20. Cause in relation to effect possesses an essential order of succession, but God cannot destroy the effect while the cause remains, and hence He cannot produce a natural effect without a natural cause.

21. It is unbecoming that the greater good should give way to the lesser; but the good of the whole universe is better than the advantage of one particular part. Therefore God cannot change for the behoof of one man or a single nation laws which He instituted for the good of the universe as a whole.

These twenty-one *cons* are of course duly followed by their correlated *pros*, which, however, do not seem to us quite so forcibly put; but what is important for us to notice is Aquinas's frankness in the discussion of questions of theology. The exceeding exuberance of this candour,¹ so often observable in his writings, can only be accounted for by an unlimited confidence in reason, and in its power to apprehend and verify truth. It would be interesting to ascertain, were it possible, the precise effect of this mode of ratiocination on those who were continually dieted on it. What intellectual momentum, *e.g.* and of what kind, would a thinker of the thirteenth century derive from a series of twenty *pros* set in array against twenty-one *cons*? In the present day, with our more direct methods of reasoning, the attempt to revive such an exact equilibration of conflicting arguments would be too formal to be successful. But if it could be adopted, the result would often be pure suspense. In ancient Greece, as we know, this was regarded as the inevitable outcome of the method—itsself one of the most valued weapons in the armoury of Pyrrhonism. But in mediæval times and in general relation to Christian dogma this was by no means necessarily the case. Thinkers reared in the principles of ecclesiasticism, and holding that no ratiocination could by any possibility invalidate the dicta of the Church, were always

¹ Aquinas's excessive ingenuousness in stating objections to Church dogmas has often been the subject of angry comment on the part of his coreligionists. Cæsar Cantù, *e.g.* in his *Eretici d'Italia* (vol. i. p. 97), thus describes his method: 'Enuncia, per lo più in forma di quistione, il teorema che intende dimostrare; poi espone e sillogizza tutte le opposizioni filosofiche con tal franchezza e lealtà, che poterono da lui attingere eresia ed objezioni quanti ebbero la mala fede di sopprimere le risposte.'

provided with a remedy for the suspense which might arise from the equal balance of antithetical arguments. They had only to affirm, as Aquinas did, the arbitrary determination of the will, and the matter was settled.

We will next consider Aquinas's treatment of the first article in the creed—belief in God. This again we shall find to be strikingly illustrative both of his Free-thought and of his inconsequent ratiocination.

All we really know of God, according to Aquinas, is His existence. We know that God *is*. But this truth is not to be accepted as an authoritative dogma propounded by theology, and incapable of demonstration, nor is it to be received as an intuition based on ontological and *à priori* grounds; nor again are men to create an imaginary Deity by making Him the embodiment of all the positive attributes we choose to assign to Him. The being of God is capable, he thinks, of demonstration, and demonstration *à posteriori*. He accordingly adopts Aristotle's mode of proving God's existence by inferring a mover from the fact of motion. This is only another form of the general argument from causation which we shall find was impugned by Ockam, but which Aquinas regarded as indubitable. Every effect must have its adequate and appropriate cause, and that there cannot be an infinite regress in the series of causes, but we must postulate a primary cause, is admitted by Aristotle himself. But these effects and multiform movements are seen to exist in the universe. The visible world is therefore to Aquinas the most obvious and indisputable of all the proofs of God's existence.¹ Even its dissonances and contradictions tend to demonstrate the being of a Supreme Ruler; for what other cause could be alleged for the order that seems evolved from so much disorder and discrepancy? But having thus determined from the combined action of the reason and the teachings of the universe that God exists, Aquinas hesitates to go further except by the road of negation (*via remotionis*). Though we know that God *is*, we cannot tell what He is. In Scholastic terminology we cannot define the Divine substance: we know only what He is not. Here Aquinas is in accord with Abelard, Ockam, and many other mediæval thinkers who derived their inspiration from the so-called Dionysius the Areopagite, the author of this proof by negation. But the process itself, as you will see, is the usual method by which the Realists attained to their highest abstractions, *i.e.* by eliminating all qualities and determinations until nothing was left but pure

¹ *Contra Gentiles*, i. xiii., *Op. om.* v. p. 12.

Ens, or unconditioned being. That this process is both inconsistent with the reasoning that infers a Creator from the visible universe, and is besides of a peculiarly dangerous character for a dogmatic theologian, I need not point out.¹ But inconsistencies are of small account in Aquinas's estimation. So, pursuing his negative path, he demonstrates that God cannot have either beginning or ending, that He is not material, that He has not body, nor anything of a composite character, that He does not contain anything accidental, that He has not a purely passive capacity, that He cannot be defined by any other genus but His own, &c. M. Jourdain has observed that Aquinas was induced to propound his definitions of Deity by the Pantheism then prevalent of David de Dinant and Amaury; but however great his antagonism to those thinkers, his own writings are not altogether free from occasional sentiments and reasonings which have a distinct flavour of Pantheism. In truth, Aquinas's intellect was too comprehensive, his sense of the infinitude of Deity, the illimitable nature of His powers and attributes, was too profound to allow him to ignore those aspects of truth of which in any case Pantheism is only an exaggerated statement. But although Aquinas, in deference to the authority of the pseudo-Areopagite, and partly as a counter-active to Pantheistic dogma, sanctioned a negative conception of Deity, he declined carrying it to its legitimate issue. When he comes to discuss the Divine relation to humanity through the agency of nature or Revelation, his conceptions of God and His attributes are just as positive as those of any theologian. Not unfrequently indeed his expositions of the Divine dealings have a distinct flavour of anthropomorphism. More in accord with his negative standpoint is his opinion that all our knowledge of God attainable by human faculties or by ordinary methods is imperfect. To know God in His essence, a supernatural state of beatific vision, a kind of superior reason or intuition, is necessary. Hence he agrees with Abelard, Ockam, and for that matter with most Christian theologians, in anticipating in the future world that plenitude of knowledge unattainable in this. It would be difficult to determine from his own diversiform utterances the precise connection he supposed to exist between this supernatural reason and the ordinary reason shared by all men alike. But taking as our guides tendencies rather than *obiter dicta*, we shall not be far wrong in saying that while as a philosopher his inclination was to make their difference one of degree, as a theologian he actually

¹ See, on this point, Jourdain, i. p. 206.

regarded them as distinct in kind—another form, in short, of the ultimate dichotomy of reason and faith.

There is little that is markedly peculiar in Aquinas's doctrine of Providence, if we except his constant effort to combine Aristotle's teaching with the dogmas of the Church. He makes God's knowledge extend far beyond the limits of actuality, even as conceived in the Divine mind. God knows not only what is, but what is not and might have been. On this ground he declines to believe with Abelard that our universe is the best of all possible worlds.¹ With his accustomed appreciation of freedom, he refuses to tie down omniscience to the little our finite intelligences are able to discern concerning His action. God, he thinks, might have conceived other designs besides that which He actually chose; but having for good reasons, known only to Himself, selected that which the universe presents to us, its development is perfect. It is needless to point out the inconsequences of this ratiocination, or to show how it purchases the unlimited freedom of the supreme volition at the cost of the absolute wisdom of its actual operations. As bearing on his eclecticism, we may observe that Aquinas finds the multifarious diversity of the creation in harmony with the collective attributes of God, the numberless beings, species, varieties, &c. being necessary as a complete many-sided reflection of the supreme power, wisdom, and goodness.² A more interesting peculiarity of Aquinas's doctrine of the providential government of the world is the traces it exhibits of something like a theory of evolution. Of the act of creation he maintains that it is indemonstrable—an object of faith, not of knowledge; but creation once posited as an accomplished fact, he is inclined to make its continuity and preservation the outcome of unchangeable laws. Indeed, he goes further, and asserts that the process of conservation is only the perpetuation of the self-same energy that first brought the universe into being.³ This phrase may remind you of the stress he allowed to be placed on the uniformity of the course of nature, as distinguished from miraculous interferences. In this connection, too, I may add that though he regards miracles as necessary and befitting the promulgation of Christianity, he does not consider them abso-

¹ *De Potentia*, qu. i. 5.; comp. Jourdain, i. 257, who points out Abelard's agreement with Malebranche and Leibnitz on this point. See also Ritter, *Gesch.* viii. p. 281.

² Jourdain, i. p. 231.

³ *Summa Theol.* i. qu. xiv. art. i.: 'Conservatio rerum a Deo non est per aliquam novam actionem; sed per continuationem actionis qua dat esse.' See Jourdain, i. p. 241.

lutely so, for Christ might have chosen to convert men by an appeal to their instincts and reason, in other words, by purely moral influences.¹

There is one more aspect of Aquinas's theology—also illustrating his evolutionary tendencies—which we must glance at before leaving this cursory sketch, viz. the relation of Christianity to the precedent condition of the world. His own partiality for Greek and other non-Christian literature would of itself suggest an assimilation between Gentile and Christian truth; and this he is inclined to manifest so far as the exigencies of dogma will allow. He shares the belief we have already noticed, of the Alexandrian school and St. Paul, of a prior and natural Revelation imprinted by God in the hearts of all men. Thereby men have acquired those primitive instincts of justice and goodness which have enabled them to establish political and social systems. Hence they have come by that gift of reason which has guided them into such important acquisitions of truth. Through its agency we possess all that varied and massive wisdom of ancient Greece—the metaphysical speculations of Plato, and the still more valuable natural science of Aristotle. But this primary and universal Revelation was imperfect for more than one reason, but chiefly because it did not guide humanity direct to God—the alone source of all truth, wisdom, and goodness. Accordingly the Christian Revelation was added, not to contravene the utterances of the former, but to confirm, enhance, extend them, as well as to impart to them a new direction. The gospel is, therefore, the crown and glory of the natural Revelation given to all men. They also stand to each other in the relation of explicit and implicit faith; the first making clear and manifest what the second contained in a veiled, partial, or imperfect form. Aquinas's opinion on the salvability of the heathen we shall have another opportunity of discussing.² I will only say here that it partakes of that perpetual conflict between his own natural instinct, his sense of justice and humanity, on the one hand, and the dicta of the Church on the other, which is so general a feature of his thought.

Having thus glanced at the eclectic spirit in which St. Thomas

¹ *Quodlibeta*, ii. 6 (*Op. om.* ix. p. 477); comp. his *Commentary on St. John*, cap. xv. lect. v. (*Op. om.* x. p. 572). In an age when belief was based so exclusively upon miracles, it is important to notice Aquinas's attempts to modify this misconception. He points out, *e.g.* how miracles diminished the merit of faith, and that the disciples of Christ believed on Him before they saw His miracles.

² See *Essay on La-Mothe-le-Vayer*, in a succeeding volume.

discusses some of the primary doctrines of the Christian faith, I need go no further in this direction. On all other dogmas on which the mind of the Church had been long and decisively affirmed, his standpoint is the same—a careful marshalling of opposite arguments, sometimes followed by a judicial summing up of their different bearings; but ending with, in most cases, a preponderance on the side of dogma. But the chief characteristic of his intellect is the equilibration, not the preponderance. The latter is a duty; the former, clearly a mental pleasure. His intellectual pendulum is perpetually oscillating between the demands of reason, of justice, of expediency, of humanity, and the pronouncements of dogma. Even when the doctrines of the Church are too sacred and ineffable to be analysed, too mysterious to be rationally discussed, he yet contrives to examine them indirectly, and to suggest analogies, &c. as reasons for their acceptance. Thus, although he declares that the Trinity must be received without investigation, he himself enters upon an explanation of each of its parts.¹ The Incarnation he defines as the greatest of all miracles, yet he is eager to find analogies and reasoned justifications of it. While accepting, and on some points exaggerating, the efficacy of the Atonement, he yet refuses to allow that it was absolutely necessary.² In regard to doctrines of lesser importance he similarly steers a zigzag course between rival theories. He recognises what seems most true in predestination, and what must be maintained on behalf of human liberty. Man's will, he admits, is free, but its *ultima ratio* is the Divine volition. Evil is only privative, but nevertheless its positive conditions as determined by the Church, its army of demons with their supernatural powers, its physical tortures of hell-fire, are rigidly insisted on.³ His views of heresy, of political rights and duties, and other questions in which authority and liberty come into conflict, are alike equilibrations between the claims of the antagonistic principles, with, as I have already remarked, a final bias towards authority, especially as represented by the Church.

III. Proceeding next to his ethical teaching, we find the same method of equipoise, but with the distinction that it is fully

¹ See Ritter, *Gesch. der Phil.* viii. p. 276. Baur's *Dreieinigkeit*, ii. 684.

² Qu. xlvi. art. I. Comp. on this subject, Baur's *Lehre v. der Versöhnung*, p. 247.

³ It is one of the countless inconsistencies of Aquinas, that though he maintains fully the physical nature of eternal torments, he yet thinks that the never-dying 'worm' is not material, but spiritual, and represents the remorse of conscience.

avowed. The basis of his morality is indeed more Aristotelian than ecclesiastical, and for this very reason forms a pleasing contrast to the ritual morality most affected by the Church. He starts with the fundamental maxim of the Nichomachean ethics, that man must needs pursue what he esteems the supreme good. This in Aquinas's ultimate ratiocination is nothing else but God: mediately, however, it may be defined as intellectual, or more frequently—for Aquinas's sentiments on this, as on every topic, are variously expressed—ethical excellence. To enable man to attain to this *summum bonum* we must admit that his will is free.¹ Indeed Aquinas, like Malebranche and Condillac, makes the will identical with the appetite, for with all his love of subdividing and distinguishing he occasionally evinces an appreciation of simplification. Now the value of any human action is determined by three things—its object, circumstances, and intention. An action must be unexceptionable in each of these respects before it can be truly described as good. But it is evident that in this very enunciation of the conditions of moral worth a large field of speculation and uncertainty is thrown open. Aquinas therefore insists that virtue is a mean between two extremes, and this mean is determinable by reason. To use his own words, 'The good of moral virtue consists in its conformity to the standard of reason.'² It is clear, however, that between excess and defect there is a mean of equality or agreement, whence it evidently appears that moral virtue consists in a mean.³ Almost the *ipsissima verba*, we may add, of Aristotle in his ethics. But even this definition does not make equilibration needless; on the other hand, it demands its application in every particular instance. The very terms of the definition assume a certain degree of mutability. Moreover, the mean itself is not always represented by a point equidistant from its supposed extremes, for, as Aristotle himself admitted, it sometimes approximates to one, sometimes to the other. I need not point out the similarity of this method with that which had become the normal procedure of all ecclesiastical inquiry. Substitute for separate arguments a divergency of ethical conditions and circumstances, and the after-processes of balancing and deciding are in the two cases alike. Aquinas insists so much on this method that the

¹ On this point M. Hauréau considers Aquinas's opinions so pronounced as to savour of Pelagianism; see his art. ('St. Thomas') in *Dictionnaire des Sci. Philosophiques*.

² 'Bonum enim virtutis moralis consistit in adæquatione ad mensuram rationis.' Comp. following reference.

³ Jourdain, i. p. 355.

moral doctrine of the 'Summa' has been termed a commentary on Aristotle's ethics.¹ Every thinker must allow that there were features of this teaching of peculiar importance to Christianity, especially at the time when it received the high sanction of the 'angel of the Schools.' To begin with, the ethics of Aristotle is in itself a nearer approximation to the moral teaching of Christ than the spurious ethics which the Church had for her own interest too often sanctioned. Aristotle at least would never have allowed a speculative opinion on an unimportant subject to be substituted for gross neglect of elementary human duties. It was something also to have the moral conduct for which each man is individually responsible thrown upon the broad bases of reason and humanity, instead of being dictated *ab extra* by sacerdotalism. Nor was the exercise of independent judgment in estimating the conflicting movements in a given course of action, and finally determining on the issue to be preferred, without its advantages at a period when so little scope was allowed for the employment of such judicial functions. At the same time we must take heed not to exaggerate this Aristotelian aspect of Aquinas's moral teaching. It would involve a fundamental misconception of his character to suppose that his philosophical predilections were on any topic so pronounced as to make him unmindful of his orthodoxy. Hence we have in his moral doctrine the same duality that we have already noticed in his intellectual speculation. For as there are two kinds of reason, the first natural and inferior, the second supernatural and Divine, so is there a natural and infused virtue. The latter, being supernatural in origin and efficacy, is superior to the former. Here again we come to the dichotomy of faith and reason that underlies all his theorizing. Aquinas's own conception of the precise relation of the superior and inferior virtue is not easy to determine, for his opinions on this subject are no more consistent than they are on others. He sometimes appears inclined to make the higher morality distinct from the lower, not in degree only, but in kind. He asserts, for instance, that the theological virtues differ in species from all the moral and intellectual virtues—an utterance, surely, of sacerdotal intolerance, for it would imply that no man had ever exercised the virtues of faith, hope, and charity before the introduction of those graces by Christ. More in harmony with his Catholic moods is his opinion that all virtue, as all reason, is in its origin Divine, and therefore that all manifestations of it at whatever time must needs have some sacredness

¹ Jourdain, i. p. 358.

pertaining to them. But, as I have so often said, we must not hope for consistent thought in Aquinas. Here, as elsewhere, he is an eclectic, putting forth what appears most true or striking in conflicting schemes of thought, without the least regard for their mutual congruity. Hence we meet with continual dissonances, the inevitable result of his standpoint between philosophy and ecclesiasticism. As a philosopher, *e.g.* he believes and asserts that man always desires good as his supreme object; but as a theologian, and in view of the doctrine of the Fall, he is compelled to contradict his assertions on that matter.

I will not weary you with the countless distinctions which Aquinas introduces into his ethical teaching, nor is it necessary. What I have already said will show you the nature of his speculations, as well as of their diverse character. The objection has often been made that by means of its manifold distinctions, subtle refinements, &c. Aquinas's moral teaching prepared the way for the complete ethical Skepticism of the Jesuits. It would be truer to say that both one and the other are in kind developments of the same primordial causes. These are—1st. The claim on the part of the Church to decide all controverted issues in morals, as in every other department of human knowledge. 2nd. The introduction of dialectic, often of a captious kind, into ethics and theology. Aquinas's moral distinctions and subdivisions were no novelty. All the principles and procedures of mediæval thought revealed the same features, and in method casuistry is synonymous with scholasticism. But there is but little trace in Aquinas of that scandalous perversion of all ethical principles which has rendered Jesuitism a word of infamy. It is true his teaching here, as always, is ultimately made to accord with the dicta of the Church; but his conception both of the Church and her genuine interests differs widely from that which the followers of Loyola thought proper to adopt.

IV. I have often characterized Aquinas's teachings as inconsistent: the same charge cannot be made against his method. That is always the same. He is always an eclectic. Indeed, his incongruities are only outgrowths of that rudimentary principle. We have already seen the truth of this remark in his philosophy, his theology, and his ethical teaching; but it also holds good of him as a commentator. His exegesis is as uncertain as his speculation. Almost half of his voluminous writings consist of expositions, and they are all pervaded by the same spirit of syncretism and cosmopolitan sympathies. Thus in his Scriptural comments we can never affirm that we have a decisive opinion as to any

particular passage, until we are certain that he has never contradicted it elsewhere, and to assert this deliberately presupposes a detailed knowledge of the contents of some twenty-five massive folios. Thus we have not only divergent but contradictory opinions as to whether Abraham did right, from an ethical standpoint, when he attempted to sacrifice his son; whether he was culpable or not in proclaiming Sarah to be his sister; whether Jacob really conversed with God face to face; whether the prophet Hosea was right in contracting the singular marriage to which he confesses in the first chapter of his prophecy,¹ &c. Nor was this freedom of Scriptural exposition part of that general latitude which the Fathers derived from the allegorical interpretation of the Bible. It was rather a diversity of view suggested by the different moods of the writer, or induced by the various standpoints and connections that presented themselves in his many works. The same remarks also apply to Aquinas's comments on Aristotle. True, he does not string together, as in the 'Catena Aurea,' the different interpretations of the text propounded by various authorities, probably for the reason that, with the exception of Boethius, the commentators on the Stagirite were unknown to him; but he readily excogitates different possible renderings from the large resources of his own intellect, and leaves the reader with an embarrassment of exegetical riches to select the rendering that appears to him best.

We are now, I think, in a position to take a fair and comprehensive view of Aquinas's intellectual standpoint, and we must make ample allowance for the peculiar nature of his environment. He found himself surrounded by a multitudinous and diversiform speculation of varied origin, scope, and tendency: the utterances of Holy Scripture conveyed and explained by numerous commentators diverse in knowledge and sympathies; the teachings of the Church attested by decrees of councils and the writings of the Fathers, and displaying beneath a fictitious semblance of unity a multiform diversity of speculation; the philosophies of Aristotle and other Greek thinkers with a similarly divergent presentation, though of narrower extent; the more recent speculation of Arabic thinkers, with their strong leaning to Pantheistic metaphysics, and their independent investigation of nature. As a many-sided thinker, capable of entering sympathetically into conflicting ideas and schemes of thought, Aquinas was not so much embarrassed as

¹ Those who care to pursue the subject of Aquinas's contradictory interpretations, Biblical or otherwise, may be referred to the 5th Index 'De Antilogiis,' in vol. i. of Migne's edition of the *Summa*, or the Index of 'De Bergamo,' contained in vol. xxv. of the *Opera omnia*, ed. Parmæ.

a man of narrower culture would have been, either by the multiplicity or mutual antagonism of these many schemes. He carefully revolved in his own mind their foundations, their developments, and their several outcomes. All claiming alike to be based on reason, he was compelled to give them due consideration. Indeed, apart from their claims, his own predilection for thought of any kind was so great that any thinkable scheme was certain to command his respect and insure his investigation. It was impossible, *e.g.* to say what was dialectically justifiable in the system of Averroes, or what was not, until he had attentively considered it. Although he rejects it as a whole, he borrows some few of its reasonings and conclusions. He deals in the same way with all the other thought-methods that presented themselves for his examination. Ultimately he chooses from each those principles or conclusions most in harmony with his own predilections. He was not frightened at the inconsistency of the *tout ensemble*, even if he cared to contemplate it. Heterogeneousness in thought was no bugbear to him. Besides being the outcome of his own conviction that all intelligences were disparate and individual, he saw too many traces of it, or a multifariousness undistinguishable from it, in nature, in philosophy, nay, in theology itself, to be alarmed at it, or to regard it as abnormal. There is an old Devonshire proverb which says, 'It takes all sorts to make a world.' Aquinas would perhaps have said, 'It takes all sorts to erect a scheme of Catholic thought,' especially one that would include philosophy as well as theology. Indeed, his own definition of theology is so framed as to comprehend not only philosophy but every department of human inquiry.¹ Accordingly he brings together his materials, and erects the most elaborate, but withal the most 'ruda indigestaque moles' that is known in the history of human speculation. His 'Summa,' as the most systematic of all his works, has been compared to a Gothic cathedral. Some time ago I tried to realize the appropriateness of the simile while engaged in contemplating our cathedral at Salisbury, but I failed. In truth, the simile is too flattering. The 'Summa,' though not deficient in amplitude and multitudinous detail, as a whole lacks uniformity. It is more like Solomon's temple for its vastness, and because its materials are collected from all quarters. But the church that might fitly challenge comparison with it would be one not only built of many kinds of materials, but one that should embody different styles of architecture, and be adapted for various modes of worship—a combination of Christian cathedral, Greek temple, and Mahometan mosque.

¹ *Contra Gentiles*, lib. i. cap. iv.

Nor are we left to infer Aquinas's cosmopolitan sympathies and his predilection for multifariousness indirectly from his diversified treatment of different topics. We have his own repeated admission of his idiosyncrasy. Indeed, his polemic against the Pantheism of Averroes and some Christian thinkers of his time necessitated an individualizing, disintegrating policy of thought. When the heresy consisted in fusing the whole of existence, physical and spiritual, into an undistinguishable oneness, it was clearly the duty of orthodoxy to insist on the differentiation and consequent variety of the constituent parts. Thus Aquinas defined God as the primal cause in which all effects are contained. The multiplicity of nature he considered necessary in order to reflect the manifold attributes of Deity.¹ Of the sum of intelligences, human and Divine, he thought no two were precisely alike. He regarded human language as involving an infinite diversity of implication. He recognised the manifold senses of Scripture, refusing, however, to admit that they were self-contradictory. Aristotle's method he especially eulogized for amassing exhaustively all possible opinions on a given subject before declaring his own decision. He described dialectic as uniform only in speculative things, but of different kinds in demonstrative science. Just as he defined Deity as the cause of manifold effects, so he pronounced the human soul as being in its multiple operations 'all things.' Truth itself he asserts to be multiform, and that in a twofold manner: (1) by the diversity of things known; (2) by means of different methods of knowing. Taken as indications of mental disposition, and coupled with what we know of his own method, the aggregate force of these different definitions and opinions seems to me considerable. They attest an omnivorous appetite for multiform and many-sided aspects of truth, and, what is more, an inclination to regard every truth not as single and uniform but as multiple and diverse.

To attempt to formulate in some consistent shape or to present in epitome the belief of such a myriad-minded thinker as Aquinas is upon the face of it a sheer absurdity. One might just as reasonably exhibit an herbarium or a collection of fossils as an epitome of the universe. Not only might each intellectual tendency be counterbalanced by another divergent form if not contrary to it, but to almost every expression of opinion it might be possible to oppose others of varying degrees of dissimilarity. While looking through his works, I collected not a few indications of his Free-thought sympathies, but I found them so often contradicted or

¹ Jourdain, i. p. 284.

modified by other passages that I did not think it fair to urge them. Still, I have not the least doubt in my own mind that he was more of a philosopher and a rationalist than a dogmatic theologian—a conclusion, I may add, to which many even of his co-religionists have arrived. Passing over minor arguments in favour of this view, there seem to me to be two especially deserving consideration: 1st. His extreme individualism. Although he asserted it as the antithesis to Averroes' theory of the indissolubility of the intellect, it is manifest that he carried it to a Skeptical extent. Among the Schoolmen no thinker asserted so firmly the maxim of Protagoras, that man—the individual, not the species—is the measure of all things. The outcome of this argument we have more than once indicated. Nothing indeed can well be more evident than that the predication of individual distinctness in the case of all intelligences, earthly or heavenly, renders truth as a common possession impossible and absurd. Aquinas's chief difference on this matter from Sextos Empeirikos is, that as a theologian he extends to celestial intelligences the disparity which the philosopher limits to human intellects. 2ndly. I cannot help thinking that for doubt in the sense of suspense Aquinas entertained no small measure of active sympathy. Indeed, it is difficult to see how he could have forborne to do so. The principle of intellectual hesitancy is so closely allied to his own chosen method of equilibration that he could hardly have impugned the former without condemning the latter. He defines doubt as 'a movement of the reason on both sides of a subject, combined with a dread of determining either, lest one might be involved in a wrong conclusion.' He acknowledges that it is 'a mode of avoiding errors,'¹ for 'in all problematical matters there should not be a facile assent.' His appreciation of doubt seems indicated by various other circumstances. Thus all his heresies are dogmatic, either positively or negatively. The very term heresy implies, as he justly remarks, determinate dogma; his construction of non-Christian beliefs, for an ecclesiastic of the thirteenth century, is singularly tolerant. He makes the implicit faith of Jews and Gentiles prior to the Christian era an equivalent for the explicit belief required afterwards. Blameworthy heresy, he says, consists in pertinacity, and is engendered by pride and worldly interest. He admits that misbelievers, when they do not try to corrupt others, should be tolerated, and maintains that the uninstructed can in no case be deemed heretics. To this we must add the charitable

¹ Comp. on this point, lib. i. cap. iv. of the *Contra Gentiles*.

tone of his controversial works, especially of his 'Contra Gentiles.' But more than all is the curious fact that he nowhere blames or tries to refute Skepticism as such. M. Jourdain has remarked on this singularity, which seems the more noteworthy because Henry de Gand, the most illustrious Schoolman among the contemporaries of Aquinas, has dedicated a considerable part of the Introduction of his 'Summa' to the subject.¹ This writer describes Skeptics as men 'who by affirming that everything is uncertain have engendered in many minds despair of finding truth.'² Was Henry de Gand, asks M. Jourdain, gifted with a forecast of the Renaissance, or was Skepticism, in the sense of suspense, already in existence? I am inclined to favour the latter hypothesis. That Skepticism was even then widely disseminated in the south of Europe seems to me clear for reasons which we shall have another opportunity of examining;³ and my own solution of Aquinas's silence is, not that he had any sympathy with suspense for its own sake, but as a mode of cautious investigation it was too closely akin to his own method of equipoise to justify its reprehension.

But if Aquinas was not, as Bishop Huet called him, a Pyrrhonist, it may still be asked how far he shared in that semi-Skeptical mode of thought which we have denominated double-truth. And here we must discriminate. We noticed under Sokrates and in the chapter on Twofold Truth the idiosyncrasy of many thinkers to antithetical reasoning, and the reception of contradictory conclusions. In the case of Sokrates the standpoint is ironical and purely Skeptical. The judge gravely mediating between the contending parties professes the most absolute ignorance as to the merits of the question, and allows the issue, generally uncertain, to be self-evolved in the process of discussion. But with the advocates of double-truth and with Pyrrhonists, the antagonism between opposing beliefs is clear, definite, and avowed: the judge is constrained to admit the opposite issues to be equally true and irreconcilable. Now the judicial Skepticism of Aquinas is somewhat different from both of these. In this case it is assumed as a necessary postulate that one of the contradistinctions is infallibly true, but together with that assumption it is admitted that the opposite may have much to say for itself, so much indeed as almost to elevate it into the category of certitude, but

¹ Jourdain, vol. ii. pp. 30, 31.

² Comp. *Recherches Historiques et Critiques sur Henri de Gand*, par F. Huet, p. 117.

³ See the chapters on the *Italian Renaissance and Pomponazzi*, in the next volume.

always leaving a residuum of advantage to the favoured side. Hence, if Sokrates's ironic Skepticism may be represented by balances in a perpetual state of mobility, with no special inclination to one side more than the other, and if the method of double-truth and Pyrrhonic Skepticism may find an analogy in balances that always preserve a fixed state of equilibrium, the method of Aquinas may be likened to balances, apparently true, but in reality having one scale slightly loaded, so that after any number of fluctuations it always returns to the same position.

We must not, however, forget that such a predetermination to reach a foregone conclusion is quite compatible with a considerable degree of Free-thought, and that for two reasons: 1. The very effort of research which enables a thinker to discover nineteen *cons* which may fitly be placed in antagonism to twenty *pros* is itself a distinctly Free-thinking process. The practice of perpetually finding contradictions to propositions which are nevertheless held to be true may not result in overthrowing them, but cannot be supposed to confirm them. The countermine is planned by one who knows perfectly well the position of the mine it is intended to counteract, and who is cognizant of the precise point at which it might, if allowed to advance, become fatally effective. The onlooker, who contemplates the dangerous tactics, may be pardoned for entertaining a suspicion of the perfect *bona fides* of the unscrupulous engineer. He may distrust his protestations that the mine, and not the countermine, represents his real sympathies. He may ask whether a little more energy or an effort less directed by confessed *arrière pensée* might not change the preponderance even of loaded balances. Besides, when the contending issues are so evenly poised, the determination to adhere to one rather than the other must needs partake of the character of an unconditional affirmative, and we have already seen that Aquinas's assent to ecclesiastical dogma was professedly volitional, and so far was in precisely the same category as the ultimate imperative of Kant or any other Skeptic. 2. Aquinas's controversial freedom may be regarded as the outcome of that very dogmatic fixity he has attained by means apparently so questionable. Having started with the deliberate acknowledgment of all the dogmas of the Church, and thus placed his loyalty to those dicta above suspicion, he may have considered himself more at liberty to criticize for criticism's sake the terms of those very propositions. Paraphrasing Augustine's motto—'Habe caritatem et fac quod vis'—Aquinas might have said, 'Habe fidem orthodoxam et dic quod vis.' This was undoubtedly

his intellectual position, and it is one shared largely by Free-thinkers of his own and other dogmatic communions. Having fixed one leg of their intellectual compasses, these men conceive themselves at liberty to let the other range at liberty in any given direction. Just as a modern clerical assembly, having devoutly recited the Apostles' Creed standing, not unfrequently sits down and propounds doctrines and manifests a spirit in entire antagonism to Christianity—the hallowed influence of the initiatory act of faith is apparently supposed to sanction the after-display of unfaith. When we come to discuss Bishop Huet we shall find a remarkable instance of the extent to which this line of thought might be carried, but Aquinas, though a more moderate, is a sufficiently striking example of its operation. M. Jourdain has asserted that his sole ambition was to be orthodox. I should rather say that he was determined to profess his adherence to orthodoxy, and under cover of that adherence to exercise his reason with a very considerable amount of latitude. After what I have said in my paper on double-truth, it is needless to add here that I question neither the *bona fides* nor the justifiableness of that position. That Aquinas's method is related to double-truth cannot, I think, be gainsayed, but it does not amount to its definitive assertion. He repeatedly denies that contradictions in the same subject are admissible. But we must in fairness allow that there are many instances of antinomies of every degree of contrariety in his works. Indeed, both his master and himself may be taken as illustrations of a mode of truth-conception that cannot be called double, partly for the reason that it is multiple, *i.e.* when each dualism becomes merged and lost sight of among countless antagonisms of the same kind. Not that I think either Albert or Aquinas was conscious of the mutual irreconcilability of their varied premisses and conclusions.¹ They illustrate a psychological law that a principle which standing by itself, and consciously realized in a definite instance, would be dis-

¹ Dr. Prantl's diagnosis of Albert's manifold contradictions is equally applicable to Aquinas (*Logik*, iii. p. 89). His words are worth quoting: '... ja auch seine bisweilen ins endlose gehenden Distinctionen, welche man gerne an ihm rühmt, sind nicht sein Erzeugniss; die Auswahl welche er zwischen verschiedenen Ansichten trifft, beruht nicht auf einheitlich festgehaltenen Grundsätzen, sondern auf dem momentanen Drucke, welchen Autoritäten auf ihn ausübten, daher man sich auch nicht wundern darf, wenn man ihn häufig auf Widersprüchen ertappt.' On the other hand, Oischinger, in *Die Spekulative Theologie des Heiligen Thomas d'Aquin*, maintains that Aquinas's conclusions are discordant and unsustainable, for the reason that his speculative principles were drawn from Aristotle.

claimed, may pass unquestioned when its operation is manifold both in degree and in kind. The intellectual, like the physical, vision often labours under an incapacity of discerning the wood on account of the trees.

But this eclectic multifariousness—the outcome of such a diversified ratiocination—I regard as Aquinas's greatest merit, considered as a Schoolman. In an age when freedom of thought was so carefully watched and vehemently suspected, latitude of speculation within the ostensible limits of the Church broadly and philosophically defined, afforded an outlet for intellectual energies the importance of which we cannot over-estimate. The very conception of Christian truth as a fairly open field of discussion, or at least one that did not exclude alien methods of thought, could not but prepossess ingenuous and liberal minds in its favour. Thereby was asserted the worth and dignity of all truth, no matter whence originated or by whom promulgated. Something of the feudal idea of material prowess and superiority seems to have entered into this predilection for free discussion. It was the outcome of a firm persuasion that truth is in its nature Divine and supreme, and for this reason is able—like the most powerful knight in a tournament—to hold its own against all comers. This was Aquinas's conception of Christianity, and the source of his broad cosmopolitan sympathies. The doctrines of the Church he believed to be true, both to the investigation of reason and to the spiritual intuition of faith, and on this ground he regarded them as impregnable to all attacks from whatsoever side they might arise. The notion that Christianity as a Divine communication of truth could be injured by contact with Aristotle, Avicenna, or any other non-Christian but genuine truth-seeker, he would have spurned with contempt. His Gentile sympathies were often charged against him by men of narrower views, but they formed an integral and indissoluble portion of his intellectual breadth. He probably would not have yielded so willing an assent to some of the dogmas of the Church had he considered himself altogether debarred from the rational compensations of philosophy. The very preponderance of faith in his equilibration of faith and reason rendered it the more needful to allow reason all the influence it could possibly possess short of that ultimate supremacy. Accordingly, Aquinas is the thinker of all others who best represents the Catholicity of Romanism—I mean that all-inclusive, variously sympathetic latitudinarianism which every institution intended for humanity ought indubitably to possess. That the scope and outline of his collective beliefs were intentionally multifarious we

have already acknowledged, and we must accept their mutual contradictories as an essential portion of such a comprehensive standpoint. No doubt his inconsistencies are both numerous and startling. The most popular edition of his greatest work, the 'Summa Theologica,' is preceded by a table in which the antinomies (contained in that work alone) are duly catalogued and, in attempt, reconciled. How far Aquinas would have approved the effort to harmonize his discrepant utterances appears to me doubtful. From his ardent sympathy with diverse, many-sided aspects of truth, we may infer his belief that on most moot points of speculation no simple consistent solution is obtainable, or for that matter desirable. His conception of Deity, as we have seen, included manifoldness as an essential characteristic, and he extended the same attribute in kind to minor intelligences, not excluding the human mind. That the dissonance and incongruity thence resulting has been animadverted upon is no more than we might expect. Indeed, the diversity of his views is curiously reflected both in his own destiny and in the various opinions of his commentators. After being stigmatized as a heretic by his own Church, he has since been canonized as a saint. His methods and conclusions have been accepted as ultimate tests of Catholic truth, and denounced as the outcome of extreme Skepticism.¹ Could he have foreseen the diversiform character of the judgment of posterity concerning him, he might have regarded it as an additional argument for the multifariousness of truth and the individual disparity of all intelligences. Thus Petavius, with others of his co-religionists, considered him heretical on the subject of the Trinity and other dogmas of the Church. Casimir Oudin said that his works were the offspring of Scholastic garrulity. Brücker² complained that his Christianity was tainted with Greek and Arab philosophy. St. Cyran said that he reasoned too much. Bishop Huet pronounced him a Pyrrhonist. Neander considered him a semi-Rationalist. Hauréau regards him as a semi-Materialist, and on the question of human free-will a Pelagian. While Dean Milman thus characterizes him: 'He is nearly as consummate a Skeptic, almost Atheist, as he is a divine and theologian.'³ On the other hand, his works have been received with favour by thinkers of widely distinct sympathies. The ethical part of his 'Summa,' called

¹ On the adverse estimates of Aquinas, considered from a Romanist standpoint, see, *inter alia*, the Dissertations of De Rubeis, appended to the *Summa, Op. om.* vol. vii. pt. ii. pp. 1274-1311, and vol. ix. p. 642, &c.

² *Historia Philosophiæ*, vol. iii. p. 805.

³ *Latin Christianity*, vol. vi. p. 283.

the 'Secunda Secundæ,'¹ has been loudly applauded by moralists who have looked coldly on his theological disquisitions. Protestant jurists, like Grotius and Puffendorf, and Romanist jurists like Budæus and Vives, regarded it as an authority of no small weight. It is said also to have formed the favourite reading of some eminent English ecclesiastics, as, *e.g.* Bishop Sanderson. While as to his writings in general, Rationalists, Pietists, Mystics, and Sceptics have concurred in extolling the 'angel of the Schools.' Not only Liberal Catholics, as Erasmus, Bossuet, Fénelon, Arnauld, but thinkers generally opposed to ecclesiastical dogma, have agreed in recognising Aquinas's good sense, his moderation, his immense learning, his generous and undogmatic spirit. Thus he was the favourite of Descartes, Giordano Bruno, Pomponazzi, Campanella, and La-Mothe-le-Vayer. Indeed, whatever deduction may be drawn from the circumstance as to his own intellectual proclivities, it must be admitted that Aquinas has generally been the favourite divine of modern Sceptics.

Closing this tripartite essay, I once more revert to my introductory apologue. I trust I have satisfactorily established this part of my thesis, that Aquinas's method is suggestive of and contributory to Free-thought, and is thus closely related to the idealism of Erigena and the bolder rationalism of Abelard. The 'angel of the Schools,' like the balancing bird in the cage, virtually annihilates the confining bars by the perpetual motion of his wings, and his delight in his own power of levitation. In other words, Aquinas is an admirable example of the mental freedom which necessarily springs from eclecticism and broad sympathies; from the perspicacity which recognises, and the equipoising instinct that weighs, the different aspects of every truth; from the vivid imagination which not only seizes but elaborates and intensifies alien standpoints; from the indifference to exclusive, one-sided dogma which marks the genuine philosopher; lastly, from the absolute confidence in truth, which believes in its ultimate superiority when allowed a fair field and ample scope of reason.

TREVOR (folding up his MS.). Now to which of these three types of thinkers—we may call them the intensive, the protensive, and extensive—shall we award the credit of achieving the greatest amount of intellectual freedom, or

¹ This somewhat puzzling designation means the second or ethical division of part ii. of the *Summa Theologica*. In Migne's edition it takes up the whole of vol. iii.

which of the three birds succeeds best in annulling the iron bars of his prison, the singing, cage-forcing, or balancing bird?

MISS LEYCESTER. It appears to me that all those succeed equally in ignoring their confinement. Each might quote for itself Lovelace's verses with but a slight adaptation :—

Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage,
Minds deep and bold and large all take
That for an hermitage ;
If I have freedom in my love,
And in my soul am free,
Angels alone that soar above
Enjoy such liberty.

But as a matter of personal taste I should prefer the freedom born of idealism. The power to fuse and blend all that is circumscribed, painful, embarrassing in our lot, in some infinite homogeneous pleasant environment, seems to me very valuable. One could hardly suppose that Erigena, for instance, could have been greatly incommoded by any amount of dogma.

HARRINGTON. I knew that would be your choice ; but give me the protensive or the forward intellect—the man who will not condescend to the subtleties and evasions of the idealists, nor deign to hide his head in the sands in order to enjoy the delusion that he is unseen. Abelard—taking him in his prime—appears to me a far loftier type of thinker than either Erigena or Aquinas. He is the Prometheus Vincetus of the Schoolmen—'bound' not by the decrees of Olympus, but by the hardly less ignoble chains of Papal sacerdotalism.

ARUNDEL. Well, my selection would be Aquinas—the Broad-Church man of the Middle Ages. I own to despising entirely the customary vituperation of eclecticists as if they were outcasts of philosophy. Truth, as it exists within or without us, seems to me like chemical elements—generally found in nature as compounds, and only attaining simplicity by means of laborious analysis. Simplicity is not its natural but artificial condition, and, when we succeed in detaching a single truth from its concomitant qualities, it is just as ready

to rush into unison with them again as a chemical element is to relapse into its composite condition. But if truth have thus a more or less mixed character, then clearly the best mode of comprehending it in its fulness is eclecticism, a subjective many-sidedness corresponding with the objective multitudinousness. Indeed, the eclectic faculty—the power of grasping every truth by its more probable aspects, and of assimilating truths or portions of a truth diverse from each other—appears to me higher and rarer than almost any other class of intellect—higher, *e.g.* than the idealistic. Any one might by refining, allegorizing, &c. reduce all the articles of a creed into so many airy nothings: the difficulty seems to me to accept dogmas in their customary form, at least with only obtrusive angles chipped off, and afterwards to put them together into a coherent superstructure.

HARRINGTON. Precisely so, if you are sure of the coherence. But this quality in Aquinas's case at least seems to have been conspicuous by its absence. . . . I confess I cannot share your opinion that the Aquinas type of mind is rarest, nor does it always imply either an omnivorous appetite for knowledge or an abnormal capacity for containing it. It is just as often the outcome of ignorance or of an undisciplined intellect. Small minds are not averse in proportion to their size to assimilating discordant beliefs. Perhaps, if I may say so without offence, it is precisely this class of intellect that is most common with clerics of all kinds. I have heard the remark made that three-fourths of the clergy 'of all denominations' are unconscious syncretists. Without realizing it, they are monotheists and polytheists, Christians and Manichæans, Calvinists and Arminians, and some half-dozen more of irreconcilable beliefs, all at one time.

TREVOR. Well, we must remember what we said on a former occasion as to the happy rarity of mental dyspepsia. At present our question relates not to the highest type of mind inherently, but to that which is able to secure the greatest amount of freedom in presence of a large body of dogmatic belief such as that professed by the Church of Rome. Apart from this standpoint, I should say Abelard's as the analytical intellect stands highest, but in relation to Church

dogma, and assuming the necessity of submitting to its requirements, I should hold Aquinas's as the most convenient type of intellect. The two thinkers are related to each other, so far as primary mental aptitudes are concerned, as Lessing to Goethe.

MISS LEYCESTER. But the quality that especially availed Aquinas in his eclecticism and adjustment of diversiform belief was precisely that for which Erigena is most remarkable—I mean his metaphysical aptitudes, his devout feeling, and powerful imagination. Hence we have that breadth and comprehensiveness of view which indeed distinguishes not only Aquinas but all thinkers who find themselves at home among dogmas and creeds, against which their reason might if employed unconditionally and unscrupulously recalcitrate. Take, *e.g.* the two chief divisions of modern Christianity, Romanism and Protestantism : not a few of the profounder intellects which have embraced both one and the other have been enabled to do so by the possession of this idealistic and imaginative faculty. This is especially seen when the dogmas are in their common acceptation difficult or self-contradictory. What a number of metaphysical interpretations of the Trinity, for instance, have commended themselves to thinkers of various aptitudes, ages, and schools ! What a variety of acceptations of the Incarnation—the synthesis of the Divine and human—have been propounded by thinkers not only of different times and countries but even of different religions ! No doubt to the narrow-minded dogmatist there is little distinction between losing the definite outline of a dogma in a halo of imagination or sentiment and directly impugning it. For him it is not enough that the dogma should be affirmed in any manner : he must needs insist on the special form in which he himself, whatever his intellectual power, is able to conceive it.

ARUNDEL. Thanks, Miss Leycester ! You have suggested a thought which appears to me of considerable importance. We are all agreed more or less that the imperative claims of a religion should be marked by simplicity and self-evident rationality, and would rather go for our Christianity to the Sermon on the Mount than to the 'Summa' of Aquinas. But

at the same time his eclecticism and its methods possess another advantage in addition to their multifariousness, which, as broad-thinkers, we cannot refuse to concede—I mean the undoubted effect of the endless distinctions and subtle refinements of scholasticism as a mental gymnastic. However mischievous in other respects, the method was calculated to induce a flexibility of thought, to develop a keen eye for gradations and distinctions in all subject-matters of speculation, and a nice apprehension of delicate *nuances* in their verbal expression, together with such a comprehensive insight into every side of a question as to exhaust readily and completely its ratiocinative resources. Talleyrand used to ascribe the undoubted ability of mediæval diplomatists, who were mostly clerics, as well as of their ecclesiastical brethren of more recent times, to their scholastic training. The ablest diplomatist in English history was, in my opinion, Cardinal Wolsey. It may not be tracing cause and effect too curiously if we were to ask how much the political polity, diplomatic usages, &c. of the foremost European states are owing, through the clerical statecraft of some centuries ago, to the voluminous works and oftentimes non-luminous methods of the Schoolmen.

HARRINGTON. Talleyrand was probably right, but you must take the character of that clerical diplomacy as a whole before pronouncing its verdict. If scholastic methods tended to evolve intellectual acumen and dexterity, an unrivalled tact and suppleness in urging one's own opinions and interests, they also helped to promote an unprincipled astuteness—a cynical contempt for candour and honesty, and an unscrupulous employment of sophistry, chicane, and tergiversation from which I hope our modern diplomacy is to a great extent free. Whoever reads the history of the Italian States from the twelfth to the sixteenth century, or, for that matter, the mediæval chronicles of any of the great states of Europe, will entertain no very high opinion of the clerically trained statesmen and diplomatists who directed their politics. Talleyrand himself, with his clerical education and affinities, is an apt illustration of that Machiavelianism which is in politics what Jesuit casuistry is in religion.

Could we trace their statecraft directly to ecclesiastical training, such characters as Machiavelli, Wolsey, and Talleyrand clearly prove that the methods of the Schoolmen and their successors tend to produce not only the legitimate freedom of thought Dr. Trevor claimed for them, but that species of Skepticism which is worse than all others—I mean the contemptuous disregard of all moral obligations.

ARUNDEL. By crediting scholastic methods with the incidental merit of imparting intellectual versatility, I of course did not mean to go beyond those qualities which in the complicated relations of political and social life may be honourably as well as usefully employed. I meant such virtues as tact, urbanity, common-sense, social adroitness, the genial and courteous appreciation of adverse positions or parties, which might be discharged without injury to the primary claims of veracity. . . . I have myself scant respect for the personal characters of Wolsey or of Talleyrand—the latter especially seems to me the Mephistopheles of modern diplomacy.

MRS. HARRINGTON. I must say that the methods of the Schoolmen are receiving hard measure at your hands, considering that the object of Dr. Trevor's paper was to show the services they rendered to the cause of Free-thought. We have often been told that Jesuit casuistry is the offspring of Scholasticism : now we are informed that the selfish scheming of statesmen may be traced to the same origin. This additional inculcation is surely needless. The very position of a diplomatist demands an eager watchfulness for his country's interests, which in many cases would degenerate into craftiness. Sir Henry Wotton's witty definition of an ambassador as a man 'sent to lie abroad for the good of his country' recognises the inherent nature of his temptations and his possible delinquencies.

TREVOR. Well reminded, Mrs. Harrington. I think it quite time to give our pendulum an impulse in the opposite direction. When criticizing the *ἡθoς* of Scholasticism with its countless distinctions and abstractions, we must bear in mind that the resultant mischief was by no means equal to what we might have anticipated from a survey of its un-

rivalled resources. The apparatus of the Schoolmen for intellectual sleight-of-hand performances has never been equalled. I think it will amuse you if I cull a few sentences from a famous controversialist of the seventeenth century¹ on this point, albeit remembering that they are the utterances of a vigorous and not very discriminating polemic. Speaking of Scholasticism he says, ‘What a desolate wilderness was it, covered with briars and thorns, darkness and obscurity! Monstrous distinctions and multitudes of abstractions were introduced into philosophy. There you might find *entia rationis*, *objectivè*, *subjectivè*, and *effectivè*; and the distinction of a distinction into that which is *realis*, and what they call *rationis*, and this latter is either a distinction *rationis ratiocinantis*, or *rationis ratiocinatæ*. Then follow, ranged in due order, your *greater and lesser realities*, *modal entities*, *formalities*, then *acts*, whether *substantial*, *accidental*, *prime*, *secondary*, *compounded*, *divided*, *signatè*, *exercitè*; then the *states*, *amplifications*, principles of *individuation*, *suppositalitys*, *signate matter*, *hæcceitys*, *ecceitys*, *petreitys*, *quidditys*, *identitys*, *desires after a form*, *a dread of a vacuum*, and whole cart-loads of qualitys. But it’s impossible to number up all the elegancys of the *Albertists*, *Occamists*, *Thomists*, *Scotists*, *Reals*, and *Nominals*. Such wretched work have these gentlemen made, both in philosophy and theology, by mangling and showing them in vizards and masquerades, and by false lights; that instead of seeing ’em in their native loveliness and beauty, you can discover little or nothing of ’em in their writings, but paint, obscurity, and deformity.’ Now allowing, as we must, the substantial truth of this invective, we must acknowledge that it is not so wonderful that Scholasticism should have engendered Skepticism as that its influence in this direction was so limited. Erigena, Abelard, and Aquinas are the most advanced thinkers among the Schoolmen, but it would not be right to regard their freedom as more than semi-Skepticism.

HARRINGTON. But you forget, Doctor, what you have

¹ *A Discourse of Logomachys*, by S. Werenfelsius, translated into English. London, 1711. P. 101.

more than once insisted on, that the evils of these scholastic subtleties lay in their affinity to the dogmas to which they are related. As mere speculations they were, if barren, in other respects innocent; but when they claimed the consistency and definiteness of dogmas, they became tyrannical. You remember what Rabelais says on this very point in his description of the furred law-cats, and what they were enabled to do by the power of the sixth essence, *i.e.* scholastic abstractions: 'Among them reigns the sixth essence, by means of which they grip all, devour all, burn all, draw all, hang all, quarter all, behead all, murder all, imprison all,' &c.¹

MISS LEYCESTER. No doubt 'the sixth essence' has imprisoned and murdered not a few noble spirits, as our Skeptical researches will all too sufficiently attest. But while we are treating the outcomes of Scholasticism, I should like more light thrown on its more legitimate scope, I mean its influence on after-theology, science, and language.

TREVOR. Such a field of discussion would be much too wide for our purpose. On the first point you might read Bishop Hampden's Bampton Lectures, which, however, seems inclined to exaggerate the influence of Scholasticism on subsequent theology. The good bishop appears not to have seen that the abstractions and distinctions which he rightly complained had disturbed the peace of the Church are not exclusively the outcome of Scholasticism; for—(1) they are partly inherent in the nature of all speculative theology; (2) they took their rise in the earliest history of the Church—the first Schoolman is St. Paul; (3) they were increased by the introduction of dialectic long before the era of Scholasticism, as we saw in the case of Augustine.

HARRINGTON. By the way, Doctor, I feel inclined to demur to your classification of Aquinas as an eclectic. According to your own admission this character can only be assigned him with the reservation—a somewhat large one—of the whole dogmatic belief of the Romish Church. I cannot share your opinion that what you term his eclecticism diminished to any serious extent his belief in the Church,

¹ *Pant.* book v. chap. xi.

though something, no doubt, should be allowed for his basing his theological beliefs on faith and volition rather than on reason. My notion of an eclectic is a man who without foregone conclusions of any sort deliberately surveys all accessible modes of thought and chooses from each his own 'hortus siccus' of definitive convictions.

TREVOR. Starting, I suppose, with the assumption that everything is an open question. But there is nothing to show that Aquinas may not have adopted this method. There was so much ratiocination in his intellectual formation as to make it even probable. His acceptance of the dogmas of the Church may therefore have been based on his own independent investigation of their evidences, just as his reception of Aristotle's teachings was. A determined adhesion to a creed does not conflict with a thinker's eclecticism, provided its articles were originally acquired eclectically, and this I am fully sure was the case with Aquinas.

ARUNDEL. What appears to me to prove Aquinas's taste for eclecticism is his undoubted multifariousness by which his thought seems distinguished from the narrower but more reasoned systems of Erigena and Abelard. My motive for inclining to eclecticism in religious belief is that I distrust the effects of rigid logic on theology. Every system of dialectical theology that pursues its course of dry abstract syllogizing without taking thought of qualifications, conditions, &c. seems to land one in a moral *cul-de-sac*. Take, e.g. sacerdotalism, Roman or Anglican, grant its premisses, and you cannot dispute its conclusions; but the system is fatal to intellectual freedom or progress. Or take bibliolatry, allow all its postulates, and you are irretrievably entangled in the meshes of a servile and imbecile literalism. Or once more, take Calvinism, nothing can be dialectically better founded, as Jonathan Edwards long ago demonstrated; but what havoc does it not make with all our instinctive convictions of God and His attributes, and of the sanctions of morality! What makes logic so mischievous in the domain of theology is, I suppose, the fact mentioned by Harrington just now, that its procedures become tainted with the assumed infallibility of its conclusions.

TREVOR. As a case in point, I may mention that I once heard a Romanist thus trace the genesis of the immaculate conception. 1. Sinlessness of Christ. 2. His Divine nature. 3. His Incarnation. 4. Perpetual virginity of Mary. 5. Her superhuman nature. 6. The immaculate conception. Of course the dialectical process ought not to have stopped at that stage. There ought to be an indefinite regress of the same material causes of assumed spiritual facts. Perhaps if Romanism ever again resumes her course of doctrinal development, which for the time being seems arrested, we shall have some future Pope proclaiming the immaculate conception of the Virgin's mother and grandmother.

ARUNDEL. I presume your remark as to arrested dogma-growth refers to the new Pope (Leo XIII.) and his allocutions in favour of Aquinas. Romanists are now assured by infallibility that our eclectic must be regarded as their accepted teacher. What, I wonder, will be the effect of that movement on the doctrinal system of the Church? Is it an advance or a retrogression?

TREVOR. Undoubtedly an advance in respect of general culture, liberal thought, and comparative toleration, but a retrogression in point of dogmatic evolution. The selection of Aquinas as the ultimate authority of the Church would be absolutely fatal to its infallibility, if we could only secure his being studied by thoughtful and critical intellects.

HARRINGTON. I believe it is the science and philosophy of Aquinas on which the Pope lays especial stress. He appears to think that the confessed proclivities of the 'angel of the Schools' to reason and physical science would be regarded as an adequate concession to the claims of modern science.

TREVOR. Aquinas's science is Aristotelianism with a slight tincture of Arabic philosophy. But it is utterly inconceivable that any disciple of modern science should be content to limit its scope by the attainments of Greek science some four centuries before the Christian era, still less that he should recur to the *à priori* and deductive methods then in use. Some portions perhaps of Aquinas's teaching might still obtain recognition by modern thinkers, *e.g.* parts of his

psychology, most of his ethical teaching, the greater part of his demonstration of God's existence and of the immortality of the soul; but as a whole his thought and methods are just as impossible of resuscitation in modern Europe as are the manners and institutions of the thirteenth century. The best result of the renewed attention to Aquinas would be to infuse into those scientists who have so long been vainly trying to reconcile the teachings of science with the claims of an infallible Church a little of Aquinas's ingenuous, truth-loving spirit. I have not the least doubt, if he lived in our day, no demands of ecclesiasticism would have made him forego the clear teachings of physical science. His devotion to Aristotle and his leanings to materialism suffice to prove that.

MISS LEYCESTER. I want to ask Mr. Arundel to explain to us his meaning when he said that all large views of truth are necessarily composite—thence drawing an argument in favour of eclecticism.

ARUNDEL. I can best illustrate my meaning by a reference to Goethe's conversations with Eckermann. You remember the passage where Goethe shows his friend a landscape of Rubens representing a summer evening, and when Eckermann, after admiring the fidelity of its different details, suggested that it was copied from nature, Goethe answered, 'Certainly not! A picture so perfect is never seen in nature.' He goes on to say that Rubens carried all nature about with him in his memory, and that was the reason why there was so much truth in the whole as well as in the parts of his landscapes. As a composition, the picture was the outcome of the poetic mind of the painter. Now what Goethe said of Rubens's landscapes, and what Claude claimed for his own when he styled a collection of them *Liber Veritatis*, I should say of all large views or presentations of truth, viz. they are ideal and composite—the subjective constructions and arrangements of single isolated truths. No doubt the truths, like the figures and groups in the landscape, exist independently, but their artistic grouping and collocation are the work of the creative, idealizing intelligence. Aquinas appears to have been endowed with

that plastic ideal faculty. His mind was like an enormous canvas whereon was delineated a broad many-hued landscape like one of Claude's, *e.g.* a mosaic of lights and shadows picturesquely crowded with different objects animate and inanimate; and if he placed prominently as foreground objects the doctrines of the Church, in the background may be discerned a copious variety of other objects representing Gentile and other collateral aspects of those same doctrines.

HARRINGTON. Aquinas's definition of truth was the common scholastic one—the equation or perfect assimilation of the subject knowing with the object known. I hardly see how he would have approved a definition of truth that denies its actual existence, in the form contemplated, in nature.

ARUNDEL. That depends on whether he ever tried to present all or most of his truths as objects with different distances, and colours as well as varying degrees of light and shade, on a single canvas. His eclecticism, I suspect, was unconscious.

MISS LEYCESTER. For my part I quite approve of your pictorial illustration of eclecticism. It makes ideality of prime importance in the mental presentment of truth. But how do you reconcile your approval of eclecticism and multifariousness with your appreciation of simplicity in the fundamentals of religious belief?

ARUNDEL. Quite easily. Take, *e.g.* the first commandment of the Christian code—love to God. Nothing can be simpler than its mere enunciation. But apply reason and experience to the primary conception of God, and what is the result? The creation of a theology with its manifold aspects and countless ramifications. We seem compelled to ascribe to God different attributes to bring Him into direct relation with nature and its evolution, with humanity and its history, with peoples of different races and creeds, with the imperative needs of our spiritual instincts and feelings, with the demands of human ethics and social politics, &c., so that what was simple in primary definition becomes in ultimate ratiocination multiple, or rather the simplicity is transmuted into homogeneousness—the ideal quality of the whole, instead

of the characteristic of each separate part. This is precisely the way in which Rubens, Claude, and all the great landscape painters treat nature. As it actually exists, nature is not discernible in their compositions considered as wholes. It is rationalized and idealized, reformed and rearranged, transposed and transmuted, by the imaginative faculties and eclectic instincts of the artists.

MISS LEYCESTER. But I thought you distrusted the functions of idealism?

ARUNDEL. So I do when it claims not to represent Nature, but to outvie, caricature, or transcend her. A landscape, *e.g.* in which all the known laws of nature, of lights and shadows, were reversed, or in which the objects figured were impossible chimeras, would be loathsome to me.

HARRINGTON. Well, after your encomium of eclecticism you must be more guarded in your strictures on individualism. I suppose you would grant that every man must needs construct his own representation of physical and metaphysical truth, and hence the likelihood that no two eclecticisms, if I may coin the word, are precisely alike.

ARUNDEL. Not necessarily. A society or community *might* 'elect' for valid reasons shown, though I grant that the function pertains more properly to the individual. If you pressed me on the point I might, however, take refuge in an argument I have often heard from Dr. Trevor and yourself, *viz.* that individualism can only be partial and circumscribed. Take again my illustration of landscape-painting. Nothing can well be more distinct than the characteristics of different painters, *e.g.* Claude and Rembrandt. But in each case you have nature and natural objects, though regarded from different standpoints and with a considerable dissimilarity of treatment. Similarly external truths, theological or other, expressed in the same terms or possessing modes of presentation exactly alike, must needs affect different receptivities in at least nearly the same manner. The distinction between individuals will be only in arrangement, colouring, shading, &c.

TREVOR. Quite enough, however, to establish an individualism which might in many cases become Skeptical. But

as you have pleaded guilty to a sympathetic construction of eclecticism, we have no right to press your ratiocination. An eclectic *ex vi termini* is not pledged to uniform or consistent reasoning. . . . As to the subject-matter of my paper, we seem to have arrived at varying conclusions with regard to that kind of freedom which is best able to withstand the attacks of extreme dogma. But we are all agreed that the human mind, whenever it is sufficiently strong and independent, will discover and insist on some method of asserting its freedom.

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EVENING X.

WILLIAM OF OCKAM.

Ἄρχὴ μαθήσεως ζήτησις, καὶ βίβλα τῆς ἐπὶ τισὶν ἀγνοουμένοις συνέσεως, ἢ
περὶ αὐτῶν ἐπαπόρησις.

ST. CYRILL. *Comm. in Johan.* l. ii. ch. iv. p. 180,
Op. om. tom. iv. Paris 1638.

Mephist. Im Ganzen—haltet euch an Worte!

Dann geht ihr durch die sichere Pforte

Zum Tempel der Gewissheit ein.

Schüler. Doch ein Begriff muss bei dem Worte sein.

Mephist. Schon gut! Nur muss man sich nicht allzu ängstlich quälen;

Dann eben wo Begriffe fehlen,

Da stellt ein Wort zur rechten Zeit sich ein.

Mit Worten lässt sich trefflich streiten,

Mit Worten ein System bereiten,

An Worte lässt sich trefflich glauben,

Von einem Wort lässt sich kein Ióta rauben.

GOETHE, *Faust.*

‘Secta nominalium omnium inter scholasticas profundissima, et hodiernæ
reformatæ philosophandi rationi congruentissima.’

LEIBNITZ.

‘La querelle du Réalisme et du Nominalisme est d’une haute importance,
non-seulement pour l’étude historique, mais pour la solution du problème
de la certitude.’

A. FRANCK, *De la Certitude*, p. 149.

EVENING X.

WILLIAM OF OCKAM.¹

TREVOR. Our subject to-night—William of Ockam—has several points of peculiar interest for us. Not only does he possess the Skeptical instinct needed as a qualification to appear before us—for he is our special representative of nominalistic or verbal Skepticism—but he is an Englishman, the founder of a considerable school of Free-thought, a precursor of the Reformation both on its philosophic and its religious sides, and a vigorous antagonist of the Papacy—in

¹ The following are the authorities employed in this chapter:—

I. *Quæst. super iv. Libr. Sententiarum* (Lyons 1495), including also the smaller treatises, *Super Potestate Summi Pontificis* and *Centilogium*, &c.

II. *Quodlibeta* and *De Sacramento Altaris*. Strassburg 1591.

III. *Opus Dialog.* lib. vii.: *De Imp. et Pont. Majestate: Compendium Errorum Jo. Papæ xxii.: Opus Nonaginta Dierum*. Lyons 1494, &c. The contents of the last-named volume are reprinted in the first volume of *Goldasti Monarchia*. 3 vols. folio. Frankfort 1614.

The references in the following Essay are to Goldast's reprint.

Ockam's logical works are sufficiently analyzed and represented by copious extracts in Prantl, *Gesch. d. Logik*, vol. iii. pp. 327-420.

Gabriel Biel Collectorium, &c. *super libr. iv. Sent.* 1527. The importance of this work, for a complete study of Ockam, is now fully acknowledged. Unfortunately, like all nominalistic authorities, it is exceedingly rare.

D'Argentré, *Coll. Jud.* 3 vols. fol. Paris 1728.

Hauréau, *Hist. de la Phil. Scol.* vol. ii. pp. 418-74.

Rousselot, *Études sur la Phil. dans le Moyen Age*, vol. iii. pp. 200-72.

Riezler, *Die Literarischen Widersacher der Päpste*, &c. Leipzig 1874.

Contzen, *Gesch. der Volkswirtschaftlichen Literatur im Mittelalter*, pp. 120-30.

Stöckl (Alb.), *Gesch. d. Phil. im Mittelalter*, vol. ii. 2, pp. 986-1021.

C. Jourdain, *La Philosophie de Saint Thomas d'Aquin*, ii. pp. 174-207.

The more general works of reference, Histories of Philosophy, Church Histories, Dictionary Articles, &c. are noted at the bottom of the page.

short, he unites in his own person most of the elements of Free-inquiry which were current in the fourteenth century.

MISS LEYCESTER. I once heard a learned German say—speaking of mediæval thinkers—that the realists were all Pantheists, and the nominalists all Skeptics. Is not that assertion too sweeping?

TREVOR. Not if you regard it as indicating tendencies rather than affirming definitive and avowed conclusions. Realism, or the principle that asserts the independent existence of metaphysical or linguistic abstractions, is no doubt the royal road to Pantheism; while nominalism, or the principle which denies metaphysics, vivisects its ideas, and bases its abstractions on sensation, experience, and human convention, is clearly Skeptical. As to particular instances, we have already seen what the conceptualism of Abelard—itsself a form of nominalism—meant, and we shall soon perceive the real import of Ockam's nominalism in the direction of theological and philosophical negation. On the other hand, all the essential principles of Spinoza have been found in Duns Scotus and Albert the Great.¹

HARRINGTON. I have been more than once forcibly struck with the fact that all our great English philosophers are nominalists, beginning with Roger Bacon in the thirteenth century, and ending with John Stuart Mill in our own day. In fact, England seems to have been the purveyor-general of nominalism and experience-philosophy to the thought of modern Europe.

ARUNDEL. She has not limited herself to the comparatively innocent commodities you have mentioned, but on two occasions at least she has supplied Continental speculation with a quantity of downright Skepticism—(1) indirectly by the influence of the English Deists in France during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; (2) and more immediately by the influence of Hume on the thought of France and Germany in the eighteenth century.

TREVOR. I am not sufficiently skilled in ethnology to be able to assign racial causes for such a fact, but it would

¹ See Dr. M. Joël's interesting essays on this subject in his *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie*.

appear that those countries in which the originally most distinct branches of the Aryan race have intermingled to the greatest extent, exhibit the fullest intellectual vigour as well as the freest instincts. Take, *e.g.* England, where the Teuton and Latin elements have blended most equally. I don't mean to say that we are in advance of other European nations in point of intellectual research—I know we are not. But I have no hesitation in saying that in the combination of intellectual progress with political freedom we are in the van of European nations.

ARUNDEL. Amen! Only allow the ethnological fact to qualify your usual animadversions of the backwardness of English general culture. After all, a capacity for intellectual progress is of no use except in a country where thought is, by its political constitution, free. . . . As to our Skeptics, were we to separate those of modern times on our list into their several nationalities, we should find that most of them are Frenchmen or Italians. No doubt there is the usual affinity between their general and philosophical character. Both are marked by excitability and impulsiveness—an absence of caution, moderation, and restraint. An average French or Italian Radical is almost invariably a complete Skeptic. There seem to be some elements in the Celtic character, especially when purest, favourable to Skepticism. . . . On the other hand, the Englishman's cold temperament, his intellectual caution, his practical tendencies, impart to his Skepticism a superficial character. Hume was, of course, a Scotchman and therefore a Celt, besides being by foreign residence a half-naturalized Frenchman.

HARRINGTON. You must not found a theory of the relation of Skepticism to nationality merely from the names in our list. We could easily have increased, *e.g.* our English contingent, by including some of the English Deists who were certainly partial Skeptics, for instance, Collins, Tindal, Toland, Bolingbroke, Hobbes, and Shaftesbury. Moreover, all the chief Italian philosophers since the time of Giordano Bruno have been idealists. For my part I am inclined to doubt whether any reliable conclusion on this point is possible.

MISS LEYCESTER. Besides, the generalization which assumes that the impetuosity and mobility of the Latin races tend to Skepticism is counterbalanced by the fact that Christianity has found in those very races, and probably in virtue of their emotional impressionability, her most fervent believers, defenders, and martyrs. So that the same impulsiveness which generates Free-thought may by being shunted on another line of rails, so to speak, induce Pietistic enthusiasm.

MRS. HARRINGTON. I remember once, when puzzled in some youthful mediæval studies by finding a mention of realists and nominalists, asking a learned divine, a friend of my father's, what the distinction between the rival sectaries was. I shall never forget his answer, delivered with the mingled unction and pomposity of the old school of divines: 'My dear young lady, realists are so termed because they believed in realities; nominalists, because they believed only in names.' Of course I was not much enlightened by the elucidation.

TREVOR. It was certainly an *ex parte* definition. If you could have propounded the same question to the ghost of Ockam, you might conceivably have got the answer, 'Realists are so called because on the *lucus a non lucendo* principle, they believe in *unrealities*, while nominalists believe only in real things.' There has been, I need not say, an inversion of both names and meanings since the time of Ockam, though the process has been quite in harmony with his philosophy. What mediæval metaphysicians thought real have now come to be classed as mainly nominal, and the things then reputed nominal have now come to be considered real. Realism in art, *e.g.* is a standpoint which would have commended itself more to mediæval nominalists than realists.

MISS LEYCESTER. The change reminds me of Wordsworth's lament over the decay of idealism in his own intellectual progress. Indeed, his incomparable 'Ode to Immortality' symbolizes also the general transition of thought from metaphysics to physics in the history of modern philosophy.

The youth who daily farther from the East
 Must travel still is nature's priest,
 And by the vision splendid
 Is on his way attended.
 At length the man perceives it die away,
 And fade into the light of common day.

HARRINGTON. No doubt idealism cannot be said to be as prevalent in this age of waning theological beliefs as in the so-called 'Ages of Faith.' Men of science prefer 'the light of common day' to the most brilliant morning star, or the most gorgeous 'daffodil sky' that the imagination of poet ever conceived. But we need have no fear as to its ultimate disappearance. Its power, nay its absolute necessity in poetry and art as well as in religion and philosophy, is far too great to permit, even as a contingency, the hypothesis of its extinction. Indeed, I am inclined to regard the total amount of the idealistic and imaginative elements among cultured societies as an invariable quantity; the difference between one epoch and another in this particular being rather apparent than real, and consisting in a difference of direction. Thus the idealism which our forefathers expended entirely on religion is now spread over the wider area of art, poetry, music, and general æsthetic culture.

Moreover, we must bear in mind the invaluable services nominalism has rendered to science in analyzing the numberless *à priori* beliefs and ideal conceptions of which mediæval thought was so full. Nominalism entered on a contest with all these supersensual phantasms of the dark ages, just as some knight of chivalry armed himself against the supernatural giants, enchanters, wizards, griffins, dragons, hobgoblins, and all the other unreal apparitions of the time.

ARUNDEL. You have just reminded me of an interpretation I once heard given of Don Quixote, viz. that it represents in the perpetual play of cross-purposes between the knight and his trusty squire the different standpoints of realism and nominalism. First we have Don Quixote like an extreme realist idealizing, sublimating, beautifying, and magnifying what is small, obscure, mean, and homely; and next comes Sancho Panza like a Skeptical nominalist with his native

shrewdness, his materializing instincts, his reliance on what can be seen, touched, and tasted, and in general his tendency to reduce all idealities to their lowest denomination.

MISS LEYCESTER. Well, at all events, give me the hidalgo with all his crack-brained eccentricities rather than the crass animalism of Sancho Panza. For my part, I think the illustration is altogether in favour of realism. All the high impulses, the ideal imaginings of Don Quixote, are, notwithstanding their fantastic garb, unselfish and generous, while the aims and desires of Sancho are, as a rule, utterly sordid and sensual. While Don Quixote, clad in his patched armour, and mounted on his sorry steed, rides forth for the destruction of tyrants and the relief of the oppressed, transmuted, by the omnipotent wand of his imagination, windmills into giants, country girls to high-born ladies, and wayside inns to enchanted castles, in a word, glorifying what is abject, magnifying what is little, exalting what is low, transforming everything in his environment into a nobler, sublimer existence, forthwith comes me Sancho Panza, gross, sensual, and unidea'd, bestriding his ass, and insisting on taking the wretched objects of his rustic surroundings at no higher estimate than that of their intrinsic and repellent worthlessness. Who would not rather live in a world peopled by the lofty if visionary fancies of the Don, than in one modelled after the likings and aspirations of his squire? Or, to revert to our subject, who would not rather be a realist inflated with noble and spiritual, if intangible, ideas, than a narrow-minded nominalist who believed only in the verdict of his senses?

HARRINGTON. Your enthusiasm for idealism is running away with you, Florence. Most people, I suspect, would dislike equally the crazy fancies of the master and the stolid materialism of the servant. It is only indirectly that the relation of realism to nominalism can be said to be subsumed in that of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, though I acknowledge the intimate relation that exists in point of contemporaneousness between the exuberant fancies of chivalry and the fictitious ideas of realists. . . . There is, however, this difference in the comparison of Don Quixote's creations and

those of idealists, that the former were only mischievous to himself, whereas there is no doubt that overmuch realism, especially combined with and hardened by theological dogma, is productive of very serious injury as an obstruction in the path of mental freedom.

TREVOR. Both realisms—that of knight-errantry and the school-philosophy—were unquestionably mischievous. We must remember that it was the ill influence of the former, according to Cervantes, that first suggested his immortal satire. As to the other, it is indisputable that the effect of nominalism in modern philosophy has been of a distinctly wholesome kind. It gave the death-blow to scholastic metaphysics, and prepared the way for modern science. Ockam, as we shall find, is the direct lineal precursor of Bacon, Descartes, and Locke. . . . Miss Leycester's challenge, therefore, does not quite do justice to the position of Sancho Panza and the nominalists. The higher standpoint of Don Quixote, like that of realists in general, is only purchased at a sacrifice of truth. A roadside inn may not be so magnificent an object of contemplation as an enchanted castle, and a mere class name may not be so interesting as a metaphysical entity invested with the attribute of existence. Still, truth compels us to pronounce that the object in the first case is only an inn, and, in the second, a mere word. . . . I may add that nominalism also has this special significance for our subject, that it denotes a return in a considerable degree to the position occupied by the human mind in Greek Skepticism. It was a recognition—the first in modern philosophy—that all knowledge is dependent on the senses, that what the mind contributes to it is only in the way of receptivity, formal shaping, and classification. It also returned to the Greek position of the conventional nature of language. In a word, nominalism brought the mind back to its original straight course in philosophy after the long and weary detour it had been compelled to take by ecclesiastical Christianity.

MRS. HARRINGTON. It is not an accident, I presume, that makes all nominalists opposers of the Papal power?

HARRINGTON. Certainly not. Nominalism in its very essence is a critical disintegrating influence. Imagine a

power like Romanism, based on what itself claims to be realities of the most important and stupendous kind, exposed to the vivisection of a faculty which must needs analyze and test those realities without reserve or scruple, and it is clear the relation between them must be polemical. To give them their due, Romanists have not been backward to discern the solvent properties and anti-theological implications of nominalism. Most of Ockam's works, *e.g.* are placed on the Index.

TREVOR. Freedom from ecclesiasticism and its dogmas has not been the only service rendered by nominalism to human speculation and progress. Its greatest service consists in its perpetual protest against the tyranny of words and human language.

Goethe's words—

Name ist Schall und Rauch,
Umnebelnd Himmelsgluth—

are true not only of theology and metaphysics, but of every object of human knowledge. The physical scientist is just as fond of conjuring with a few high-sounding self-devised terms as the theologian. Now, nominalism, as taught by Ockam, reveals language as an indispensable but intermediate and obfuscating influence. It represents it as intervening—1st, between man the knower and the object known; 2nd, between man and his fellow-men. As to the first, it is its function to do so, just as that of the eye is to see and the ear to hear, but its final expression differs from sense-impressions in the second point, and also in the fact of its being a self-registering and perpetuating instrument. 'Litera scripta manet,' says the proverb; but all words, whether written or spoken, are charged with implications which either exceed or fall short of their proper limits as symbols of thought; but they are notwithstanding credited with an absolute uniformity of meaning, an unvarying identity of scope which they are far from possessing. To a thoughtful, analytical mind, words say too much or too little according to its special idiosyncrasy. Even to the realist, when his tendencies are mystical, language is insufficient and mis-

leading. Analyze, *e.g.* the definitions of the Supreme Being contained in the confessions of most Christian Churches, and how ludicrously inadequate do the poor, meagre, wretched terms seem contrasted with the object for which they stand. What thinker has not longed for some Pythagorean *ἀφασία*, reverential speechlessness, devout dumbness in matters of religious philosophy? Instead of which we have a perpetual dinning babble, loud-voiced authoritative pronouncements on the most mysterious objects of faith and thought. The same argument may be applied to much current phraseology in scientific theory. To all this dictatorial verbosity nominalism recommends—1. Analysis of the thing. 2. Economy as to the symbol, both principles being set forth in two Ockamist axioms (I. ‘*Entia non multiplicanda sunt præter necessitatem.*’ II. ‘*Frustra fit per plura quod fieri potest per pauciora*’). It says in effect: Remember that words are merely words; they symbolize things only by arbitrary convention, and even this accidental signification must be qualified in every case by its actual relation to the true concept or idea in the mind of the speaker. In short, language in final analysis is purely individualistic; the individual expression of audible symbols denoting ideas and feelings, which in their nature, extent, &c. are themselves individual; and which probably differ more or less in every case of the employment of the same terms.

HARRINGTON. Pardon me, Doctor, but your nominalistic fervour is carrying you too far. According to your theory and that of extreme nominalists, language is altogether refused its *raison d’être*. It is no longer a mode of communication between one man and another, the indispensable basis of all social existence and civilization; it is rather an instrument of demarcation. On your principle it is not only true, ‘*Quot homines tot sententiæ,*’ but ‘*Quot homines tot linguæ*’—an enunciation of extreme individualism which I regard as self-refuting. Happily the excessive analysis needed to isolate every man’s language from that of his fellow-men is so rare that we need have no fear of this form of Skepticism obtaining a wide currency.

ARUNDEL. I also object to Dr. Trevor’s vilifying the inter-

mediate function of language, though it is quite in harmony with his intellectual bias. It seems to me puerile to quarrel with conditions which are inevitable to our human existence, 'craving,' according to the old saying, 'better bread than can be made of wheat.' Doubtless language is a medium, occupying in part the same position as our senses, but it is Quixotic and absurd either to complain of its indispensable relation to us, or to doubt that its intercommunication generates infinitely more harmony than dissidence. Because all men's eyes have not the same power, or because objects of sight when analyzed are personal, shall we bid every man commit the self-stultifying act of blinding himself? And even granting that the mental conception I attribute to such common terms as 'man,' 'whiteness,' are not absolutely and in all points like those which my neighbour attributes to the same words, the difference, even if it could be detected, which I submit it cannot, would probably be of the very smallest significance, not affecting appreciably the substantial harmony expressed by our common employment of such common terms. . . . I have called this craving for impossible conditions of knowledge 'Quixotic' designedly, for the moral of Cervantes's great work appears to me useful for all those dissatisfied thinkers, pessimists, nihilists, and Skeptics—the irreconcilables of human thought. Like Don Quixote, these despisers of actualities don their battered armour, mount their Rosinantes, and go forth in quest of the undiscoverable, feigning imaginary Dulcineas, and contending vigorously with the phantasmal creations of their own crazy brains. I wish these relatives of the knight of La Mancha would lay to heart the last chapter of Don Quixote, in which the Don confesses himself disillusionized and freed from all his absurd imaginations. The passage seems to me the most pathetic in the whole book: 'Yo tengo juicio ya libre y claro sin las sombras caliginosas de la ignorancia, que sobre él me pusieron mi amarga y continua leyenda de los detestables libros de caballerías,' is his plaintive comment on the vain pursuits of his life.

MISS LEYCESTER. The chapter and passage you have just alluded to seems to me to have another and very different interpretation. It surely represents the tardy

discovery and the lament of idealism for the unattainable nature of all its high-wrought and generous desires. It is a wail like that of the Hebrew Skeptic, which so often attends the retrospect of a thinker's life: 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.' For my part, I have no difficulty in conceiving the real moral of Don Quixote as being Skeptical—representing in a satirical and humorous form the same lesson which is taught by other mediæval mythes, possibly among the rest by 'The quest of the Holy Grail,' viz. the search of the human mind for complete, demonstrable, self-satisfying truth. Considered from this standpoint, I know few things in literature more profoundly pathetic than the last chapter of Don Quixote.

TREVOR. With that interpretation of Cervantes's work I quite agree; . . . but as I am now attacked by two such vigorous opponents of extreme nominalism, it is time to cry, 'Ockam to the rescue!'

(Thus saying, Dr. Trevor began his paper.)

Skepticism, being a mode of thought, will necessarily affect language as the instrument and expression of thought. In an early stage of civilization men began to speculate not only on the relation of their subjective feelings and ideas in regard to the external world, but also on the relation between those ideas and the audible signs by which they were expressed to themselves or to others. No doubt the first impulse of a child or an uneducated man is to assume a real existence for every term which denotes an objective entity, even if it is the most abstract of abstractions. 'For every denominative word, nay, for every mental concept, a real thing'¹ is the rough-and-ready rule of the unreflecting on such subjects. Hence the various generalizations, colligations, abstractions which emerge in language, which are necessary concomitants of its growth, and without which knowledge would be impossible, are held to symbolize entities possessing independent existence and reality. It is not until the human mind has advanced so far as to be able to cast a retrospective and analytical glance at its rough-hewn conceptions that it begins to discover the arbitrary and unsatisfactory relation existing between knowledge and its verbal realization and expression. It might therefore be said that men start on their intellectual course by being realists, while it is only in their philo-

¹ Comp. Prantl, *Gesch. der Logik*, i. p. 15. Proverbs expressing this relation are common to most civilized languages, e.g.: 'Nomen alicujus est alicui.' 'Alicui rei aliquid est nomen.'

sophical maturity that they become nominalists. The relation of language to knowledge was a problem that occupied the attention of Greek thinkers at an early date. Among the Eleatics it was a natural result of their keen introspection,¹ while among the Sophists and Rhetoricians it was a product quite as natural of their logomachies. These early inquirers were not long in coming to the conclusion that in its origin language was *οὐ φύσει ἀλλὰ νόμῳ*, the result of conventional agreement, rather than of primordial law or necessity. The judgment of Sokrates on the point was of the same indeterminate kind as that of the Sophists. Often in his Dialogues of Search he treats words as if they were arbitrary signs of things or ideas, while on the other hand he sometimes expresses an opinion that they possess an independent fitness and appropriateness which remove them from the categories of chance and accident. The general outcome of his Eristic, much of which consists in verbal analysis, is, however, nominalistic. The value of words as of ideas to Sokrates consisted largely in their controversial utility. Indeed, an Eristic must, from the necessity of the case, be more or less a nominalist. The Greek work which comes nearest to what we understand as a philosophy of language is the 'Kratylos' of Plato; but like the rest of Plato's writings, it leaves the question of the origin of language undecided. Human speech, we are told, possesses some characteristics which seem to show that it was divinely imparted, while others appear to indicate that it was humanly evolved. Plato is, however, a realist on the question of the independent existence of common terms. Abstractions and generalizations are not mere products of the growth of language: they are names of independent self-existing entities. Indeed, ideas have not only a being of their own, but it is by partaking of their own independent and eternal being that real objects possess their reality. Aristotle also called attention to the same common concepts, but in a different manner. To him they were not realistic notions, but convenient class-names, under which objects of knowledge might be arranged. By his conversion of Platonic ideas to logical categories,² Aristotle gave a new aspect to the contrast between realism and nominalism, without, however, committing himself definitely to the latter, his general position being a kind of objective conceptualism.³ He must also be reckoned to have

¹ Comp. Prantl, i. pp. 11, 12.

² Prantl, i. p. 62.

³ Comp. the Essay of Baumgarten-Crusius, *De vero Scholasticorum Realium et Nominalium discrimine*, &c., *Opuscula Theol.* p. 67, and Kampe, *Die Erkenntnis-Theorie des Aristoteles*, p. 324, and *passim*. See also Hauréau, i. pp. 86, 87.

given a decided impetus to the growth of nominalism in later Greek philosophy, by his opposition to the extreme idealism of Plato. But the most marked development of nominalism among Greek thinkers is found among the Cynic and Megaric philosophers, the residuary legatees, as they may be called, of the Sokratic Eristic. Antisthenes, the founder of the former sect, seems to have arrived at nominalistic conclusions both as to general knowledge and the relation of names to the conceiving mind on the one hand and to external objects on the other, that have hardly been exceeded in scope even by Ockam or Hobbes. A similar remark, though with some abatement as to the Skeptical employment of the theory, is also applicable to the nominalism of the Stoics.¹ I need not point out, after our discussion on Greek Skepticism, the use which the later Skeptics made of the ample scope for analysis furnished both by words and their assumed relation to things. Pyrrhôn and his successors were fully aware of the arbitrary origin and nature of language. They knew that words represent concepts rather than things, and made full use of the individualism, as well as the infinite variety of verbal significations, which were outcomes of that position. Centuries before Ockam and Hobbes they had seen that genera and species are reducible to individuals. Indeed, the general tendency to particularism, by which I mean the reduction of all common facts and properties to singularities and individual qualities, is common to nominalism and Skepticism. No doubt Skepticism went beyond the extremest nominalism, for the truth which Hobbes, *e.g.* declared to be 'an affection of words, not of things,' is by Skeptics denied altogether; indeed, the ratiocination of the latter on this point is a powerful *à fortiori*; for if truth be eliminated altogether from things, it will not be very safe among their verbal *idola*. Nor was this the only point in which Greek Skeptics went beyond nominalists; for among other niceties in the relation of words to things, they detected the ambiguity arising from the continuity implied in names when the objects they symbolize have altogether changed their nature and qualities, as, *e.g.* the same name applied to Sokrates living and Sokrates dead. In short, there is no position or excessive refinement in the nominalism, whether of Ockam or of Hobbes, that may not be paralleled from the works of Sextos Empeirikos.

When Christianity took by degrees the chief position in the speculation of Europe which had once been occupied by Greek and Roman thought, the general tendencies of her earlier teaching was

¹ Prantl, i. p. 416.

realistic. Nor could it well be otherwise. Every religion at its first stage of initiatory enthusiasm has but little aptitude for the self-analysis that nominalism implies. Besides which, every spiritual religion, every faith that inculcates the worship of the Unseen, that invests Deity with personal attributes, that deals largely in Pietistic generalizations, must be ontological in its main tendencies; so that ecclesiastical Christianity possessed numerous elements and thought-directions which were distinctly opposed to nominalism. Thus it supplied an additional basis and religious sanction for belief in the real existence of abstractions by its multiplication of correlated supernatural agencies of all kinds. When, *e.g.* it embodied evil into a personal devil, supported by a numerous organization of demons and malignant powers, each gifted with independent existence; when good was similarly attributed to real self-existing agencies in the form of angels and benign spirits; when the operations of nature were held to be caused by supernatural beings—even the movements of the planets in their respective orbits being ascribed to their guardian angels—it was only reasonable that the generalizations and abstractions of language should similarly possess their word-spirits and ideal entities. It is clear that the outcome of all these different universes of incorporeal existences was to generate superstition of the worst kind. Indeed, no small part of the darkness of the dark ages must be attributed to the excessive realism which pervaded all its thoughts, secular as well as religious. Moreover, the realism of ecclesiastical Christianity was further consolidated and developed by the form which some of its chief dogmas assumed at a comparatively early period. The doctrine of the Trinity, which might be termed the 'test-doctrine of realism *v.* nominalism,' early received a Trinitheistic form, which, however consonant to extreme realism, could not but invite the attacks of nominalism. The Incarnation, too, forsaking its earlier form as represented by the Logos-doctrine of St. John, and becoming intensely materialized, offered a fair subject for nominalistic analysis. At a later period excessive realism found a further dogmatic *nidus* in the sacraments and the doctrine of a corporeal presence, for which even in the present day nominalism furnishes the best antidote.¹ The generally realistic bias of Christianity in the pre-scholastic ages was common both to Greek and Latin fathers, and manifested itself not only in the

¹ Salabert, in his rare work *Philosophia Nominalium Vindicata*, has pointed out, what is, however, sufficiently obvious, the easy perversion of sacramental doctrine by realists. Comp. Baumgarten-Crusius, *ut supr.* p. 77. The sacramental views of Berengarius were founded on a nominalistic basis.

dogmatic developments I have just glanced at, but also in other forms. We must ascribe to it the passionate hatred of dialectic which, we noticed in the preceding chapter, characterized the early doctors of the Church; while another of its outcomes was the mysticism which distinguished some of the most venerated names of mediæval Christianity, though the latter has also, as we shall find in Ockam's case, affinities with nominalism and Free-thought.

But although the prevailing tendency of Christianity for the first hundred years of its history was realistic, we must not suppose that nominalism commenced its existence with Roscellin in the eleventh century, as Church historians are in the habit of affirming. In days when heresy was imputed even to a particular logical method it was to be expected that nominalist writings should be carefully suppressed by the dominant 'orthodoxy mania,' as Dr. Prantl calls the theological zeal of Anselm. The disappearance of Roscellin's writings is probably only an illustration of the fate of similar works. But the occasional manifestation of nominalism must be taken as incidental to the growth of mediæval dialectic. After the time of Boethius and the revival of Aristotelian logic, the attention of thinkers was naturally drawn to the true nature of universals, the potent abstractions of genera, species, &c.; and the mental awakening which set in during the ninth and tenth centuries was not likely to allow the realistic interpretations of those terms to remain unanalyzed and unchallenged. Besides the nominalistic proclivities of Erigena glanced at in the preceding essay, the semi-nominalistic views of Raban Maur¹ the great scholastic authority of the ninth century, and the still more developed nominalism of Heiric of Rheims,² recent discoveries in mediæval literature prove that the same Skeptical principle had a well-marked existence in the tenth century.³ Probably further researches among the glosses and marginal notes of mediæval MSS. would result in finding more evidence of a similar kind. But even with that already at our disposal, Dr. Prantl is fully justified in his conclusion⁴ that the standpoint of Roscellin was not essentially new, whence it follows that the Free-thought implied in

¹ Hauréau, *Hist. de la Phil. Scol.* (last edition), p. 144; Prantl, ii. p. 38.

² Hauréau, *ut supra*, pp. 193, 194; Prantl, ii. p. 41.

³ See Dr. Barach's interesting little tractate, *Zur Geschichte des Nominalismus vor Roscellin* (Wien 1866), which gives the glosses inscribed by some unknown nominalist of the tenth century, on the margin of a MS. containing the categories of the Pseudo-Augustine.

⁴ *Logik*, vol. ii. p. 77, &c. See also, *passim*, the earlier half of the same volume. Comp. Hauréau, vol. i.

nominalism may be said to have been coeval with, if not a concomitant in the sense of reaction of, the earliest developments of realism. Roscellin, to use a happy expression of Lobkowitz,¹ was 'Nominalium sectæ non author, sed auctor'—'not the father, but the furtherer of the sect of nominalists,' as the words might be freely rendered. But if Roscellin has thus his precursors dating from the commencement of mediæval philosophy, he has also his successors. The remark of John of Salisbury that nominalism expired with its founder must, as historians of philosophy have long acknowledged, be taken with large qualification.² Even allowing that the greatest doctors of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were realists, their realism was only the creature of their dogmatic necessities, it afforded the only metaphysical standpoint on which some of the most important doctrines of ecclesiastical Christianity could be theoretically based. Hence the most remarkable even of these were realists in conclusion but nominalists in method and tendency. Hauréau has well observed—what our own investigations in the preceding chapter have served to confirm—that even 'the "Sentences" of Peter Lombard and the "Summa" of Aquinas, the two great manuals of Christian orthodoxy, were composed according to the plan and spirit of nominalism.'³ Indeed, the intellectual character and tone of thought of the twelfth century was becoming more and more nominalistic in its persistent inquiry, its daring criticism, its insistence on dialectic and reasoned discussion as the sole basis of truth, its regard for mental freedom, its impatience of dictatorial dogma and sacerdotal domination.

William of Ockam may therefore be said to have succeeded to a wealthy heritage of Free-thought, or at least what must have become so to a man of his keen insight and powerful intellectual grasp. Hence it is not so much as an originator, whether of nominalism or of rationalism, or of political and religious liberty, that the name of Ockam is so remarkable, as that he combined in his own personality, consolidated by his intellectual power, imparted a new zest and energy by his indomitable character and spiritual fervency to the various Skeptical impulses and tendencies of the two preceding centuries.

William of Ockam derives his name from his birthplace, Ockam, in Surrey. The year of his birth is uncertain, but may be

¹ Hauréau, i. p. 243.

² Comp. De Gerando, *Hist. Comp. des Systèmes de Philosophie*, vol. iv. p. 399.

³ Vol. i. p. 489.

conjectured as being somewhere about 1280. While yet young he was received into the order of the Franciscans, and after due preparation was sent by his superiors to Oxford. He is said to have entered Merton College, but in truth nothing certain is known of the early events of his life. A more trustworthy tradition represents him as going from Oxford to Paris, where he came in contact with Duns Scotus, whose lectures he attended. Assuming this to be true, the meeting must have been remarkable, and a repetition of that between William of Champeaux and Abelard. In both cases the realistic teacher was confronted by the nominalist disciple, who was destined to subvert his doctrine and overthrow his authority. As Hauréau remarks,¹ Duns Scotus was an extreme realist. 'There is no fiction he did not accept, no abstraction which he did not rank among independent existences, no verbal distinction which he did not take as a sign of reality;' while Ockam's tendencies pointed altogether in an opposite direction. In a short time the keen, independent, rationalizing spirit of the disciple made itself favourably known among a society which always cherished a secret admiration for freedom of thought and boldness of utterance. Ockam was soon in a position to become a lecturer, and in his new office attracted, as Abelard had done, all the eager ingenuous youths of the university round his chair. The prominent position he thus acquired among the teachers of the university, as well as his indomitable spirit and his known dislike of mere traditionalism in every form, pointed him out as a fitting champion of the rights of the king and the Gallican Church against the encroachments of Boniface VIII. His work on the subject—which we shall have to notice more fully when we come to discuss his position as a theologian—is the first of a series of anti-Papal declamations which might almost have emanated from a Protestant controversialist. They completely cut the ground, not only from beneath Roman ecclesiasticism, but from under sacerdotalism of every kind; and leave the principles and authorities which determine human beliefs on those broad grounds of reason and direct obligation where Christ Himself placed them. The antagonism which Ockam commenced against Boniface VIII. was continued with still greater vehemence against his successor, John XXII. By his fulminations against the Minorite orders, their opinions on the subject of poverty, and their conceptions of primitive Christianity, the latter Pontiff had excited the indignation of those influential bodies. Ockam had

¹ See his article on Ockam in the *Nouv. Biog. Gén.*

been chosen provincial of the Franciscan order in England in 1322. This elevated position, combined with his own Free-thinking proclivities, marked him out as a leader in the controversy with John XXII. He attacked the great adversary of himself and his order in several works which, notwithstanding their scholastic form and wearisome prolixity, are of the greatest importance in determining Ockam's ecclesiastical and so far his dogmatic standpoint. Among the first of these was a small tractate styled 'Epistola Defensoria,'¹ which, according to Hauréau, may stand as one of the earliest vindications of the liberty of the press, and so far may claim to be a precursor of Milton's 'Areopagitica.' But this early assertion of 'Liberty of Prophesying' was not likely to meet the approval of the successor of Boniface VIII. Having received, says Hauréau,² 'William's manifesto, he transmitted it to the Bishops of Ferrara and Bologna, charging them to proceed according to canonical routine against the author of that abominable work.' The issue of this investigation, which, according to Fleury, took place in 1323, is not clearly known, but from Ockam's ill fame in the Papal Rescripts and fulminations launched against Louis of Bavaria,³ we may well conclude that it was unfavourable, and that Ockam thus early acquired the honourable appellation of heretic which clung to him for the remainder of his life. This, however, was only the first of a series of ecclesiastical processes with which John XXII. visited his Free-thinking antagonist. In the next few years we find Ockam implicated with other leaders of the Franciscan order in the crime of complicity with Louis of Bavaria and the antipope which that monarch had set up against John XXII. While this suit was still pending Ockam and his brother Franciscans were taken prisoners, brought to Avignon, and were there kept in confinement until their cause was determined. The date of their captivity is not known, but a Papal rescript, bearing date 1327, complains of the flight of Ockam and his friends, and excommunicates them for this additional defiance of the Pope. We learn from this document that Ockam's writings had then been for a long time before the court appointed to try them, so that it is barely possible that the

¹ Published by Ed. Brown in his *Appendix ad Fasciculum rerum expetendarum et fugiendarum*, p. 436.

² *Hist. de la Phil. Scol.* vol. ii. p. 420. It may be necessary to observe that all references to Hauréau's invaluable history on the subject of Ockam are made to the first edition.

³ See, *passim*, the 'Processes of Pope John XXII. against Louis of Bavaria,' contained in vol. ii. of Martene and Durand, *Nov. Coll.*

inquiry commenced in 1323 had for some reason never pronounced a definitive judgment. However that may be, Ockam with his two companions contrived to make their escape from Avignon. Leaving the city secretly and by night, they found their way to the port of Aigues Mortes. On their arrival there they were overtaken by the Bishop of Ostia, who had been hastily despatched by the Pope to bring back the absconding heretics. But Ockam and his friends had too much experience of the Pope's disposition to wish to trust themselves in his power. They refused to return to Avignon; not only so, but they openly declared their intention of going over to the Pope's great adversary, Louis of Bavaria. Embarking in a small boat at Aigues Mortes, they were soon taken up by an armed galley which their imperial patron had despatched to meet them.¹ They were conducted to Pisa, where Louis—then engaged in his Italian campaign—received them with great honour, no doubt foreseeing the advantage of such powerful auxiliaries in his contest with John XXII. It was on this or some similar occasion of meeting Louis that Ockam is reported to have made the agreement, 'Defend me with your sword, I will defend you with my pen'—a compact which his numerous anti-Papal writings prove to have been abundantly fulfilled so far as he was concerned. Nor was Louis wanting to his part of the bargain. So far as is known, Ockam, after accompanying him throughout his unfortunate Italian expedition, returned with him to Munich in 1330, where he continued to reside under the protection of his patron for the remainder of his life. Here he wrote, with unimportant exceptions, the whole of his voluminous works: I. On Theology and Church Government; II. On Dialectics; III. On Philosophy. The effect of writings whose general scope consisted in an uncompromising attack on scholasticism and the Papacy was to spread abroad his fame as a bold and free thinker. The titles 'Invincible Doctor' and 'Venerable Founder'—*i.e.* of nominalism—were bestowed on him. Disciples gathered round him, his works were read and commented on by professors in the university of Paris and other European seats of learning. He was the accepted teacher of the new thought which on its religious side resulted in the Protestant Reformation, and on its philosophical found an outcome in the teachings of Descartes, Bacon, and Locke. But the Skeptical nature of Ockam's speculations, both in theology and philosophy,

¹ See the whole narrative in Martene and Durand, *Nov. Coll.* vol. ii. p. 751.

was too distinctly marked not to draw upon them the continued hostility of the Papacy and its adherents. We find, *e.g.* that in 1339 the university of Paris promulgated a decree¹ pointing out that the outcome of Ockam's nominalism was to destroy all knowledge, and for that reason forbidding the teaching of his philosophy. The decree was renewed the year following (1340), whence it would seem that it had not been very effectual, and that the number and influence of Ockamists in the university were greater than the authorities were aware of. Nor was it only in Paris that Ockam's doctrines were thus early disseminated. As we shall see further on, he had acquired a European reputation for Free-thought and anti-Papal sympathies while hardly more than thirty-five years old. Our knowledge of his life at Munich is unfortunately very scanty. There is little doubt that with his Ghibelline sympathies he entered warmly into the imperialist projects of Louis of Bavaria, and was one of the earliest to pay court to the Antipope whom that monarch set up. Indeed, as Ockam had proved to his full satisfaction that Pope John XXII. was a heretic, and, further, maintained that a heretical Pope was *ipso facto* deposed from his power and dignity, he could have had no difficulty in transferring his allegiance to Nicholas V. during his brief and ill-fated sovereignty. Of the remainder of Ockam's life at Munich nothing seems to be known, with the exception of its abundant literary productiveness. That his social environment was in many respects congenial we may take for granted. Munich had long been the seat of that freer anti-Papal thought which might be styled mediæval Protestantism. The spiritual teachers among the Franciscans, Marsilio of Padua and John of Janduno (both of them being allies, perhaps pupils, of Ockam), had found shelter there.² The *genius loci* of

¹ D'Argentré, *Coll. Jud.* vol. i. p. 337.

² Marsilio was the greatest of Ockam's allies among the Free-thinking Franciscans of the fourteenth century. He was the author of the celebrated *Defensor Pacis*, a work truly epoch-making in its enlightened conception of human liberty. It utterly undermines the whole sacerdotal and dogma-making power of the Papacy, and in its spirit is more like a literary product of the nineteenth than the fourteenth century. See the work in Goldast, *Monarchia*, vol. ii. pp. 154-308. Comp. also, Neander and Milman's *Church Histories*; Riezler, *Die Literarischen Widersacher der Päpste*, p. 30; Contzen, *Geschichte der Volkswirtschaftlichen Literatur im Mittelalter*, p. 120, &c. It was the opinion of Clement VI., who certainly had every opportunity of knowing the truth, that Marsilio had derived his opinions from Ockam. As the *Defensor Pacis* was probably published before Ockam's open rupture with John XXII., Riezler conjectures that the

Munich was therefore precisely adapted for the inception of that warfare with dogma which Ockamism implied. Still with his daring, resolute spirit, his restless, vivacious temperament, Ockam seems to have desired a wider if not more congenial field for his activities. Such at least is one inference from a passage which occurs in the prologue to his 'Compendium Errorum Papæ John XXII.'¹ Here he seems to complain that himself, with other Christ-worshippers (Christicolis) had been banished to Patmos (Munich). He then proceeds: 'We are not, however, placed beyond the hope of succour and reward; we trust in the Highest that we shall return with honour to Ephesus (*i.e.* probably Paris). But if God should not grant this, I am certain that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor power, nor height, nor depth, nor tribulations, nor threats, nor promises, nor any other creature can separate us from the love of God, or from the defence of the Christian faith, for which we have learnt to undergo labours and sorrows.' Assuming this to represent Ockam's real feelings, we may affirm with some confidence that his return to the Ephesus of his affections was never accomplished. The most reliable tradition states that he remained at Munich until his death, which it is said took place in 1347.² On the other hand, Ockam's enemies appear inclined for obvious reasons to extend his life for some ten or twelve years longer. Wadding, the chronicler of the Minorite orders, relates that after the death of Louis in 1347 he desired reconciliation with the Pope, and that in order to obtain absolution he subscribed in 1349 a form of recantation prescribed for the purpose by Clement VI.³ In consequence of these important events his death is postponed until 1359, when Wadding says he died at Collimala in Italy. But the sources of this tradition are too questionable, and the powerful motives that might have invented it are too manifest to allow it any basis even of probability. Independently of other and less suspicious testimony, Ockam was by no means the kind of man to submit for any reason to an authority he believed unfounded both in reason and Scripture. Such an act would have

intercourse of the two Free-thinkers must have taken place during their residence at the university of Paris. See his work above mentioned, p. 241, &c.

¹ Goldast, *Mon.* vol. ii. p. 957.

² Fabricius, *Bibl. Lat.*; Hauréau, *Nouv. Biog. Gén.*; and, generally, all Protestant historians.

³ Bulcous, *Hist. Univ. Par.* iv. p. 317. Wadding, ad ann. 1349. D'Argentré, *Coll. Jud.* i. p. 360.

stultified his life's work. Indeed, the very terms of the recantation Clement VI. is said to have exacted of him¹ sufficiently prove the falsity of the story, while nothing is more certain than that his memory was cherished by his disciples, many of whom were contemporaries, as well as by the early Protestant reformers, as an undaunted and irreconcilable foe of the Papacy.

Turning from Ockam's life to his works, we may observe that the latter is the speculative counterpart of the former. The resistance to dogma and traditionalism, so strongly marked in his career, is also attested by his writings. The stern unbending character of the man, the sweeping nature of his methods, his determination to attain freedom at any cost, his single-hearted devotion to truth, his contempt for the prescriptive claims of antiquity except when consentient with truth and reason, mark his books as well as his life. There is a notable passage in his dialogues,² in which he ridicules the dread of novelty, so common among timid minds in all ages, and asserts that there is no inherent virtue in antiquity that entitles it to demand the unqualified assent of humanity. He maintains that novelties when needful or expedient ought to be embraced with the greatest possible readiness. No great enterprise, he justly remarks, was ever accomplished by men who were afraid of novelties, and he points his teaching by demanding what Alexander the Great or ancient Rome would have accomplished, had they been deterred by the novelty of their undertakings. The passage illustrates the daring temper, the mental self-reliance of Ockam's life, and its implication is fully confirmed by his writings. He was just as ready to overturn by argument the fabric of Romish ecclesiasticism as he was to flee from the Papal prison at Avignon; and he was quite as forward in demonstrating that mediæval speculation, philosophical and religious, was based on falsehood, as he was to take the side of Louis of Bavaria, in the interests of human freedom and genuine Christianity.

Before presenting an epitome of Ockam's philosophy and theology, it will be well to glance at the peculiar character of the dialectic which is the common basis both of the one and the other.

The progress which dialectic had made in Europe, and its general effect on theology, we have already considered in connection with Abelard. In the two centuries that intervene between Abelard and Ockam, the further advance of logic had been determined mainly by its contact with Arabic and Byzantine expositors. The impulse thus imparted consisted in the incorporation into Aristotle's

¹ See it in D'Argentré, *ut supra*.

² Goldast, ii. p. 737.

logic and that of his commentators of a subtle introspection, a keen perception of the obscurer processes of human thought, an extreme minuteness of subdivision—in a word, a tendency to reduce dialectic to a negative polemic, an instrument of indefinite and omnipotent analysis. This so-called Byzantine logic, which Dr. Prantl assures us dominated the thinkers of Western Europe for upwards of two centuries, may be said to have attained its climax in the dialectical works of Ockam. No conceivable instrumentality was indeed better fitted to represent and express the Skeptical tendencies of our Free-thinker. Its numerous and complicated subdivisions, its subtle ratiocination, its minute and impalpable distinctions, eminently qualified it for becoming the chosen method of Logomachists and Skeptics. It was a logic that took cognisance only of words, and of these, in the first instance, regarded but as concepts, and admitted their relation to things merely *ex hypothesi*, and by virtue of an arbitrary convention. It was a method that substituted hypothetical for categorical judgments,¹ that distrusted classification and generalization when applied to objects of knowledge, that deliberately reduced human science to single, separable facts or names; a logic, moreover, that discarded in its very definition² the outer world, and concerned itself mainly with the subjective creations and opinions of the intellect. The method with which it is most natural to compare it is the Greek Eristic. Many indeed are the points of contact between the logic of Ockam—and the remark might be extended to other systems of mediæval dialectics—and the exercitations of the Greek sophists. Both are modes of disproof, disintegration, and negation, though it should be added that in this particular they have only attained the ultimate development of all logical methods. We cannot, however, be surprised that the historian and patient expositor of logical systems—I mean Dr. Prantl—should manifest some impatience³ at the infinite quibbling and petty disputatiousness of Ockam's logic. While the issue of his method is doubtless simplicity, the method itself is involved and complicated in the greatest conceivable degree. Of few authors could it be affirmed with as much truth that it is 'difficult to discern the wood for the trees.'

Ockam's teaching commences with his theory of knowledge. In harmony with modern philosophy in general, and English philosophy in particular, he inquires into the sources of knowledge. This he finds generally to be sensation. He quotes as an axiom of philosophy the well-known dictum ascribed to Aristotle, 'Nihil est in intellectu

¹ Comp. Prantl, iii. p. 380.

² Prantl, *ibid.* p. 334.

³ P. 390.

quod non prius in sensu;’ but some centuries before Leibnitz he also discerns the truth of the latter writer’s addition, ‘præter intellectum ipsum.’ For, as Prantl truly remarks, Ockam does not identify himself completely with a sensualist empirism, but recognises the ideal function of the intellect;¹ indeed, the extent to which he does this appears surprising, if not inconsistent, to those who regard him as a mere nominalist, in the sense of Hobbes.² Now, the chief, nay, the only faculty of reliable knowledge, Ockam calls the *vis intuitiva*, what I should paraphrase as the ‘immediate faculty,’ that which takes direct cognisance of states of consciousness, no matter how produced. Thus in relation to external phenomena the *vis intuitiva* includes the physical sensation as well as the mental conception which realizes and completes it; while in relation to purely mental states it comprises the feelings, acts of memory, volition, &c. which may at any time be deliverances of consciousness; indeed, Ockam would make even the spiritual apperception of the mystic, e.g. the beatific vision of the Deity, a function of the *vis intuitiva*.

But besides this, man possesses another faculty, the *vis abstractiva*, or power of abstraction. By means of this the similar qualities, relations, &c. of different objects are combined in a confused manner, and are for convenience’ sake employed in language and received into the mind as concepts, e.g. whiteness is inferred by the *vis abstractiva* from a certain number of white objects. By the same faculty too these concepts are classified, become parts of the memory, and are assigned their place in the sum of human knowledge in company with other concepts of the same kind. Thus on seeing a man I recognise him by the immediate operation of my eyesight—what Ockam calls the sensitive vision—together with its mental correlative, the *vis intuitiva*; but I am enabled to classify him as an object already known in my memory, or else as an object partaking of characteristics common to other men, by the *vis abstractiva*. In other words, man as a singular object or phenomenon I apprehend by the *vis intuitiva*; but humanity I comprehend indirectly by combining in a single concept or verbal generalization all the characteristics common to the different individual men whom I have known, or of whom I may have heard. In Ockam’s philosophy the results respectively of the two faculties

¹ *Logik*, iii. p. 333.

² *Sent. Prol.* qu. i.: ‘Intellectus noster pro statu isto non tantum cognoscit sensibilia sed etiam in particulari et intuitive cognoscit aliqua intelligibilia quæ nullo modo cadunt sub sensu.’ These intelligibles he explains as intellections, volitions, perceptions of pleasure, pain, &c.

become approximately certitude and uncertainty. With the exercise of the *vis abstractiva* Ockam's Skepticism begins.

There is nothing very remarkable in this division of ideas. To a certain extent the intuitive and abstract faculties had long been differentiated by the metaphysicians of Greece, as well as those of Christian times, while they are counterparts of similar distinctions in the systems of Locke and Descartes. Nor is Ockam alone in making immediateness in relation to consciousness the test of the highest knowledge.¹ Here indeed he is in harmony with Greek Skeptics and mediæval mystics on the one hand, and with most modern psychologists, as, *e.g.* Kant and Herbert Spencer, on the other. But in Ockam's time, and in relation to realists, the distinction of intuitive and abstract ideas, as well as the limitation of knowledge to the former, signified an enormous advance in philosophical simplicity, and in the rejection of spurious metaphysical entities. To the realist sensation was conditioned by the supposed existence of *sensible species*. Intellection was similarly accomplished by means of *intelligible species*. The sight, *e.g.* of a man or any other external object was rendered possible by the simultaneous presentation of its sensible species. The recollection of a man in memory, his representation in idea, was accomplished by the presence to the mind of his intelligible species. The term species being here used as the cause, ground, and condition of individual existence, whether phenomenal or noumenal. It is therefore easy to see what an advance in philosophical thought Ockam's elementary doctrine really implied, how its tendency was to destroy the supersensuous entities which both in philosophy and in common life afforded a basis for superstition, how its direct significance was to make the individual thinker armed with senses and reflection, the sole judge of all objective knowledge. However difficult in minute introspection the problem of cognition, there was not the least need, said Ockam, of these sensuous and intellective species. A plurality, he perhaps satirically remarked, was not to be asserted without necessity. In this philosophical economy—this reduction of superfluities to the bare necessities of human knowledge—consisted the chief value of Ockam's reformation of mediæval philosophy.

Hauréau remarks that in this distinction of intuitive and abstract faculties is contained Ockam's theory of knowledge. I

¹ *Sent.* ii. qu. xv. : 'Ad cognitionem intuitivam habendam non oportet aliquid ponere præter intellectum et rem cognitam . . . quia frustra fit per plura quod potest fieri per pauciora.'

would add, that, in order to enable the learner fully to appreciate that distinction, Ockam's theory of language ought also to be borne in mind. He distinguishes between three different stages of names, or rather of their allied concepts. The first is the pre-lingual state, in which impressions of outward objects exist in the mind as inarticulate, voiceless concepts—unbaptized infants, so to speak. The second stage is when they become or are assigned names—spoken utterances. Their third stage consists of their stereotyped form as written words. The first of these stages constitutes a notable and important feature in Ockam's system. With all his stress on the empirical sources of knowledge, he really seems to have doubted whether the fact of the continuity and permanence of impressions did not necessitate the hypothesis that certain images, *idola*, continued to exist in some unknown manner in the mind. A difficulty of a similar kind was occasioned by the congruity between the external object and the internal conception of it; for how could such a harmony be affirmed unless there existed a subjective image with which the outward object might be compared? Ockam solves this and other difficulties pertaining to the reproduction in the mind and in language of external phenomena, by a process not unlike that of Leibnitz's 'pre-established harmony.' He employs, *i.e.* the Byzantine theory of 'supposition,' by which was meant the hypothetical assumption of one concept or name as equivalent to or identical with another; *e.g.* a generalized concept might be supposed for a particular, as humanity or man for an individual.¹ No doubt Ockam here verges closely on realism. His *idola*, mental images, though only subjective concepts, are at least the ghosts of the dreaded universals.² Nor is the *rapprochement* wonderful, since it is the same fact of the persistency in thought and memory of sense-impressions which impel men to realism, that made him adopt his own hypothesis of mental names and undesignated concepts. Ockam might have avoided a

¹ Prantl (*Logik*, ii. 280), who thus defines 'supposition:': 'Die unterstellung (*ὑπόθεσις*, "suppositio") die annahme eines substantivischen Begriffes anstatt eines anderen, namentlich eines particulareren,' &c. Comp. the definitions and distinctions of Petrus Hispanus, in Prantl, iii. p. 51. It is a noteworthy fact in the relation of language to knowledge that all the terms which connote knowledge imply an *underplacement*, a subordination, of object to the thought or conception. The rationale of this is the recognition, often unconscious, that the nexus which joins man to the object of his thought—the synthesis of subject and object—is in reality hypothetical. To take a simple instance, the word *understand* implies, properly, supposition.

² Comp. Prantl, iii. pp. 336–38, with notes.

conceptualism, which sometimes seems to amount to semi-realism, by the determined adoption of Hobbes's dictum, viz. names signify *only* the mental concepts, *not* the external objects,¹ but he was clearly averse to a theory which completely sundered the thinker from the object of his thought. According to Ockam, the external object—for all science was of singulars—was included in the name being supposed as its verbal equivalent. Such a supposition or subsumption of the external world under mental impressions or verbal symbols amounted to a reconciliation or even identification of the objective and subjective. By means of the mental *idola* and the habit of the understanding which confirmed them,² the man, house, tree, &c. distinguished by the senses, were conceived hypothetically as the same objects existing in the mind. So far as the outer world of phenomena and the corresponding inner universe of noumena were identified in this manner, and formed one single consciousness whole and indivisible,³ Ockam's theory resembled that of Descartes and other thinkers who have maintained consciousness to be indecomposable. But although he thus conceded certain mental images, '*idola, phantasmata, quodam fictum*,' as he called them, he was very careful to discriminate between them and the ideal generalizations of some partial realists. They did not, he said, exist in the mind as objective, independent entities like the 'intelligible species' of the Scotists, but merely as subjective states, conditions or qualities of the mind itself. With the opinions of realists proper, viz. that ideas do exist *outside* the mind, Ockam's conceptualism had nothing in common.⁴

It is just in these unvocal concepts that Ockam professes to diagnose truth. Maintaining that truth is a relation of propositions, he considers those propositions before they have actually

¹ Hobbes's works, vol. i. p. 17. The distinction—for there is more distinction than similarity—between Ockam and Hobbes may be succinctly defined thus: Ockam was a conceptualist, who distrusted language; Hobbes a pure nominalist, who believed in language. The former found his truth or untruth in the agreement or disagreement of mental propositions; the latter, in the mutual relation of names. Comp. Prantl, iii. p. 340, note 774.

² *Sent.* i. dist. ii. qu. iv.: '*Nihil refert ad scientiam realem, an nomini propositionis scitæ sint res extra animam vel tantum sint in anima, dummodo stent et supponant pro ipsis rebus extra.*'

³ One of Ockam's main distinctions on the subject of the intellect was that between 'the act' and 'the habit of intellection.' The repetition of sensations or mental experiences increased both their vitality and continuity.

⁴ Comp. Hauréau, vol. ii. p. 434.

become vocal, *i.e.* while they are still inarticulate, voiceless impressions of the mind. The development of language from its primary unvoiced condition of mental concepts he considers a deterioration. However essential for humanity, spoken language, according to Ockam, is obtained by a sacrifice of truth. As he again and again points out, spoken or written words are purely arbitrary signs, not inherently or directly connected with the objects for which they stand. Assigned by convention and common consent, they are removable or modifiable by the same agencies. They cannot, in any case, have the permanence and indestructibility which are marks of truth. On the other hand, mental concepts themselves, *e.g.* the immediate deliverances of consciousness or the direct impress of the external world on the receptive human intellect—are unquestionable, and, in one form or other, permanent. Accordingly, in contradistinction to most thinkers classed as nominalists excepting Locke, Ockam imagines a logical proposition of which the terms are purely mental.¹ These terms he designates by various names, *e.g.* concepts, intentions, likenesses, &c. Why the great nominalist should have propounded a theory difficult of statement, if not of proof, and apparently harmonizing but imperfectly with his tendencies, may not at first sight seem clear. In my opinion Ockam was influenced by a desire of meeting realists on what he saw was the point of departure of their erroneous doctrines, and while admitting the existence of conceptual signs was careful to point out that they had, notwithstanding, no real *independent* existence, whether in the mind or without. Secondly, I regard Ockam's stress on concepts—considered apart from language—as manifesting his profound distrust of words as the signs and vehicles of truth. The pure deliverances of consciousness he held to be infallible, the embodiment of those deliverances in spoken or written speech he esteemed altogether fallacious, the source of all human error and falsehood. So far his theory is both a proof and outcome of his Skepticism.

The general bearing of Ockam's theory of knowledge upon our subject is evident. The sharp line of demarcation it draws between personal conviction—the immediate deliverances of consciousness—on the one hand, and verbal knowledge on the other, is almost a reproduction of the conclusions of Greek Skeptics on the subject.

¹ Comp. Prantl, iii. p. 339 (note 769): 'Quando aliquis profert propositionem vocalem prius format interius propositionem unam mentalem, quæ nullius idiomatis est,' &c. So *Sent.* i. lib. ii. qu. 4: 'Propositio in mente quæ nullius linguæ est, vere scitur.' See Locke, *Hum. Und.* Bk. iv. ch. 5; and on the other side Condillac, *Art de Penser*, pp. 90, 91.

And the similarity is further confirmed by his opinion that the verdicts of consciousness in relation to absolute truth are not infallible, for just as the Greek thinkers recognised the imperfection and uncertainty of our sensations, so Ockam affirmed that our sense-impressions are only *hypothetically* veritable representations of external phenomena. In every such act of cognition there is a supposition of the outer world—a process not unlike the spreading of quicksilver on the back of a mirror which imparts its power of reflection. Further evidence of Ockam's Skepticism will meet us as we proceed.

For the same reason that Ockam recognises a superiority in mental impressions compared with spoken or written language, he also finds that of the latter, some names are far more direct and therefore trustworthy than others. Adopting the distinction imported into mediæval logic by Arab expositors—itsself an outcome of Skepticism—he divides names into first and second intention. The former being names of things, the latter names of words, or of the relations and qualities of things. All language excepting mental was, we have seen, distrusted by Ockam, but words which were signs of things came nearer to his primary requisite of immediateness as an imperative condition of knowledge than terms created by and serving to express the relations of other words. As an object of knowledge, *e.g.* a man is a more apprehensible fact than 'humanity,' or 'rationality.' A white horse is more conceivable than abstract 'whiteness,' and a given triangle is a more patent object of realization than 'triangularity.' Indeed, this distinction of names corresponded to a certain extent to the difference between the intuitive and abstractive faculties. The immediate apprehension of an object by the former, if expressed in speech, would necessitate the employment of a term signifying that object, and this would be a name of the first intention. And supposing the mind went a stage beyond its primary apprehension, and discriminated and compared qualities, similarities, &c. it would have to employ the abstractive faculty, and would be obliged to mark its operation by the creation and use of suitable terms, all of which would be words of the second intention. This latter class of names gives us the point on which Ockam came into collision with the realists, and generally with the whole fabric of mediæval philosophy. A general Skeptic as to language, Ockam was especially Skeptical as to names of second intention, or to give them their technical appellation—Universals. Now it was just upon these names, and the independent existences they were supposed to signify, that mediæval thought was built. Its general

tendency had been to reverse the true order of direct and verifiable cognition. Ockam's order was—I. Consciousness—propositions made up of pure mental concepts. II. Direct language—names imposed immediately on things. III. Indirect language—as names of names, abstractions from different objects. Whereas, realism, starting from the *à priori* assumption that every name must have an independent self-existent entity in order to create it, combined with the fact that class-names, and especially 'Universals,' were more comprehensive than names of single objects, made words of second intention of more importance than any other part of knowledge. The extent to which this tendency was carried would appear impossible if it were not so well attested. The realist maintained that we knew a man by recognising his participation of the 'Universal' humanity; indeed, he went still further, and declared that a particular individual, *e.g.* *this* man was identified by his possession of an abstruse property they called '*Thisness*,' and that Sokrates derived his individual personality from a mysterious attribute denominated '*Sokrateity*.' Ockam, like Roscellin and Abelard, ridiculed this multiplication of spiritual entities as equally baseless and needless. These fictions he maintained rather hampered than aided human knowledge. 'When a verbal proposition is truly made of external objects, if two things suffice for its truth, it is superfluous to require a third.'¹ Such a fictitious entity intervenes between the subject knowing, and the object known. The act of cognition alone (*actus intelligendi*)—the mere juxtaposition of a man endued with senses and reason with the external world—is sufficient as a basis of knowledge without the interposition of such phantoms. It is impossible to deny the justice of Ockam's antagonism, or to withhold our admiration from the perspicacity which recognised, and the determination which followed to its conclusions, the true relation of language to knowledge. With his penetrating intellect, Ockam discerned what is true even in our own day, that language was overweighted with indirect terms and generalizations. Not that he denied their utility as purely verbal expressions, but he recognised their inherent tendency to become substituted for things, and, in point of fact, saw them elevated by realists to an independent self-existence they had no right to claim. He distrusted all these verbal syntheses and abstractions. Believing the maxim, '*Dolus latet in generalibus*,' he analyzed these pretentious universals—'Ghosts of defunct bodies,' as Butler termed them—and found them as unreal as other super-

¹ *Quod.* lib. iv. qu. xix.: 'Quando propositio verificatur pro rebus si duæ res sufficiunt ad ejus veritatem, superfluum est ponere aliam rem.'

natural apparitions of the same name. In other words, the universal he affirmed to be no more than the individual or particular regarded from a certain intellectual standpoint.

It will help us to realize Ockam's position if we try, however imperfectly, to discard from our language all terms which signify common qualities and relations, and from our minds all notions implying community of properties or existence. To take a single instance, suppose we attempt to divest ourselves of the idea of man or humanity as an abstraction or class name, and characterize, so far as possible, the different units of the human race as isolated persons; predicating nothing in common even of two individuals, except with the addition of a specialty which in reality would differentiate them just as their separate physiognomies might do, we should thus reduce the race to its constituent units, and our knowledge of the race would be limited to the knowledge of those members of it who chanced to be within the limit of our personal acquaintance. From this standpoint we could no longer make general affirmations of any kind, we could no longer say man is mortal, we should be compelled to come to the true basis of all those universal propositions, and confine our knowledge of man's mortality to those instances which we knew either from personal knowledge or trustworthy evidence to be true. By this reduction of universals to singulars Ockam arrives at the sole basis of all demonstrable knowledge, and indicates the starting-point, though without following it up, of inductive science. Here also he is in harmony with Sextos Empeirikos and other Greek Sceptics.¹ These analytic thinkers, with their congeners of modern times, readily discerned the seductiveness of a general term or universal, as a *nidus* for dogma. As in the well-known fable of the bundle of sticks, these parcels of sensation-*residua* and thought-figments derived an adventitious and unreal strength from their mutual connection. All that was needed was to break the bond of union, and reduce the bundle to its single units. No doubt the individualism of this position is extreme. It expressed, though in cumbrous phraseology and with scholastic subtlety, the truth of the old maxim of Protagoras—'Man is the measure of all things.' Ockam himself was clearly aware of its theoretical character, and acknowledged that in practice this certitude of immediate cognition could not be maintained. The process was in complete antagonism to that by which language is

¹ Comp. *e.g.* Sext. Emp. *adv. Math.* book viii. (ed. Fabricius), p. 496, and see Vol. I., Evening IV.

evolved, and general communicable knowledge advanced. That consisted of classification, colligation, induction, synthesis; while Ockam's method was disintegration and analysis. 'What we know,' he says, 'at first hand, are not classes, groups, and generalizations, but single things.' Truth consists of mental propositions, of which the terms are unvocal concepts, and the moment these, however necessarily, are expressed in language, from that moment uncertainty sets in. Truth, by the intermediate agency of an arbitrarily formed language, becomes indirect and second-hand, the legitimate prey of doubt and Skepticism. Ockam's logical analysis, as I have observed, is common to most of the great thinkers of Europe, whose thought-system is based upon or allied with dialectics. Every true system of logic as a method of thought must start from the primary and inevitable deliverances of consciousness; but Ockam's peculiar method, in which he transcended most of his successors, was his full recognition that indirect knowledge can have only a secondary certitude, that the further we depart from immediate sensation and mental perception the greater our distance from primary demonstrable truth; or, to formulate his position in his own words, 'a more or less perfect cognition depends on greater or less approximation to the object known,' whether to the objective sensation, the subjective intellection, or, in the case of mystical intuition, to God Himself. This rigid analysis, so potent in resolving all compound terms and generalizations to their component elements, is a dialectical chemistry useful, nay, indispensable, to a healthy progress in knowledge at all times, but it was urgently needed in the fourteenth century. Philosophically speaking, it was the commencement of that gradual dissolution which ended in the fall of mediævalism both as a philosophical and as an ecclesiastical system. The aim of mediæval thought, in harmony with the ecclesiastical and political despotisms of the time, was the suppression, if possible the elimination, of the individual. To the realist, the individual—the individual man, *e.g.*—was only a singular and transitory presentation of an universal entity which itself was both real and eternal.¹ An animal of a given species was no more than an isolated example of a reality which was itself unchangeable. The manifestation of a particular quality, *e.g.* a colour, was but a transient or special appearance of the same colour realistically regarded as a self-existent and eternal entity. Individuals

¹ From the realistic theory of the universals Ockam rightly deduced, as a *reductio ad absurdum*, that God could not destroy the individual without annihilating the race. Comp. the notes in Prantl, iii. pp. 347, 350.

might pass away, the realities they represented were indestructible. Nor was this all: realism partook of the all-inclusive undifferentiated conception of the universe which is the outcome of Pantheism. To the consistent realist the worlds of matter and mind—or rather the latter only, for matter was nothing but the phenomenal presentation of some kinds of spiritual entities—formed a vast indissoluble whole, a very ocean of being, in which individuals and singular objects of all kinds were completely submerged and annihilated. The very nature of things was thus altogether inverted. Abstractions and qualities derived from single objects were elevated to the position of their authors and originators; language, which man had developed and trained for his service, was become his master and tyrant; and the text of Ockam's teaching might have taken the form of a paraphrase of a well-known principle, 'Language was made for man, and not man for language.'

Similarly the Church had long since bent all its energies to the suppression of human individuality, whether in belief or in action. To the Roman hierarchy, man, with his rights and liberties, was no more than the phenomenal figment which he was to realism. The Church was eternal, man was transitory. Dogmas, like the eternal species of the realists, were unchangeable, the individual believer was mutable and mortal. Here again the same inversion of the normal course of things was observable. Christianity, through its Divine Founder, had propounded certain truths conformable to the highest reason of humanity—truths which acquired their greatest sanction because they were clear products of that reason—and the Church, after perverting and unhumanizing them, had established them as tyrants of human reason and the foes of human freedom. Here also Ockam, as we shall see further on, did much towards suggesting how far the dictum might hold good, 'Dogmas were made for man, and not man for dogmas.'

I may add that Ockam's ideas of political liberty were also opposed to the despotic universalism in which individual liberties were merged and lost. The rights of princes were no more unconditional over their subjects than the claims of *à priori* universals were over men's thoughts and ideas. The authority of kings was derived in the first instance from the subjects whom, under God, they were appointed to govern; and the highest form of government, as well as the noblest system of thought, was that which guaranteed most freedom to its subjects. Here also the old principle might be once more applied: Princes were made for subjects, not subjects for princes.

Hence Ockam's warfare with universals imported far more than is commonly thought. It was an assertion in one particular direction of his general vindication of freedom of thought and intellectual independence. To the oppressed human reason and conscience his persistent recommendation was analyze, individualize. Hence he required the logician and metaphysician to test their overgrown universals and to resolve them into the primary abstractions and names of which they were composed. He suggested to the theologian to employ a similar discriminating process with regard to the powers of the Papacy and the dogmatic claims of the Church. The same process which sufficed for the former operation was equal to the latter; nay, the habit of mind which was formed by the persistent and thorough analysis of universals would almost instinctively betake itself to the examination of dogmas, many of which were formed in a very similar manner. In short, as I have just pointed out, Ockam's antagonism to realistic assumption involved not only philosophical freedom, but also a deliverance from religious dogma, from sacerdotal pretensions, and from political despotism. The emergence from mediæval universalism of the individual, whether as a single object of sensation, a particular mental concept, or as an independent unit in a political or religious community, were all precursory symptoms of Free-thought, and betokened the coming Reformation. Indeed, Protestantism in ultimate implication is only a synonym of individualism, and Hallam has well observed of the warfare between realism and nominalism that 'this metaphysical contention typifies the great religious convulsion' of a later period. He might have included the great secular reformation of modern philosophy as well.

In his warfare against universals Ockam, like a mediæval Darwin, sets himself to discover the 'origin of species,' with analogous results metaphysically to those which Darwin arrived at from a natural-history point of view, so far at least that species, as persistent eternal realities, outside and independent of the human mind, were shown to have no existence. Nothing can be more complete than Ockam's disposal of these fictitious entities, whatever may be said of the involved super-subtle processes by which it is accomplished. He is evidently aware of their Protean character, their numberless disguises, the manifold forms which they assume in mediæval philosophy.

I will not weary you with the different kinds of universals which Ockam discovers in the works of preceding thinkers, especially as some of them are too abstruse and impalpable to be

sustained by modern philosophical introspection. Let me say briefly that whenever the universal is so connected with external objects that its externality and independence of the mind is thereby asserted or implied, Ockam persistently attacks and destroys it. His own theory is this: 'An universal,' he says,¹ 'is nothing possessing a real objective existence either in the mind or out of the mind, but has only a subjective being in the mind, and is a feigned thing (*quoddam fictum*), possessing such an existence subjectively as an outward object has objectively; and that in this way, because the intellect perceiving anything outside the mind feigns a similar thing in the mind, so that if it possesses a productive power (like an architect conceiving the plan of a house²) it might produce externally a similar object.' Hence an universal is not by generation but by abstraction, which is itself a kind of fictitious process. Figments or results of the abstractive faculty have their existence in the mind and not objectively, because in that case they would be true things. There are, therefore, some things which possess only subjective existence, so that their existence consists in their cognition (*ita quod eorum esse est eorum cognosci*).³ Thus universals, whether outside the mind or *objectively* in the mind, are fictions and unrealities, not the less dangerous because they are evolved from the psychical fact of their existence in the mind as subjective ideas or qualities, and because we can trace the manner of their production. Besides, even if universals were admitted to be true, real, and independent of the thinking faculty, they would still be valueless for purposes of science, because they are so located and conceived as necessarily to transcend discovery and identification. We should then, just as now, be compelled to attain our generalizations by the comparison of individual objects, *i.e.* by the method which afterwards came to

¹ *Sent.* i. dist. ii. qu. viii.; comp. Prantl, p. 357.

² 'Artificem excogitare domum antequam producat eam, non est, artificem habere domum in esse objetivo tantum, sed est, ipsum habere artem vel scientiam domus quæ est vere qualitas mentis, et talis scientia "domus" vocatur.'—*Expos. Aur. Perierm. Proem.*

³ The resemblance of this language to Berkeley's *Esse = percipi* is obvious, but Ockam limited this mere conceptual existence to abstractions and mental notions, whereas Berkeley extended it to all phenomena. Ockam did not deny, as Berkeley implicitly did, the existence of an external world; he only maintained that our knowledge of external things, as such, must be always indirect, second-hand, and uncertain. He, however, included among his subjective notions, '*quod eorum esse est eorum cognosci*,' all dialectical propositions, parts of syllogisms, &c. Comp. Tennemann vol. viii. p. 861.

be known as induction. No doubt the point of importance in Ockám's theory of mental universals or concepts—as in every system of thought—is the precise method by which the mind comes to conceive the single object, or the class-object which thereby becomes its quality. Were we, however, to ask him how the external object is transformed into a concept, Ockam would reply by *supposition*, in other words, by the same process which creates universals out of singulars, or by which any partly alien quality is subsumed and connotated by and under some other given property. For here, as elsewhere, Ockam is careful to remark that neither in the employment of the intuitive or abstractive faculty is there a necessity of postulating anything except the object and the act of apprehending it (*actus intelligendi*).

Ockam's general conclusions from this standpoint are two :—

I. Our knowledge is not of external things as such.

II. Our knowledge is based only on singular things.

I have already glanced at the first, on which Ockam insists so frequently and so pointedly that we must accept it as the chief feature in his system of thought. We know nothing, he says again and again, of external things as such ; we know only our subjective impressions of them. This must not be taken as a denial of objective phenomena. It merely means that Ockam refused to contemplate them, except as mirrored in his intellect. Like the Greek Skeptics, he recognised the fallibility of all those intermediate agencies which unite the thinker to the thought. Maintaining that mental propositions are composed of concepts,¹ not of things nor of words, he shows how all the rules and terms of logic are based on that assumption. Indeed, if the converse held good and mental propositions consisted of real objective things, numberless absurdities would follow, for of necessity whatever might be predicated of any given object would be held to imply that that object really existed in the mind.²

The same dislike to externality and consequent indirectness in conceiving knowledge is also the main cause of Ockam's distrust of all language. Just as he himself regarded the universe as reflected in his own consciousness, Hobbes, in this respect less Skeptical, contemplated it as expressed in human speech. But on this point our Skeptic differed entirely from a thinker generally classed as

¹ *Quod*. lib. iii. qu. v. : ' Dico quod propositio mentalis non componitur ex rebus extra animam sed ex conceptibus.'

² *Ibid.* : ' Si subjectum et prædicatum essent res extra animam tunc in ista propositum "canis comedit panem" subjectum vere comederet prædicatum.'

his successor; and Dr. Prantl points out the curious feature in a traditional nominalist that he regards language as an arbitrary and second-hand evidence of truth.¹ But to Ockam truths expressed in speech reached the mind by the agency of intervening sensations, e.g. the eye or the ear. So far indeed their *modus operandi* resembled that of the 'intelligible' and 'sensible species' of the realists; at any rate it was an interposition, and as such was offensive to a thinker whose highest conception of personal certitude was based on the immediateness of the cognition. Ockam allowed that spoken language might enable a man to formulate or communicate mental propositions, and he admits its necessity for this purpose;² but this does not affect his opinion that concepts and judgments, expressed in language, are *ipso facto* imperfect. In his own case, he finds human speech to be a weak, vacillating, easily perverted image of his thought, while in the case of others it is quite impossible to ascertain how far a man's words are exactly commensurate with the ideas they are employed to express. Probably, however, we must connect Ockam's Skepticism on the subject of language with his mysticism. Certainly a distrust, more or less profound, of the mere human vehicle by which their supersensuous apperceptions and intuitions are necessarily conveyed is a characteristic of not a few mystics.

II. Ockam's second general conclusion is, that knowledge is concerned only with singulars. This is necessitated by the fact that the outer world is composed of single objects, for, as he observes, 'Everything outside of the mind is in reality singular and in itself numerically one and without any addition.'³ Nature and the creative power of God know nothing of these collective entities postulated by realists. In the exercise of her productive energy,⁴ Nature does not bring forth genera or species, but individuals. Similarly, God does not create 'humanity' nor 'rationality' nor 'visibility,' nor any of these abstractions which men cause to stand for the individual members of their race. God creates man. Realists had concocted a phantasmagorical universe teeming with imaginary beings, like a child's fairy-world. Ockam introduced a disillusionizing process explaining how these wonderful idealities and metaphysical entities came to be invested with real

¹ *Logik*, iii. p. 345.

² *Quod*. iii. qu. xi. : 'Propositio vocalis est vera quando ex ejus prolacione auditor est natus concipere et formare *propositionem mentalem veram*.'

³ *Sent.* i. dist. ii. qu. vi. ; comp. Prantl, p. 356, and notes.

⁴ Comp. Dr. Loewe's treatise, *Der Kampf zwischen dem Realismus und Nominalismus im Mittelalter*, p. 82.

existence. He pointed out that the effect, marvellous as it might be deemed, was produced by the magic wand of human language and its usual operation on uncritical or fanciful minds. Hence the universal is only a supposititious extension to a whole class of the quality found to inhere in certain members of it, and this as a conclusion of real demonstrable knowledge no individual is competent to make. Ockam is of course clear-sighted enough to perceive that objective science—that which is necessitated by human needs and shared as the common property of many men, must advance beyond singular facts; but the indirect and hypothetical character of the advance must always be borne in mind. ‘All knowledge,’ says Ockam,¹ ‘starts from individuals. . . . From the senses which take cognisance only of singular things comes memory; from memory comes experience; and through experience is received the universal, which is the basis (metaphysical) of all art and science. Hence just as all our knowledge (individual) has its starting-point from the senses, so all human learning (common) takes its rise from individuals, though no science ought to treat of singulars by their separate signs’ (*i.e.* no science as such is concerned with individuals), ‘but is of universals *taken for individuals.*’ He even allows, probably as a logician, and bearing in mind the exigences of syllogisms, that ‘those propositions are better marked and more useful which are composed of universal terms.’ But this concession to the needs of objective and conventional knowledge does not destroy its particular character in relation to the individual. Universals are still only the subjective creations of the individual mind, as well as in ultimate analysis its exclusive property. Indeed, an universal regarded as a common verbal proposition could only be communicated by spoken or written language, and would be vitiated by the process. Such

¹ Comp. Prantl, p. 332, note 750. This passage, which has been used as a proof that Ockam recognised the true value of the inductive method (than which, as a mode of demonstrated truth, nothing could be more alien to the spirit of his teaching), receives some illustration by comparison with the following: ‘*Perfecta cognitio intuitiva est illa de qua dicendum est quod est cognitio experimentalis quæ cognoscit rem esse . . . et ista cognitio est causa propositionis vocalis quæ est principium artis et scientiæ primo metaphysice (i.e. subjectively as a mental concept) et secundo posteriorum, id est, est causa quâ assentimus propositioni vocali format stante cognitione intuitiva perfecta*’ (*i.e.* objectively in language). —*Sent.* ii. qu. xv. It may be added that Ockam’s distrust, both of the abstractive function of the human intellect and also of human language, would have proved insuperable obstacles to his recognition of the worth of induction.

a generalizing word is 'a sign arbitrarily created for the signification of many qualities, whence, as a word is said to be common, so it may be termed universal; but this determination it possesses not by the nature of the thing but merely of the will of those who have given it its name.'¹ Both in its origin, therefore, and in its relation to demonstrable truth an universal is an arbitrary connotation derived from a singular, and conceived by the individual mind as a particular concept; in other words, it is singular in its inception and conception, and whatever plurality it may come to be possessed of is a secondary, indirect, and imperfect attribute, useful as a conventional sign, but not adding anything to it as a conviction of truth. In the same sense of identifying universals with singulars, Ockam conceives that God, as seems demonstrated by the course of nature, takes cognisance not of collections or classes, but only of single objects; and certainly if he denied to the Supreme Intelligence a knowledge of universals as objective independent facts, he could hardly have conceded such a knowledge to man. But while Ockam confines knowledge to singulars, he is perfectly aware that the singulars may be in their mode of presentation either simple or complex. Accordingly he postulates both an apprehensive and a judicative faculty, the former of which takes cognisance both of simple and complex objects of cognition when they are direct, while the latter is concerned only with indirect objects which are always complex.

Summing up Ockam's philosophy, we are now able to determine with sufficient approximation his idea of knowledge or science. He divides cognition into two kinds, correspondently with his division of faculties into intuitive and abstractive. Man knows only what is in immediate and actual contact with his consciousness. Whatever he infers by the intervention of faculties or means other than those of personal consciousness is uncertain. In this large category of dubious cognition he accordingly places not only the knowledge communicated by language, *i.e.* all external evidence, but even his own deliverances of memory,² and the operation of his abstractive faculty. With these too he includes the accumulated residua of sensations and states of consciousness, what he terms col-

¹ Comp. Prantl, p. 345, note 782. From this, however, Ockam discriminates another kind of universal, which he calls natural, and which consists of the invariable sign or accompaniment of a physical fact, *e.g.* smoke naturally implies fire, &c.

² *Sent.* ii. qu. xv.: 'Cognitio autem intuitiva imperfecta, est illa per quam judicamus rem aliquando fuisse, vel non fuisse, et hoc dicitur cognitio recordativa,' &c.

lectively the *habit* of intelligence, and which he admits forms the basis of persistent knowledge. In short, he distrusts more or less all these faculties, whether his own or those of others, which tend to create, combine, formulate, or communicate general knowledge. An outcome of this position is the discrimination common to all Idealists and Skeptics of the personal from the general knowledge, and the restriction of indubitable certainty to the former. Compared with Greek Skeptics, however, Ockam's Skepticism begins at a later point of the process of knowledge-acquisition. With the former the senses were distrusted in their actual operation. Ockam regards with suspicion the expression of these sensations in language. His certainty, therefore, is entirely conceptual. Another Skeptic might distrust his eyesight when it proclaimed the existence, *e.g.* of a white object. Ockam distrusts the verbal proposition, 'that is a white object,' and for this reason, that there is no inherent or necessary relation between the subject and predicate, in respect of its affirmation by language. Both are conventional terms, and may be altered or interchanged indefinitely by the common consent which originated them. Hence Ockam held the predicate or attribute to be hypothetically subsumed under its subject, just as he regarded the reality of the external phenomenon 'white snow' as postulated in the sensation which affirmed it, with this difference, however, that the former might be questioned, the latter not. A further consequence of Ockam's standpoint is, that the more indirect and comprehensive in relation to the thinking subject, the predicate, the greater is its uncertainty as a demonstrable truth. The most indirect and circuitous of all others is the universal; for what can the individual predicate knowingly in such a case, when his actual experience bears no relation to the extent of the thing predicated? For this reason Ockam maintains the universal to be a predicable belonging to the individual, and points out that there is no essential difference between man as a universal and man as a singular; because no definition could be formulated which would include the one and exclude the other. It need hardly be added that Ockam believes in the relativity of knowledge. We can, he says, have no knowledge of things in themselves, but only of the relation in which they appear to stand to us. Indeed, this doctrine of relativity he carries into other matters besides knowledge, as we shall presently see. A further coincidence between his own thought and that of Greek Skeptics is his conviction that to a perfect knowledge of a thing, when it is complex, the knowledge of *all its causes* is essential,¹ this of course

¹ *Sent.* lib. i. dist. iii. qu. ii. This is a favourite argument with Greek Skeptics when dealing with causation.

being an impossible requisition for man in his present condition of mortality.

Whatever the influence of Ockam's philosophy on succeeding thinkers, it was probably surpassed both in profundity and directness by the effects of his theological writings. If his conceptualism and Skeptical nominalism prepared the way for Descartes, Bacon, and Locke, his anti-Papal writings were a storehouse of reasoning from which Gerson and Peter d'Ailly on the side of Catholicism, and Luther and Wicliff on that of Protestantism, drew their weapons. But as a theologian no less than as a philosopher Ockam is animated by the same free spirit. Like every great mind, a singular oneness of impulse and similarity of method pervades all his multifarious activities. He approached the question of theology just as he did that of scholastic philosophy. In each case he saw a complicated diversiform dogma-fabric, as gigantic in dimensions as elaborated in detail, exercising a terrorism on humanity, and tending to enslave men's intellectual faculties. In each case he discerned the imperative need of rigid analysis and simplification. The evolution of Roman ecclesiasticism, like that of mediæval philosophy, had reached an excess of superstructural growth which in the interests of humanity it was expedient to examine. The despotism of popes and the tyranny of overgrown dogmas might turn out unworthy of human allegiance equally with the portentous generalizations of realists—the monstrous race of universals. In both cases there was clearly a development from the simple to the complex, from the uniform to the multiform, from the concrete to the abstract. If universals were a bastard supposititious outcome of human thought, starting from a knowledge of singular objects, why might not the Papacy be an equally unworthy development of the simplicity of primitive Christianity? If he (Ockam) could actually trace the former to single objects and concepts, why could he not follow back the latter to a perverted interpretation of the words and life of Christ? This is in reality what Ockam does. To the simplified philosophy which is synonymous with nominalism he adds the simplified Christianity which identifies it with the teaching and authority of Christ Himself. Even the methods and terms which Ockam uses for his philosophy he employs also for his theology. For example, the supposition or hypothetical inclusion by which the concept was subsumed under its verbal sign, and the universal attribute under its particular exemplification, was employed to express the incarnation of the Logos,¹ as well as the participation in the Divine

¹ *Suppositum*, in Latin theology, was the equivalent of *ὑπόστασις* with

nature by others among the noblest scions of humanity. So also the law of Parcimony, by which Ockam inhibited all realistic interventions between the thinking subject and the object thought, as, *e.g.* intelligible species, &c., he applies to the endless multiplication of Divine agencies and methods, and also to superfluities in civil government and policy.¹ This similarity further extends to the argumentative style, which is common both to his philosophical and theological writings. His 'Commentary on the Sentences,' the 'Quodlibeta,' with a few more of his minor works, are framed on the model of alternative antagonisms which we have already noticed as a characteristic of Abelard's 'Sic et Non,' and which distinguishes all the commentators on Peter Lombard; while his anti-Papal works are constructed in the form of dialogues between master and disciple, or, as in one instance, between a priest and a knight. Thus the difference between the two consists merely in this, that the impersonal ratiocinations of the former are personified in the latter, and are thereby invested with more human interest and vitality. Ockam himself points out, in an appendix to the collection of tracts known as his Dialogues—the most important of his purely theological writings—the advantages of this method.² Admitting that he has constituted himself an assertor of contrary propositions, he affirms that this method of controversy is beneficial both for the assailants and the assailed. For the former it served to set forth to the world their objections in a complete form; for the latter it was adapted to exercise their intellect, and give them an opportunity for considering the points at issue in all their bearings. What he professed to give was not definition and true conclusions as much as materials for forming them.³ His ultimate decisions in the various anti-Papal controversies propounded in this part of his Dialogues he promises in a further treatise, which never appeared. But, sooth to say, a final determination of Ockam's opinions, whether on that or any other topic that he touched, is quite unnecessary. Besides their manifestation by overt acts, Ockam's proclivities are fully attested explicitly, no less than implicitly, in the course of his voluminous writings. No amount of

which it is identified by Ockam himself. See below. But the idea was common to mediæval thinkers—so Aquinas says: 'Persona Filii Dei est suppositum naturæ humanæ.'

¹ Goldast, ii. p. 805: 'Quandocunque unus sufficit ita quod nec consilio nec favore indiget aliorum, non sunt vocandi plures, quia frustra fit per plures quod æque bene potest fieri per unum.'

² End of *Opus Nonaginta Dierum*, Goldast, ii. p. 1236.

³ Comp. the peroration to his *Octo Quaestiones*, Goldast, ii. p. 391.

two-sided ratiocination—no juxtaposition of divergent standpoints—can for a moment obscure his irrepressible attachment to Christianity as against the Papacy, to mental freedom as against spiritual bondage, and to Rationalism and Skepticism as against Dogma. Although, therefore, the method of the Dialogues, in common with his other writings, must be described as cumbrous and involved to the extremest limits of scholastic subtlety and elaboration, the sympathies of the author, the ultimate issue of his ratiocination, are never doubtful. The purport of Ockam's writings has always been fully recognised by Romanists; hence, notwithstanding what Riezler terms his foresight in adopting the 'yes and no' method,¹ the Church immediately placed his writings on the Index.

Starting from the central point of Ockam's theology, its conception of Christianity, we find it marked by the anti-sacerdotalism, the insistence on spiritual religion, the introduction of reason as an adjunct and corrective of faith which is common to all the foremost intellects of the fourteenth century. Recognising the corruptions of the Papacy, its inordinate greed and ambition, its tyranny over the consciences of men, Ockam with his fellow-thinkers, the leaders of the Minorites, advocated a return to Christ and to the poverty and simplicity of the gospel. Few movements within the bosom of the Church were more pregnant with auspicious augury for its reformation than the rise of the Minorite orders. Notwithstanding some puerilities and super-subtle distinctions, which pertained, however, more to the detailed application of their views of poverty than to the starting-point itself, the movement was distinctly both healthful and rational. It raised the question how far ecclesiastical Christianity had obscured and well-nigh annihilated its Founder—the humble Jesus of Nazareth. It advocated a return to the simplicity of the gospel, and, although by its originators it was not held to imply a polemical relation to the dogmatic development of the Church, it came to signify such a relation to Free-thinkers like Marsilio of Padua and William of Ockam. Indeed, it was inevitable that a primary stress on the life and words of Christ should lead to the conclusion that Romanism had far exceeded the limits of its Founder's prescriptions, not only in temporal power and wealth, but also in dogmatic requirements. The insistence of Ockam and his friends on their direct relation to Christ is a very noteworthy feature of their writings. They style themselves 'Christ-worshippers' (Christicolis), 'defenders and confessors of Christ'—not

¹ Riezler, *ut supra*, p. 244.

only as a formal profession of Christianity in itself, but in implied antagonism to the perverted Christianity of the Papacy. Another outcome of this new reading of the gospel was a stress on the purely human life of Christ, *i.e.* His life of privation and humility previous to His Passion. Ockam and his friends saw that between this portion of Christ's life and the acts and words ascribed to Him after the resurrection there was a profound distinction, especially in respect to the hierarchical authority conceded to the apostles. They also recognised, what the Church for obvious reasons had overlooked, that it was just in this human life of the Son of man that the importance of Christianity in relation to the practical duties and ethical obligations of Christians mainly consisted.¹ They also drew the inference that the Pope, even granting his title of 'Vicar of Christ,' could claim no greater authority than Christ in His period of humility and self-sacrifice claimed for Himself, and this conclusion completely cut the ground from beneath the Papal assumption of temporal power. On this particular point the 'Spiritual Franciscans,' as they were called, were in thorough harmony with the German mystics. Ockam's 'Church before the Passion,'² as he termed the first and purest stage of Christianity, was only another mode of expressing what Tauler had denominated 'the poor life of Christ.' Indeed, Ockam's conception of the Christian Church was as superior in freedom and rationality to that of Luther or Calvin as his general culture and sympathies were broader and more humane. To him Christianity is above all things a system of freedom. The common opinion of his co-religionists, which assigned to the Pope his plenary power, he declares to be not only false but heretical, because it is opposed to Holy Scripture, which calls Christianity a law of liberty, whence Christians are by the law of Christ the servants of no mortal master.³ In a subsequent remarkable

¹ Comp. Ockam, *Disputatio super Potestate*, &c.; Goldast, i. p. 13: 'Audivi a viris sanctis ac devotissimis, duo tempora in Christo distingui, alterum humilitatis, alterum potestatis. Humilitatis usque suam passionem, potestatis post suam resurrectionem quando ipse dixit, *Data est mihi omnis potestas in cælo et in terra*. Petrus autem constitutus est Christi vicarius pro statu humilitatis non pro statu gloriæ et majestatis: non enim factus est Christi vicarius ad ea quæ Christus nunc agit in gloria, sed ad ea imitanda, quæ Christus egit humilis in terra, *quia illa nobis necessaria sunt*.' From this distinction of the humble and glorified states of Christ, Ockam elsewhere draws the inference, 'Christus ante passionem et resurrectionem Divinam Essentiam minime viderit.'—Goldast, ii. p. 740.

² Comp. Goldast, ii. 490: 'Omnes Ecclesia quæ incipit post passionem Christi potest contra fidem errare.'

³ Goldast, ii. 777.

passage he explains himself still further on this point: 'The Christian law is not called the law of liberty because it frees Christians from every kind of servitude, but because it does not oppress them with such bondage as the Jews were oppressed with; hence they are legitimately in subjection to kings and other Christian rulers. But it is called the law of perfect liberty because the Christian religion is burdened with few sacraments and ceremonies by Divine institution, and in it no Christian is made the servant of any mortal, nor is he even in subjection to any man unless in things necessary or useful, whether to himself or to the state.'¹ A natural inference from this position is that submission to the Pope or a needless multiplication of ritual observances is a restoration of that slavery from which Christianity was an emancipation.² Further, Christianity, according to Ockam, is in harmony with reason, otherwise it could possess no adequate sanction or ground of appeal for mankind. Not, however, that they are identical or even conterminous; such a proposition would have been altogether repugnant to Ockam's idealism. Revelation may—nay, often will—transcend reason. 'Our faith,' he remarks, 'is above human intellect,' but it must never contradict it in matters within their common scope; when such a conflict arises reason must be assigned the preference. The consentient testimony of reason and Scripture is superior to all precedents,³ laws, and statutes of every kind. Hence Ockam uses arguments of reason and common-sense just as freely as texts of Scripture in impugning the errors of the Papacy, and evidently does not regard one weapon as preferable to the other. Nor is it only in reference to Christianity as a pledge and instrument of its veracity, but generally as a method of truth-investigation reason is placed before Revelation. In a remarkable passage he enumerates four modes of truth-discovery, which he seems to have placed in what he deemed the order of their importance. They are as follows: (1) reason; (2) Scripture; (3) testimony; (4) Revelation.⁴ It is only a legitimate, though in

¹ Goldast, ii. 779.

² *Ibid.* 667.

³ *Ibid.* p. 630; comp. p. 633, and *passim*.

⁴ *Ibid.* 497: 'Multa sunt de quibus melius est pie dubitare quam unam partem contradictionis vel aliam temere affirmare: nunquam tamen circa quæcunque talia Catholica omnes Christiani neque pertinaciter errabunt, neque pertinaciter dubitabunt: sed supererunt aliqui in ecclesia, qui circa hujusmodi loco et tempore opportunis quærent cauta sollicitudine veritatem, parati etiam tenere explicite, si eam inveniunt sive per propriam meditationem, sive per occasionem acceptam a scripturis, sive aliis hominibus quibuscunque, sive per divinam revelationem.' The last mode being evidently the supernatural enlightenment of the mystic.

the fourteenth century it was a bold, conclusion from these premisses, and the virtual supremacy of reason, that the precepts of Christianity are in application to be limited by human necessity or utility. No power, whether sacred or civil, is competent to enact what clearly contravenes human and natural right, nor must any one observe what is evidently unjust.¹ Hence, says our bold precursor of the Reformation, 'for evident utility innovation must be attempted.'² Christ never intended, he added, that His precepts should be regarded as rigid, absolute prescriptions, unchangeable under every conceivable variety of circumstance. 'For if, notwithstanding the command of Christ, there is one rule of living in time of peace, another in time of persecution (alluding to Christ's conduct in eating the shew-bread), so also, notwithstanding the command of Christ, there is one rule in case of necessity and utility, another when neither necessity nor utility are concerned.'³ Hence, as a practical deduction, even if it could be shown that the Pope derived his authority from Christ, that plea would become null and void on grounds of necessity or expediency. For this reason Christians are left quite free in their ecclesiastical organizations, and they might, on sufficient reason shown, elect to be governed by a plurality of high-priests, even though Christ Himself had enjoined their submission to a single one. Ockam pursues this theme of Christian freedom in other directions, and insists that sacraments might be administered with other elements than those enjoined, or might be omitted entirely when the omission was either expedient or necessary.⁴ Whatever might be thought of this liberty by sacerdotalists, no rational Christian will find fault with Ockam's maxim in dealing with these subjects—'We must not always cleave to the words even of Christ, but rather to the mind.'⁵

Passing to Ockam's view of the Church, two considerations seem especially involved in it: (1) the supremacy of Christ; (2) the voluntary nature of all submission to authority. Ockam was fully persuaded that the basis of all government consisted in the consent expressed or implied of those governed. It was in this sense of

¹ Goldast, ii. 807.

² *Ibid.*: 'Ergo propter evidentem utilitatem est novitas facienda.'

³ *Ibid.* p. 810. On this point Ockam maintains that the abrogation of positive injunctions, in case of necessity, is an axiom both of human and Divine law.

⁴ *Ibid.* 810.

⁵ 'Nec est semper inherendum verbis etiam Christi sed menti.'—Goldast, p. 811.

'vox populi vox Dei' that he interpreted St. Paul's words, 'There is no power but of God,' &c. His ideal of a duly elected monarch was Saul, king of Israel, chosen by the popular voice on account of his personal qualifications and his supposed aptitudes for governing. Like other believers in the 'Holy Roman Empire,' Ockam was, however, too strongly convinced of its Divine institution to care to apply to it such subversive principles; but he did not scruple to apply them to the Papacy.¹ Had the Pope been chosen by the consentient voice of Christendom, Ockam would have respected his authority, but lay Catholics, except kings and princes, had no voice in the election of their chief priests. Another principle of his still more repugnant to the current opinion of his age was the inherent indifference of all forms of government. The organization of Churches must, he thinks, like all other modes of constituted authority, excepting perhaps the inviolable 'Holy Roman Empire,' be determined by circumstances of race, country, time, and other accidents, no uniform rule applicable to all cases alike being desirable, or even possible. His distinction between what is outward and material, and what is inward and spiritual, which penetrates to the extremest depths, both of his philosophy and theology, obviated any fear of schism in applying this principle to Church government. For according to Ockam—in this also resembling the German mystics and Reformers—Christ was the sole Head of the Church, not the Pope of Rome, or any other priest or hierarchical potentate. He was careful, too, to distinguish the Church Catholic—the collective body of all spiritual Christians—from the Papacy—the mere supporters of a Romish priest.² Chris-

¹ Like all the Free-thinkers of the fourteenth century, Ockam was almost a thoroughgoing Erastian. To him ecclesiastical rule was inherently inferior to secular. He is never tired of asserting precedents for the subordination of the Church to the State, *e.g.* the submission of Christ Himself to the Roman power, Paul's appeal to Cæsar on matters of faith, the appeal of Athanasius to the civil courts against Arius, &c. &c.

² Goldast, ii. 909, and *passim*: 'Christianity,' says Ockam, 'is entirely independent of the Pope, otherwise the Pope might alter or make creeds.' He considers this contingency a *reductio ad absurdum*. Nor is Ockam deluded by the plea of the Papal rule being a vicarial or delegated sovereignty. 'Tota congregatio fidelium,' he says, 'non debent uni capiti sub Christo subesse, cum Christus sit caput totius Ecclesiæ.'—Goldast, *ibid.* p. 768. Perhaps the passage that reveals most clearly the intensity of Ockam's feelings on the disparity between the Church Catholic and the Church Papal is the following sentence from his Introduction to his treatise *Compendium Errorum Joannis Papæ*, xxii. (Goldast, *ibid.* p. 958): 'Si quid autem scripsero in presenti opusculo, quod scripturæ vel doctrinæ sanctorum seu sacrosanctæ Ecclesiæ assertioni repugnet et adversetur, correc-

tianity implied spiritual union with Christ, and was entirely independent of all Churches, sects, and distinctions of whatever kind. Ockam's conception of the Church—regarded as a formal institution—implies his estimate of the clergy, and the system of sacerdotalism on which Romanism was founded. He not only denied the supremacy of the Pope as an individual, he refused to admit the authoritative basis on which the Roman Church was professedly founded. No Protestant controversialist could treat with greater scorn and freedom the texts usually employed as the scriptural foundation of the 'power of the keys.' He refused to admit that they asserted or even implied a superiority of St. Peter above the other Apostles. As to his successors, it was clear that they were not only fallible but were often heretics, and as such might be deposed by the emperor or a general council. Nor was Ockam more lenient to the clergy. With his strong common-sense combined with his conviction of spiritual Christianity, he quite repudiates the claim of priestly authority based on what is termed Apostolical succession. It is, says Ockam, the moral and spiritual qualities of the individual that constitute his fitness for the priestly office, and neither these nor his intellectual qualifications are affected by his consecration. That the priesthood does not imply immunity from error he has no difficulty in proving. Confining himself to his usual examples of human fallibility, viz. the Popes, he shows by numerous examples from St. Peter to John XXII. that they were by no means exempt, either from crime or from heresy.¹ Nay, the Apostles themselves, even when under the immediate jurisdiction of Christ, were continually gliding into error. He further points out that there is no distinction in the New Testament between bishops and priests, and suggests that the distinction was human; nor can he see anything in the power conferred on the Apostles by Christ which would justify the spiritual and coercive authority arrogated by Rome; the jurisdiction exercised by Christ and transferred to the Apostles being merely moral and fraternal. As to Apostolical succession being a 'note' of the true Church, Ockam maintains that it is apostolic *teaching* that constitutes true Apostolicity.²

Ockam's subordination of the Church to the empire, and generally of the ecclesiastical to the lay Christian ruler, is so

tioni præfatæ Ecclesiæ Catholicæ, non Ecclesiæ malignantium, non hæreticorum, non schismaticorum nec eorum fautoribus, me et dicta mea subijcio et expono.'

¹ Goldast, ii. 468; comp. Riezler, *ut supra*, p. 258.

² Goldast, p. 494.

pointed that it is only removed from Erastianism by the inconsistent admission of the spiritual Headship of Christ. The analogy to which he continually recurs is the relation of Christ and His Apostles to the Roman Empire. The reservation made by Christ of His spiritual jurisdiction is, Ockam thinks, removed in the case of His supposed successors the Popes, by the Roman Empire having itself become Christian. Hence the Pope should now be subject to the empire, partly in spiritual, and wholly in temporal, matters. He urges that not only laymen¹ but even women are expressly asserted in the New Testament to be Divinely inspired, and he suggests, though perhaps only as an extreme outcome of his general position, that women might conceivably constitute of themselves the true Church, all living men, clerical as well as lay, being involved in error and heresy.² We can after this appreciate Hauréau's designation of the 'Dialogus' as 'a revolutionary pamphlet,' for however doubtful the propriety which terms a work of more than 1,000 folio pages a pamphlet, there can be little question as to the revolutionary character of its contents.

None of Ockam's speculations are so diversiform and self-contradictory as his views on the sacraments, and hence on none have the opinions of commentators been more divided.³ Without going into detail on a point that belongs only incidentally to our subject, I may say that they appear to me to oscillate uncertainly between the opposite poles of his thought—I mean his naturalism or Skepticism, and his mysticism. Had we some knowledge of the order in which his works were written, we might possibly be able to determine how far this inconsistency assumed the character of an evolution—the development of idealism and Skepticism into unqualified mysticism. In this case the order of Ockam's writings would be: (1) the 'Dialogus;' (2) the 'Quodlibeta;' (3) the 'Commentary on the Sentences;' (4) the tract 'On the Sacrament of

¹ Ockam interprets the words of the Baptist, "God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham," as implying the Divine power to construct a Church entirely of laymen.—Goldast, ii. 498.

² Goldast, p. 503. The estimate of the effect of Ockam's reasoning, made by his Papal adversaries, cannot be called exaggerated, e.g. speaking of Ockam and Michael de Casena, the Pope's decree affirms 'eo impudentiæ lapsi sunt, ut dicerent omnes clericos et Episcopos Ecclesiæ in hæresi versari posse. Quod in Dialogis Okami multis rationibus inculcatur.'—D'Argentré, *Coll. Jud.* vol. i. p. 297.

³ Ockam has been credited by different writers with holding Transubstantiation, Consubstantiation, and Zwinglianism. The self-contradictory nature of his views may be seen at a glance by any one who compares his *Quodlibeta*, iv. qu. xxxv. with chap. v. of his *De Sacramento Altaris*.

the Altar.' Accepting the usual definition of a sacrament, that it is the outward sign of an inward grace, his idealist standpoint and his Skepticism as to all objects outside the mind would of themselves determine his especial stress on the spiritual element.¹ He refuses to believe that sacraments are effective *ex opere operato*, and holds that the physical elements have no inherent virtue of themselves, their use being sanctioned only by the command of Christ.² He rationalizes the effect of baptism by making the character impressed by it consist in the consciousness of the baptized of their admission into the family of Christ and their consequent distinction from non-baptized persons.³ Sometimes, however, he ironically admits a supernatural efficacy on the mere authority of the Church, but the tone of his discussion is rationalistic, and he seems to hint a preference for adult as superior to infant baptism.⁴ As to the Holy Communion, Ockam readily allows that Transubstantiation is not to be found in the New Testament, and that it is not consonant with reason.⁵ He maintains that the act of consecration does not in any way change the ordinary qualities of the elements as these are perceived by the senses, and in harmony with his philosophy he clearly dislikes the theory which makes an impossible distinction between the essence or substance and the qualities of the bread and wine.⁶ What is really present in the sacrament under the form of the symbolical body of Christ is the soul of Christ, and it is of this vitality or spirituality that the worthy recipient is a partaker. His favourite analogy in dealing with this spiritual presence is the truly scholastic one that the intellective soul in the case of a man, *e.g.* is altogether in the whole body and in each part of it.⁷ But this subjective presence can only be apprehended subjectively, *i.e.* by the faithful believer. On the other hand, there are passages in which the common doctrine of the Romish Church seems affirmed, especially in his work 'On the Sacrament of the Altar,'⁸ but these are accompanied by some qualification, as, *e.g.* a declaration that he intends to defend the ordinary teaching of the Church as such,⁹ or else by an ironical suggestion that the Church has prob-

¹ *Sent.* lib. iv. qu. i.

² *Ibid.*; comp. Goldast, ii. p. 810.

³ *Sent.* iv. qu. ii.

⁴ *Ibid.* qu. iii.; comp. on this point Rettberg's article, 'Ockam und Luther,' in *Studien und Kritiken* for 1839.

⁵ *Quod.* iv. qu. xxxiv.; *De Sac. Alt.* cap. v.

⁶ *Quod.* iv. qu. xxxv.

⁷ *Sent.* iv. qu. iv.; *De Sac. Alt.* cap. iv.

⁸ Comp. *e.g.* cap. i.

⁹ *De Sac. Alt.* Prologus.

ably received it as a Divine revelation,¹ or that it is a purely theological dogma, and as such must be received by faith,² or that it possesses the religious advantage of enhancing the Divine omnipotence.³ It is difficult to determine, therefore, what Ockam's precise views of the matter really were. For while on the one hand the ordinary theory of the Romanist conflicted with his nominalism in that it propounded a reality external to the mind, and that too by the vitiated source of the words of a priest,⁴ on the other hand there was more than one element in his mental formation which would have inclined him to accept at least a modified transubstantiation. First, there was his logical theory of supposition by which one essence or quality might be hypothetically assigned at will to another. Next, there was his doctrine of Twofold Truth, which differentiated completely the processes and conclusions of theology from those of science; and last of all, there was his undoubted mysticism. On either or all of these grounds Transubstantiation might have been accepted by him as a dogma and under protest, though it must be admitted that the doctrine in its extreme form contravened the most powerful tendencies of his intellect.

Ockam's virtual repudiation of Romanism as a source or guarantee of truth has induced some Protestant writers to lay undue stress on his opinions with regard to Holy Scripture. No doubt he was quite persuaded of the superiority of the Bible as a *regula fidei* to the *ipse dixit* of popes and general councils,⁵ but, for all that, his instincts were too free to allow him to lapse into the mere bibliolatry and literalism of the German Reformers. Thus he allows that from one point of view the Bible is inferior to the voice of the whole spiritual community⁶—the Church Catholic as distinguished from Roman—just as the part is inferior to the whole. The distrust of human language too, which forms such a prominent feature in his philosophy, comes here into play. He points out the ease with which the language of the Bible may be perverted,⁷ and the extraordinary doctrines which have been

¹ *Quod.* iv. qu. xxxv. On the ironical character of Ockam's professedly coerced belief in the extreme dogmas of Romanism, comp. Rettberg, *ut supra*, p. 77, and see Baur, *Lehre v. d. Dreieinigkeit*, ii. p. 879.

² *De Sac. Alt.* cap. i.

³ *Ibid.* cap. v. This merit is also so stated as to be indisputably a sarcasm.

⁴ Comp. *Quod.* ii. qu. xix. where the mental proposition, the actual intention of the priest, is contrasted with his words.

⁵ Goldast, ii. p. 410, &c.

⁶ *Dialogus*, chap. iv.; Goldast, ii. p. 402.

⁷ Goldast, ii. pp. 639, 640.

evolved from it. To the actual utterances of Christ as the sole Head of the Church he attributes a greater authority than to other parts of the Bible, but here also he recognises the need of discrimination—the superiority of spirit over letter¹—and asserts that we must pay more heed to the mind than to the words of Christ. Nor does Ockam see any distinction in kind between truths enunciated in the Bible and those expressed by other writers, whether sacred or profane. He is inclined to accept Augustine's idea, that all truth is inherently Divine and *ipso facto* Christian,² just as the definition of heresy which harmonizes best with his utterances respecting it is conscious falsehood. In a word, Ockam's *ultima ratio* as a standard of Divine truth is Holy Writ, especially the words of Christ, combined with right reason—what would be termed in the present day the verifying faculty. We shall find further on that the latter power in Ockam's case seems to pass into the subjective certainty of the mystic. Indeed, the standpoint of mysticism is of itself inconsistent with undue reverence for purely external or verbal revelation of any kind.

No portion of Ockam's free-speculation has provoked so much distrust as his treatment of theological dogmas. Here his philosophical eccentricity becomes actual heresy, and his Skepticism as to realistic abstractions is extended to the primary truths of Christianity. Not that Ockam, albeit a believer in double-truth, was always conscious of distinction when he passed from the subject-matter of philosophy to that of theology; for to most thinkers of his time, philosophy and theology were but different aspects of the same truth. Much of the freedom of discussion we have already noticed as characteristic of the Schoolmen must be ascribed to this conviction. Thus the warfare against universals was in reality a polemic against metaphysical conceptions, and necessarily included all religious truths of a metaphysical or abstract kind. Ockam carries this freedom of discussion to a greater extent than any other Schoolman; and the liberty which, as we saw, Erigena, Abelard, and Aquinas permitted themselves in theological controversy, develops in his case into almost absolute licence.³ Let

¹ Goldast, ii. p. 739. For this purpose he quotes Jerome against Marcion: 'Non in verbis Scripturarum est Evangelium sed in sensu, non in superficie sed in medulla, non in sermonum foliis sed in radice rationis.'

² *Ibid.* p. 840: 'Et ideo Scripturam non est necesse tanquam veram simpliciter confiteri nisi possit aperte probari quod est consona Scripturis canonicis, vel rationi evidenti naturali.'

³ Comp. on Ockam's Skepticism, Jourdain's *Philosophie de St. Thomas d'Aquin*, ii. p. 194, &c.

us take, *e.g.* his ratiocination on the first article of the Christian faith. From the standpoint of human reason he seems inclined to treat God as an unauthenticated 'universal'—a convergence of human abstractions—a fictitious entity evolved by realists from their imaginations, and to which nothing outside the mind actually corresponds. He shows that all the reasons commonly accepted as proving the Divine existence are, when duly tested, utterly abortive. Not even Kant himself destroyed with greater ruthlessness and determination the ordinary *à priori* and *à posteriori* arguments for the Being of God and His attributes. Our knowledge of God, says Ockam, is generated by analogous processes to those employed by realists in creating their universals. We conceive of Him, *e.g.* as a Person from the experience we possess of personality or individuality in ourselves or in other men. We ascribe to Him certain attributes which are originated by our consciousness of similar qualities in men, and which on account of their excellence we judge befitting to the Deity. The Divine volition, *e.g.* is a universal of which the root-thought is the consciousness of will within ourselves, just as ordinary universals are produced from singular concepts or things. Ockam propounds the question whether it can be proved by natural reason that there is only one God. This he is compelled to answer in the negative. There is nothing, he thinks, either in the human mind or in the constitution of nature to demonstrate the truth of monotheism. The old argument of Aristotle, of a first cause or mover of the universe being a necessary postulate of the reason, he rejects.¹ We possess at least no valid means of verifying such an assumption. An infinite succession of causes is not, in his judgment, an inconceivable supposition, and the limitation by theologians of the Divine energy or equivalent motive agencies to a specific portion of the infinite past he thinks unwarranted.² Nor again is there any reason derivable from

¹ *Quod.* ii. 1; *Centil.* Con. i.

² *Quod.* ii. qu. ii.; *Centil.* i. In pure metaphysics it is difficult to see why an infinite succession of energizing causes should be an impossible conception. The idea stands on precisely the same basis as every other species of infinitude, *e.g.* space, time, number, &c. Ockam illustrates it by the successive generations of mankind, which we have no difficulty in conceiving as eternal, whether in the past, or future, or both. There was, however, by no means a consensus of belief on the point even among nominalists (comp. Baur, *Dreieinigkeit*, vol. ii. p. 874). Ockam more than once assails Aristotle's position of the absolute necessity of a first cause: at the same time he does admit, as a matter of convenience, and as a peremptory assertion of faith, that it is better to interpose some limit to the infinite regress. Comp. *Sent.* i. dist. ii. qu. x.: 'Quamvis non est status

nature or the laws of the human mind why the First Cause should be one, for a multiplicity of Divine agents does not involve any incongruity or impossibility, because they may agree to work in harmony.¹ Indeed, he affirms that, on the hypothesis of more worlds than one, polytheism would be a more probable theory than monotheism. One great reason why the latter—assuming this to be the only universe—is the preferable theory is, that one supreme cause is sufficient, for ‘beings should not be multiplied without necessity;’—precisely the reason which he assigns for preferring in politics the rule of the one to that of the many. Our human ignorance of the being of God naturally extends to His attributes. These also are mere inferences from our experience of nature and humanity. We discriminate and name them as we deem most consonant to the dignity and perfection of the Supreme Being; but both our discrimination and nomenclature are in truth perfectly arbitrary. We are unable to abstract and reason on one particular attribute without including in the process all the Divine attributes. Thus the Divine wisdom and the Divine omnipotence are spoken of God simply of the same thing, for what we choose to term the Divine wisdom cannot be known except by the process by which we learn the Divine omnipotence.² None of these theistic attributes are we able to know otherwise than as concepts of our own. Neither the oneness of God, nor His priority, nor His infinite power, nor His goodness, nor His Divine perfection, are we able to apprehend in themselves; and these concepts are not truly God, but ideas which we employ in propositions, whether mental or vocal, for God. We are, therefore, concludes our Skeptic, utterly ignorant of the nature, the existence, and the attributes of the Supreme Being. Not only are the *à priori* proofs of these entities found wanting, but the *à posteriori* as well. Regarded as a rational being, as an earthly pilgrim (*viator*), the only knowledge man can have of God is negative. We shall presently see how in Ockam’s opinion that negative may haply become positive knowledge. But though Ockam objects to the ordinary process of theologians of assimilating the Divine nature to what they observe of the attributes of man, he is himself occasionally guilty of employing the

in aliquo determinato ordine sicut in intellectionibus et volitionibus tamen in toto ordine entium oportet ponere statum, quia aliter ut probatum est esset infinitas in actu.’ He also admits that an infinite succession of preserving, *sustaining agencies* is inconceivable. See Tennemann, *Gesch.* viii. p. 877.

¹ *Cent. Con.* ii.; *Sent.* i. dist. ii. qu. x.

² *Sent.* i. dist. i. qu. v.

same method. He affirms, for instance, that God knows all objects singly, in other words, in the same way that he asserts man knows them; the main difference between the Divine cognition and human knowledge being, that God knows external objects before perception, man only after perception.¹ Such inconsistencies, however, are not rare in Ockam's works. But we have not yet exhausted Ockam's Free-thought in dealing with Deity. Assuming that we cannot know either the being (*esse*) or the nature (*quidditas*) of God, may we take the mere fact of His existence for granted, may we regard Him as mere Being (*Ens*)? This Ockam not only allows but advocates. We may predicate being of God, but this selfsame attribute may be predicated universally of everything that exists: hence there is no distinction so far between God and the meanest reptile that crawls on the earth, and the highest attribute of the Creator is shared by the lowest of His creatures.² We have here, I may note in passing, a complete inversion of the process employed by Pantheists, who, starting from the same common idea of *Ens*, ascend to God as the single entity who sums up and comprehends the universe, and the very term which Parmenides and Plato employed as the highest they could confer on the Supreme Being, became, in the nominalistic analysis of Ockam, His lowest common attribute or denomination. Ockam discusses the second and third Persons of the Trinity with the same freedom as he does the first. Thus, the qualities of the Father being in theory identical with those of the Son, he considers it foolish to affirm in terms that the power of begetting pertaining to the Father cannot also be attributed to the Son. He speculates—in order to get rid of this dilemma—on a Divine attribute not generally mentioned in modern text-books of theology, but eminently characteristic of patristic and scholastic theorizing, viz. the innatability, the incapacity of being born, of the first Person of the Trinity. To the proposition 'God is man,' nakedly expressed, Ockam yields a grudging half-ironical assent, and he in more than one place deduces from it a number of *reductiones ad absurdum*. It is to be observed that in the spiritual apperception of the Divine essence pertaining to the mystic—Ockam's ideal condition of certitude and knowledge—the affirmation of the Incarnation would be impossible. Similarly, the nature and procession of the Holy Ghost, the question how far He is a person, how far an attribute, His distinction from the faculty of love and

¹ Comp. Hauréau, *Hist.* ii. p. 449.

² *Quod.* v. qu. xiv.; comp. Rousselot, *Études*, iii. p. 251.

other collateral questions suggested by the dogmatic teaching of Romanism, are so many problems into which Ockam endeavours to insinuate the thin wedge of his subtle dialectic. The general outcome of his ratiocination on the Deity, as presented in the theology of the Church, is human ignorance—the necessary suspense of the reason. All articles of faith, he maintains, are indemonstrable.¹ The supreme proof of this thesis is the doctrine of the Trinity, but he extends his ratiocination to the whole region of theological metaphysics. These dogmas cannot be known by experience or by any of the ordinary procedures of the human intellect. They are purely objects of faith. Their knowledge is negative rather than positive, and their highest legitimate attainment in human conviction is not certitude but probability.

The argumentation which Ockam applies to Deity he also finds available to other metaphysical creations of theologians, *e.g.* the nature and qualities of the soul. The old formal distinctions, extending back to the time of Aristotle, between a sensitive, vegetative, and intellective soul, he diminishes by identifying the two former. Here again he manifests the economical tendency that abolished the intelligible species, and the rest of the transcendental furniture with which realism had stocked the spiritual faculty of man. As to the intellective soul, Ockam asserts that all we can know of it are merely our internal perceptions of its operations. Judging by these we cannot affirm demonstratively, nor ascertain experimentally, that it is as theologians assert, immaterial, incorruptible, and indivisible. 'We know by experience,' he says, 'that we understand, and wish and dislike, and have similar operations within us, but we do not know experimentally that these result from an immaterial and incorruptible soul, and every reason assumed to prove this assumes something doubtful.'² Whatever we may think of Ockam's method or its results, it is impossible to dispute its consistency. He clearly sees that all metaphysical concepts have a similar origin, and that realism and ecclesiastical theology are, if not identical, at least twin sisters, children of the same parents, and precisely similar both in bodily conformation and mental qualities. The Church had long foreseen, as we know, that nominalistic analysis—the reduction of metaphysical entities to their physical antecedents—was just as destructive to her own dogmas as to those of realism, and Ockam's procedure must be held to justify her forecast.

The most extravagant of Ockam's Free-thinking speculations

¹ *Quod. ii. qu. iii.*

² *Ibid. i. qu. x.*

occur in his 'Quodlibeta' and 'Centilogium.' Indeed, the latter work may be described as a collection of theological paralogisms logically deducible from the ordinary axioms and dogmas of the Church. Employing the process of supposition—the synthesis already mentioned of the subject and object, the Divine and human, the visible and invisible, the known and the unknown—an operation which Ockam identifies with the hypostatical union of God and man, he deduces all manner of incongruities and absurdities from the accredited beliefs of the Church. Thus he shows that there is no Divine attribute which is not liable to qualifications and contradictions, induced by its origin as a supposititious extension to the Supreme Being of a human virtue. There is no contradiction, he says, in supposing that as God took in Christ the nature of man, He might not take the nature of an inferior creature, as that of an ass, or a stone, or wood,¹ a deduction which shows how little Ockam—and the same remark is true of mediæval writers generally—was embarrassed in his speculations by excessive reverence for dogma. From the same doctrine of the Incarnation other strange deductions are made, *e.g.* that the Father begat Himself, that He died on the cross, that He rose from the dead, &c.² Similarly the dogma of Transubstantiation, notwithstanding his partial acceptance of it, is shown to be surcharged with contradictory implications.³ Other conclusions to which he arrives, at least which he regards as fair topics of discussion, are—that substances may be derived from non-substantial things; that God has two wills, two intellects, two kinds of knowledge; that God the Father and the Holy Ghost may be sons of the Blessed Virgin;⁴ that God might have existed before eternity; that humanity might have existed before man's creation, &c. These examples are sufficient to show the character of the 'Centilogium,' and to explain its general acceptance as the extreme outcome of Ockam's Skepticism. The motive of this curious production is not very clear. I should be inclined to assign it—(1) to the exuberant wantonness of Free-thought which is common to all Skeptics; (2) to the unlimited dialectic which Ockam shares with his brother Schoolmen, and a desire to manifest the potent qualities of the principle of supposition; (3) it may be regarded as a propædeutic to his own mysticism—a suggestion that, reason being impotent and dogmas self-refuting, recourse must be had to the agencies of spiritual intuition, infused faith, and the beatific vision of the Deity. The history of Skepticism affords

¹ *Cent. Con.* vii.

² *Ibid.* *Con.* viii.

³ *Ibid.* *Cons.* xx.—xxxiv.

⁴ *Cons.* viii. and ix.

many similar instances of a reaction from doubt to mysticism ; and in most such cases a morbid delight in trampling down reason, and in exaggerating its self-destructive properties, is a common feature of the movement.

But before remarking on Ockam's mysticism as the ideal and constructive force of his mental formation, we must pursue the account of his Skepticism one stage further. He professed fully and unreservedly the doctrine of 'double-truth' generally held by the foremost thinkers of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. He seems to have believed that human nature has an innate proclivity to dissidence.¹ We might attribute such a conviction to his own introspection, and suggest that he had learnt human nature 'at home,' were it not for the widespread Skepticism of his time. The divergent elements and standpoints constituting opposing phases of truth which we noticed in the preceding chapter were still in operation in Ockam's time, and the distinctions between Aristotle and Church dogma, or between philosophy and theology, was one which he not only allowed but insisted on. He enforced the differentiation in a variety of ways, so as to secure the greatest possible latitude of thought. Thus, speaking of singular things and their relation to universals, he says that nothing is at the same time both one and many according to philosophers, though according to theologians (*i.e.* in reference to the Trinity) it may be granted. So also, discussing in a remarkable chapter of the 'Dialogus' the conduct of some archbishop who had interdicted certain teachings, Ockam maintains that 'assertions chiefly physical which do not pertain to theology are by no man to be solemnly condemned or interdicted, because in such matters (*i.e.* of secular learning) every man should be free, and at liberty to say what he pleases.'² He also allows that there may be a dissonance between Scripture and reason, though he is not always consistent as to the mode of its solution or reconciliation ; for while he mostly allows that reason may on sufficient cause shown override Scripture, he occasionally maintains that it is in Scripture utterances alone that contradictions are permissible.³ But like all genuine Free-thinkers, Ockam was persuaded of the utility of antagonistic reasoning as the best method of ascertaining truth. He expressly defends the free discussion of his 'Dialogus,' as well as his general abstention

¹ 'Cum ergo nostra natura humana sit prona ad dissentiendum.'—Goldast, ii. p. 949.

² Goldast, ii. p. 427.

³ *Sent.* i. dist. i. qu. v. : 'Contradictoria nunquam concedi de eodem nisi habeantur in Scriptura Sacra vel necessario inferantur ex ea.'

from a positive decision on the points at issue, on the ground of its advantages to the reader. Ockam, in a word, does not profess in those writings to affirm dogmatically what he holds to be true, so much as to afford others materials, and perhaps I should add suggestions, for forming their own judgments; and the same rule holds good of all his works. He thus shares the confidence of Sokrates and all genuine truth-seekers in the ultimate supremacy of truth, as well as their conviction of personal obligation on the part of every man in its discovery. Nor is this trait of Ockam's mind confined to incidental remarks, or to be inferred only from his dualistic method of argumentation; he is not afraid openly to avouch the advantages of juxtaposed contradictions as the readiest road to demonstration. In harmony with this conviction, his ordinary language is based upon his consciousness of the disparity between theology and philosophy; for he perpetually discriminates between his ratiocination as being sometimes that of a logician, while at other times he reasons as a theologian. He also allows that amount of double-truth which might be involved in the Romanist distinction between esoteric and exoteric teaching. But with all his dualism, Ockam is never forgetful of his idealistic standpoint. Reservation must be made of the indivisibility of consciousness. Propositions are either mental or vocal. In the latter case double-truth may be allowed, but not in the former. Real contradictories, *i.e.* of different terms or parts of the same concept, are impossible, for this would imply a disruption of consciousness.¹

Further illustration of the same feature of Ockam's intellect is found in his treatment of heresy. Not the least noteworthy circumstance in his writings is that, although himself labouring under the imputation of heterodoxy, and being for the greater part of his life under the Papal ban, he should have written so much and apparently so seriously of heresy. But his Free-thought discloses itself under the seeming orthodoxy of his animadversions, just as it does under the dialectical methods of scholastic philosophy. His treatment of the question is so unecclesiastical and judicial, so broad and comprehensive, so generous and enlightened, as to deserve the honour accorded it of a place in the Index. Indeed, his definitions of heresy are so lax, the conditions he postulates as necessary to its blameworthiness are so many, the excuses alleged for most of its manifestations are so various, his reluctance to give any tribunal a coercive control over human speculation is so strongly marked,

¹ *Sent. i. dist. i. qu. v. :* 'Non est concedendum aliquid vere affirmari de aliqua re, et vere negari ab alia re quæ tamen sunt una res numero.'

that probably no heretic ever existed who would not willingly submit his supposed aberrations to a court animated by Ockam's principles, and willingly abide the issue. The root-thought of his discussion—his ruling idea of heresy—tends to define it not as a contradiction of ecclesiastical dogma as such, nor even a contravention of the assertions of Holy Writ, so much as a conscious enunciation of what is false—a wilful and arrogant contradiction of clear, indisputable, universally received truth.¹ Thus in Ockam's nomenclature a heretic is a liar, and especially a liar animated by base and selfish motives. That this is the outcome of his heresy-discussion you will see by a summary of his chief distinctions and definitions on the subject. First he distinguishes between implicit and explicit faith, or the unconscious possession and overt expression of Christian verities.² Of the former or non-Christian Christianity, his example is the centurion Cornelius, who, though a heathen, stood high in the Divine esteem on account of his piety and virtue. He also adduces, on the same point, Christ's ignoring the sectarian distinctions of the Jews. Another distinguishing mark of a similar kind he makes between partial and complete Christianity, maintaining that error on one article of faith does not involve heresy, provided the supposed heretic be persuaded of the truth or superiority of Christianity as a whole.³ He points out that many kinds of heresies, e.g. that caused by ignorance, are obviously pardonable, and he is himself too much a Skeptic not to acknowledge that the fallibility pertaining to all men may easily assume error where none exists—or, as he puts it, 'Error before men may not be error in the sight of God.'⁴ On the same ground of compassionating human ignorance, he propounds the remarkable rule that the heretic-hunter who in a doubtful case succeeds in convicting another of heresy is himself guilty of the same offence,⁵ apparently because he develops and matures what might have been partial or unconscious error. Ockam's Skepticism on language here also finds play, for he holds that all incriminated words are to be interpreted, 'ad intentionem loquentis,' according to the meaning

¹ Goldast, ii. p. 430: 'Nam veritas explicite approbata, et in veritate Catholica fundata, pro Catholico debet haberi, ergo et falsitas contraria debet hæretica judicari.' Comp. *ibid.* p. 419: 'Non potest Summus Pontifex, nec etiam tota Ecclesia Dei de assertione non vera facere veram, nec de assertione non falsa facere falsam.' The distinction between the Roman and the Catholic Church is a main point in all Ockam's ecclesiastical writings. Thus the dictum 'Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus,' as applied to the Church of Rome, is clearly false. Comp. Goldast, p. 491.

² *Ibid.* p. 447.

³ *Ibid.* p. 447.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 445.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 461; comp. also p. 641.

placed on them by the speaker.¹ This mental intention is indeed a primary point in his estimate of error, for, as he remarks more than once, 'No man can be convicted as a liar who intends to tell the truth ;'² a generous, even if obvious, ruling which would serve to exonerate every sincere heretic that ever lived. With a similarly clear sense of justice and humanity, he pronounces all truth-seekers to be *ipso facto* exempt from the charge of heresy, considering that their attitude of seeking conflicts with the assumption of their holding any erroneous doctrine.³ He also distinguishes between intellectual and moral error, pointing out that orthodoxy by no means implies ethical rectitude, and illustrating his position by the quarrels and errors of the apostles, the ill-temperers of the Fathers, the various crimes and misdemeanours of Popes, &c. Incidentally Ockam expresses himself with merited severity on the nefarious hypocrisy of the Romish Church in yielding up heretics after condemning them to death, to be punished by the secular arm : ' Dangerously,' he says, ' do they play the fool who suppose that those only are homicides who kill men with their hands and not rather those by whose counsel, fraud, and incitation men are slain.'⁴

On the other hand, we must in fairness admit that Ockam, as a jealous Franciscan, does not seem inclined to allow their great enemy, Pope John XXII., many extenuating circumstances in respect of the heresies he alleges against him ; while it must also be acknowledged that his accusations turn upon abstruse questions and subtle distinctions which it is difficult to believe he would have pronounced sufficiently important for the condemnation of an inferior heretic. The chief of the Pope's incriminated opinions was his limiting the Beatific Vision of the Deity to the state of the blessed *after the day of Judgment*⁵—intended, no doubt, as a corrective of the prevailing mysticism, but which Ockam with his mystical brethren bitterly resented, as an unauthorized interference with the extent and duration of their supernatural illumination.

¹ Goldast, ii. p. 639 : ' Ubi incidit ambiguitas vel generalitas verborum in doctrina alicujus scribentis aut docentis recurrendum est ad intentionem loquentis ut ipse seipsum exponat.'

² *Ibid.* p. 462 : ' Nemo mentiens judicandus est qui dicit falsum quod putat verum ;' with which may be compared the definition of heresy propounded by William of Champeaux, ' Hæresis stricte accepta est scienter veritatem impugnare.'—Michaud, *Guill. de Champ.* p. 285.

³ *Ibid.* p. 754 : ' Qui quærent autem cauta sollicitudine veritatem, corrigi parati, cum invenerint, nequaquam sunt inter hæreticos computandi.'

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 461.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 761.

This leads me to another and very different phase of Ockam's mind. We have already seen that, notwithstanding his Skepticism, Ockam is not an extreme destructive. There are certain conservative and semi-dogmatic instincts in his intellectual formation, and any estimate of him which took no account of these would be equally untrue and one-sided. It will help us to understand this idealistic phase of Ockam's character and its relation to his Skepticism if we bear in mind his definition of faith. According to him, faith is of two kinds, acquired and infused. The first is the conviction based upon experience, rationality, the ordinary growth of the mind in knowledge. The second, on the contrary, is a supernatural product, a Divinely implanted belief in dogmas transcending common methods of verification. Now of acquired faith Ockam thinks there may be different degrees according to the measure of probability, experience, and other human elements constituting it, so that from this standpoint the different articles of a creed may have each its own standard of credibility; whereas of infused faith there can be only one kind, and its reception of dogmas is therefore uniform. You will see that this dualism of faith, while reminding us of Aquinas's natural and supernatural intellect, corresponds pretty nearly to Ockam's double-truth, and is a principle which clearly contains elements of Skepticism as well as of mysticism. But Ockam takes some pains to prove that their relations are not so mutually exclusive as might at first sight appear. He points out, *e.g.* that notwithstanding their different origin, they are not incommensurate with each other, for in most human attainments, as, for instance, in the acquisition of languages, the operation of both is identical. He also maintains that infused faith must possess some sanction and guarantee for its assertions, either from the mere human acquired faith whenever this is possible,¹ or from the teaching of Scripture, or from the consentient testimony of the universal (not Roman) Church. He moreover refuses to allow that infused faith is of itself either infallible, or that its presence is incompatible with an erroneous 'acquired faith.'² He is also careful to assert the individuality of the recipient of infused faith. Hence it is not the dogma of the Church as such that it receives, nor any other external authoritative truth, but the dogma or truth

¹ *Sent.* iii. qu. viii. P.: 'Potest Deus errare in intellectu viatoris habitum fidei quo inclinatur immediate ad credendum omnes articulos fidei supposita fide *acquisita respectu uniuscujusquam.*'

² *Sent. ibid.*: 'Non est repugnantia formalis inter errorem acquisitum et fidem infusam.'

as presented to and implanted in the mind of the believer by the supernatural working of Divine agencies. So solicitous is Ockam to guard the native freedom and independence of the mind from being injured by an excessive and predominant supernaturalism.

The nature of Ockam's 'infused faith' gives the key to the character of his mysticism. That he was no mystic, in the sense either of St. Bernard or Eckhart, is very obvious. He is quite incapable of sacrificing his intellect at the shrine of religious dogma and asceticism, as did the former, or of merging his individuality in a Pantheistic conception of the universe, as did the latter. On the contrary, all the main tendencies of Ockam's thought were directed to the preservation and autonomy of man's reason and personal independence. His mysticism, therefore, as in the case of other Skeptics, was largely tempered by rationalism, and was more intellectual than emotional. But it is impossible to deny its existence or importance. It formed the counterbalancing element to his Skeptical analysis. Like the categorical imperatives of Kant and similar expedients of other Free-thinkers, it restored what the natural reason had found needful to surrender. The evolution of this semi-mysticism from Ockam's idealism is readily understood. His restriction of the highest knowledge to the direct deliverances of consciousness was the first step in the movement; his distrust of all external phenomena was the second. Consistently he failed to discriminate between the facts of consciousness when their excitatory causes happened to be outward phenomena, and when they were purely spiritual, supersensuous notions. He allows, *e.g.* that there might be an intuition of things that never actually existed. Hence both sensuous and supersensuous cognitions possessed the same basis, and so far the same validity. As he himself puts it, '*Sicut sensibilia ad sensum, sic phantasmata ad intellectum*'¹—'Sensible objects are to the senses as are phantasms to the intellect,' or as he elsewhere expresses the same truth, 'Intuitive cognition . . . may be caused either naturally or supernaturally.'² In harmony with this principle, Ockam did not attempt to differentiate on grounds of reality the impressions forced on him by external phenomena, and the spiritual apperceptions the religious instincts he conceived himself to possess. Thus his conviction of the Divine existence which his reason failed to demonstrate was obtained by the affirmation of infused faith, and a similar restoration was effected in the case of other truths. Nor was Ockam indisposed on other grounds to grant all reasonable

¹ *Sent.* i. dist. iii. qu. vi.

² *Sent.* ii. qu. xiv.

importance to the instinctive postulates of the religious thinker, as well as to the self-assertions of the mystic. For mysticism, as well as Skepticism, was in reality a movement of freedom opposed to the coercion of philosophy and to the dogmas of the Church. The alliance of the mystic and the ecclesiastic, as in the case of Bernard, was by no means an indispensable conjunction. In some respects it was even incongruous. The subjective standpoint of the mystic made him not only independent of, but averse to, the externalities of sacerdotalism and its rites. His own conviction of enlightenment might indeed reach a point which rendered Christianity as a Revelation quite superfluous. There was therefore enough self-assertion and individual liberty in the mystic standpoint to justify its acceptance by a Free-thinker like Ockam. The extent to which he carried his mysticism seems difficult to determine. He does not appear to have left any formal treatise on the subject, so that his opinions can only be gathered from the many incidental remarks¹ which are scattered up and down in his voluminous writings. The maxim, itself begotten of Skepticism, that all higher knowledge must be intuitive and immediate, formed his starting-point. He thence concludes that God's knowledge being perfect must be of this kind; so also must be the knowledge of angels and beatified spirits. But it is not confined exclusively to Deity or to the denizens of heaven. Terrestrial beings may share the blessedness—indeed, the capacity for beatification is an affection of every reasonable being, as is also the intuitive assurance which is its chiefest characteristic. The stock illustration of this supernatural illumination, both with Ockam and other mystics, is 'Paulus post raptum'—'St. Paul after his rapture.' In mystical lore this was also the accepted instance of the highest degree of beatification to which a mortal could aspire. But either this or an inferior state of assurance might, according to Ockam, be conferred by God on any of His chosen servants, so that through Divine interposition, yet without the beatific vision, a man might be convinced by direct intuition of the truth of articles of faith unattainable by human reason.²

As there is thus a double capacity on the part of man, acquired and infused faith, so is there a twofold object to correspond with it. There is, says Ockam, an earthly and a heavenly knowledge. There is a theology of the human wayfarer (*viator*), there is also a

¹ See especially Goldast, p. 764, &c. and *Sent.* iii. qu. viii.

² *Quod.* v. qu. iv. the subject of which is 'Utrum Deus potest causare in viatore noticiam evidentem de credibilibus sine visione Dei?' The question is answered in the affirmative.

theology of the blessed. Not that these states of knowledge are different in kind so much as in degree. Acquired faith passes gradually into the transcendental condition of infused faith, while the latter also proceeds by degrees of beatification from the lowest stage to the highest. But in its terrestrial stages acquired faith might conceivably, as we have observed, be truer than a given condition of infused faith, when the latter, *e.g.* is the mere unauthenticated dream of a visionary; and as a rule infused faith, even when supernaturally conveyed, presupposes acquired faith. Thus Ockam tries to temper his mysticism by a certain measure of the rationalism and Skepticism which were the primary constituents of his intellect.

How far Ockam conceived himself to be the object of supersensuous illumination it is not easy to say. Nowhere does he profess to have been especially enlightened on any point as to which naturally acquired knowledge proved insufficient, unless possibly when he speaks of having been coerced into crediting certain dogmas of the Church which he would not have received of his own free-will. For although in relation to Romanism this assumed coercion is no doubt ironical,¹ yet in relation to the Church *Universal* and his own theory of infused faith the profession of compulsion may have been sincere. Certainly his acceptance of doctrines transcending reason is distinctly based upon supernaturally acquired conviction, which, however, may only mean that what he calls 'infused faith' we should now term the unconditional assertion of his own religious instincts, or the expression of his belief in the necessity and superhuman character of religious truth.

But it is time to draw to a close. We have, then, in Ockam a Skeptic and a Free-thinker of a very pronounced kind. Perhaps the latter phase of his character is a little more distinctly marked than the former. His works, like his life, convey the impression that love of liberty was his one absorbing passion. There was nothing in his judgment within the scope of human speculation or practice so inherently sacred as to be exempt from criticism—nothing which could claim immunity from the touch-stone of reason. A doubtful dogma of the Church was in itself no more privileged than the person of an obnoxious Pontiff, as, *e.g.* John XXII. His Skepticism was in many respects an inevitable outgrowth of his Free-thought. His intellectual instincts were arrayed against op-

¹ Comp. Rettberg's article, 'Occam und Luther,' in the *Studien und Kritiken* for 1839.

pressive dogma just as his social feelings were against every form of ecclesiastical or political tyranny. Here also his impulses were entirely impartial. He did not manifest a greater aversion to the dogmas of the theologian than to those of the philosopher. On the other hand, so far as any difference is perceptible, he is more inclined to favour the tenets of the Church than those of the Schools. His clerical education and idealist sympathies combined to give him a bias on the side of theology. But this prejudice, as we have seen, is not very great. For the most part the universals of realists, the pronouncements of Popes, the decrees of councils, stand one and all on the same platform. They are all fair objects of criticism and investigation. They may turn out to be true, harmonizing with the intellectual processes and religious perceptions of mankind, or they may prove—as in the case of universals—to be false. In the former event they are to be received, in the latter to be discarded.

But if Ockam's Skepticism is allied to his love of freedom, it is none the less founded upon his idealism. Like the intellectual hermit, which every true Skeptic is, he retires to the recesses of his consciousness, as to a solitary watch-tower, whence he examines with suspicious glance whatever phenomenon or word may present itself for his acceptance. Behind both phenomenon and word he endeavours to find demonstrable truth—in his own words, real things; and he is not certain whether in their modes of presentation both the former and the latter serve to hide or at least to disguise the truth. Especially does he distrust human language. Knowledge must, he thinks, relate to things. The consciousness of the knower and the object known constitute the two extremities of a chain of which the intermediate links in most cases are words. To these words Ockam applies the tests of psychology and dialectic. He finds that while differing in directness of signification and therefore in value, all words are mere arbitrary conventional signs, related inherently and necessarily neither to the knower nor to the thing known. And yet, notwithstanding their uncertain, fluctuating position, words rule the world. Men use empty abstractions as if they were veritable things, and make inferences from imperfect inductions, as if they themselves were gifted with omnipotence. Ockam thus demolished the enormous Gothic temple of realism in which so many mediæval thinkers had worshipped, or rather he proved that what they deemed a solid structure was no more than an unreal eye-deceiving phantasmagoria. The universals which they thought imparted reality and eternity to all existing things he proved to be nothing more than hollow

abstractions or pretentious names. Their philosophy was but specious verbiage; their theology, so far as it differed from primitive Christianity, indemonstrable by natural reason—a revelation of a whole necessitating perpetual revelations as to each of its parts. Their supposed science was only nescience. Reduced to demonstrable proportions, the dimensions of human knowledge were thus exceedingly small. Universals were only singulars—mere individual names or concepts. Generalizations and classifications, such as species and genera, had no more reality than that allowed them by their human creators. Words were only conventional signs, signifying the arbitrary volition of those who devised or imposed them, but possessing no relation to objective truth. Nay, more, there could be no knowledge of external things as such. The knower could only apprehend what was in actual contact with his consciousness. Hence the mental world of the thinker comprehended the sum of all cognoscible things. Ockam might have used the pregnant expression of Picus Mirandula, ‘Knowing himself, the thinker learns to know all things in himself.’

I have already hinted that Ockam’s Skepticism comprehended the relativity of ethical science. Partly this was a corollary from his belief in the supremacy of man’s intuition and the comparative subordination of all external rules. Partly it was the effect of his making human volition the centre-point of his morality. Not that Ockam believed that virtue was innate; on the contrary, he held that both in its initiatory stage as suggesting moral conduct, and in its maturity as a confirmed moral habit, it was acquired.¹ He therefore maintained that there could be no true moral science unless we applied that name to an aggregate of our own practical experiences, and the innumerable speculations of ethical theorists. But he was uncertain which was inherently superior, whether practice or speculation, maintaining that this depended on circumstances.² While, however, no absolute law of moral science could be propounded,³ he granted that there were some axioms in ethical philosophy which were self-evident, as, *e.g.* ‘That the will ought

¹ *Sent.* iii. qu. xi.

² *Sent.* Prol. qu. xii. Z.

³ He sometimes allows (*e.g.* *Sent.* ii. qu. xix.) that morality is dependent on the Divine commandment; so that, had it pleased God to enjoin theft or adultery, those acts would have been meritorious. As he, moreover, regards the Divine volition to be perfectly free and arbitrary, this is only another mode of affirming the relativity of moral science. Comp. Jourdain, *Phil. de Thomas d’Aquin*, vol. ii. p. 201.

to conform to right reason. 'That every evil is to be avoided,' &c. So far indeed as such a science is to be determined by personal experience, it may have more certainty than others in the proportion that every man has a more assured knowledge of his own acts than he can have of the acts of other men.¹

Ockam's theory of causation must also be reckoned among the doctrines exhibiting his Skeptical propensity. He does not, indeed, deny the causal nexus on the same grounds as those employed by Sextos Empeirikos, *i.e.* that our sole reason for affirming it is our observation of concomitance or succession in two given phenomena, but his ratiocination as to supreme and secondary, complete and partial, simple and compound, real and contingent causes has the effect of making all causation in its final determination absolutely indemonstrable.² Sometimes he appears inclined to take refuge in a mystical solution of the question by making the will of God the sole efficient cause of all that takes place in the universe, for he maintains that the production of a given effect by a secondary cause cannot be proved,³ and that 'a cause of a cause is the cause of the thing caused.'⁴ But this is a categorical imperative, an arbitrary pronouncement of faith. It does not imply an unity or uniformity in the chain of causation as manifested in the laws of the world, for Ockam grants that we have no knowledge either of the oneness or persistent energy of the Supreme Being. That the effect of his speculation on the subject was held to dissolve the ordinary sequence of cause and effect is shown by the theories of some of his reputed disciples who denied that any cause had power to produce an effect unless it were conferred on it *ad hanc rem* by God Himself.

Perhaps, however, the Skeptical implications of Ockam's teaching transcended in the elaboration of disciples the limits he himself assigned them. Indeed, this seems exemplified in the development they received after his death, as well as during his life. Roughly we may subdivide that influence into two kinds, harmonizing with the Skeptical and idealistic moments of his own mental standpoint.

We have already seen that the influence of Ockam's writings was alleged to be so disastrous to general knowledge that the reading of his works was prohibited at the university of Paris so early as the year 1339. But twenty years before, his name had become a power in that seat of learning. Buridanus, a disciple of

¹ *Quod.* ii. xiv.

² *Sent.* i. dist. ii. qu. x.

³ *Ibid.* lib. ii. qu. iv.

⁴ *Ibid.* i. dist. ii. qu. x.

Ockam, became at that date rector of the university, and appears to have taken advantage of his position to introduce his master's doctrines. So successfully had he accomplished this that the decree of 1339 is expressly said to have proved ineffective. The masters of arts would neither give up the study of Ockam nor the opinions they had thence acquired. Accordingly the decree was, as we have noticed, repeated with stronger fulminations in the following year. The extent of Ockamist Skepticism at this early date is shown by the list of incriminated errors in Bulæus's 'History of the University.' Thus, the masters, bachelors, and scholars in the faculty of arts are forbidden to affirm the verbal falsity (as distinct from the real) of any given proposition—that no one shall affirm that every proposition is false which may seem false to his own personal understanding of its terms—that no proposition is to be distinguished (*i.e.* that all words, terms of propositions, &c. are to have, in every case, a single unequivocal meaning)—that no one shall say that a proposition must not be conceded if it is not true in his own personal sense—that no one shall assert that there can be no knowledge of things (as distinct from words), since in all sciences words are used for things—that no one shall maintain simply and without qualification, that Sokrates, Plato, God, and created things are nothing.¹ These are evidently inferences from Ockam's teaching transcending in some cases his own position, but they are invaluable as showing the course taken by his doctrines in the minds of enthusiastic followers. As a special example of the same influence we may regard the tenets of a certain Nicolas of Autricuria, which were condemned in Paris in 1348, the year after Ockam's death. This daring thinker seems to have reaffirmed Ockam's theory as to the need of immediate cognition by saying that if men were to turn their intellect to things instead of the sayings of Aristotle and his commentators they would soon acquire knowledge. He also denied that we could have any knowledge of God—that a causal sequence could in any case be asserted—that eternity could be predicated of anything—that phenomena are necessarily true, &c. Other examples of Ockam's influence over individual thinkers might easily be adduced,² but the attempt is needless. Nominalism in some of its varied forms soon became the dominant creed of all European universities that were animated by the new spirit of Free-thought and repugnance to religious and intellectual servi-

¹ Bulæus, quoted by D'Argentré, *Coll. Jud.* vol. i. p. 339.

² Comp. Prantl, *Logik*, vol. iv. for an account of Ockam's influence in dialectics and philosophy.

tude. Of this movement in the end of the fourteenth and during the fifteenth centuries Ockam was the accredited leader. His works were the scriptures, his disciples the apostles, of the new gospel of human liberty. His labours were a legacy to the future rather than a gift to the present. His own anticipation of their effect was the ordinary forecast of the Free-thinker, conscious of opinions and aspirations in advance of his time, viz. that they would prove stimulating to 'future zealous strivers for truth, righteousness, and the common-weal.'¹ The chief issues of this new culture as propounded by the Ockamists may be enumerated as—an assertion of individual freedom and independence, both religious and political—a distrust of verbal abstractions, idealities, and generally of all substitutions of words for things—a definition of dialectic which made it essentially hypothetical and uncertain—a complete demarcation of theology and philosophy, so that what one affirmed the other might justifiably deny—a special repugnance to Papal despotism and dogma, and a disposition to distinguish the Catholic from the Roman Church—a longing for greater simplicity in thought, creed, and life which found its ideal in the simple moral teaching and humble life of Christ and His Apostles: in some cases, too, a mystic conviction of direct supernatural intercourse with God. These teachings, all of them bearing the stamp of freedom, were eagerly embraced by increasing numbers of disciples, in some cases where direct contact with Ockam or his writings could scarcely be traced. Hauréau's remark of the unconscious nominalism of Peter Lombard and Aquinas might also be applied to the leading thinkers of Europe during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Nominalism achieved the highest point to which any novel mode of thought can aspire by becoming a widely diffused indeterminate influence, in which special methods, definite articles of faith, names of original founders, were submerged and lost. Leading thinkers in France and Italy adopted the current philosophy without even caring to trace it back to its fountain-head in Ockam or Roscellin. The initial doctrines of Descartes were only reproductions of Ockam's teaching. Ramus, in his warfare against Aristotelianism, borrowed unknowingly some of his most potent weapons from Ockam's armoury. Montaigne and his fellow-Skeptics adopted not a few of his methods, and reasserted his conclusions. But for us Ockam's chief interest lies in his nationality. He is, in my opinion, the true father of English philosophy. He represents all those qualities generally recognised

¹ Goldast, ii. p. 889; comp. Contzen, *ut supra*, p. 129.

as characteristic of our best thinkers. Bacon, Locke, Hobbes, Berkeley, Hume—all our great lights in philosophic thought—find in his speculations a point of departure and suggestion. Though his own intellectual proclivities did not lead him to explore natural phenomena, he undoubtedly prepared the way for the experimental philosophy by calling men's attention from the empty abstractions and verbal knowledge of Scholasticism. His demand that the mind should be in actual contact with the outer world, and his opinion that science was concerned with things, not words, point in the same direction. Thus the experience-philosophy of Bacon and Locke, as well as the nominalism of Hobbes, the idealism of Berkeley, the Skepticism of Hume, find in Ockam a common precursor and forefather. While the love of freedom and independence, the stress on practice rather than theory, the strongly marked regard for common-sense with which we are usually credited as a nation, are also conspicuous in the most illustrious Englishman of the fourteenth century.

Nor was Ockam's influence less manifested on the side of his idealism and mysticism. By this also he gave an impulse to Free-thought, liberal culture, and reforming zeal, both within and without the bounds of the Church. His disciples Peter d'Ailly and Gerson were the leaders of the great movement of Latin mysticism in the fifteenth century. This was distinguished from the German mysticism of Eckart and Tauler by the affinity it maintained with the Schoolmen, especially the mystics among them, as St. Bernard, Hugo de St. Victor, and Ockam; by its adherence to the Latin tongue, and to a great extent to the dialectic and science of the Middle Ages. It was also distinguished by greater restraint in mystical speculation, by a reluctance to abandon reason in the search for supersensuous cognition, by a dislike of Pantheism. Latin mysticism takes, indeed, a new rise from Ockam and the 'Spiritual Franciscans.' St. Bernard had contrived to bring all his ecstatic fervours and transcendental knowledge into subjection to the dogmas of Rome. Ockam and others did good service in showing that this submission was not necessary for the Christian mystic. Among these thinkers arose the conception of a Church—more truly catholic, broader, purer, more like the spiritual community designed by Christ than the corrupt Church of the Popes. The extent and beneficent effects of this movement of religious freedom and anti-sacerdotalism we cannot stay to pursue, but Ockam has a prominent place in it as a powerful and courageous coefficient.

Still more vigorously, however unconsciously, did Ockam cooperate in the *Præparatio Evangelica* of Protestantism. As is

generally known, he is to a considerable extent the intellectual father of Luther and of the German Reformation. Erfurt was, during Luther's studies and struggles there, one of the universities of which nominalism had taken the firmest hold. There teachers of the new philosophy, like Gabriel Biel, Peter d'Ailly, and William of Ockam, held undisputed sway. Luther eagerly studied all these, but Ockam was his supreme authority. He describes him as 'undoubtedly the chiefest and most ingenious of scholastic doctors.'¹ The extent of his obligations to our Skeptic it would be scarce possible to overrate. Luther had points of contact not only with his nominalistic polemic against mediævalism, his antagonism to the Papacy, and his general sympathy with freedom, but also with his idealist and semi-mystical standpoint. Hence it is not too much to say that 'Ockam's philosophy,' transmuted in the alembic of his disciples' warmer feelings and religious intensity, became 'Luther's theology.' There are few of Luther's characteristic doctrines that may not claim the paternity or fraternity of Ockam's suggestions. Thus only to instance the more prominent among the analogies between Ockam and Luther: Ockam's Scepticism and suspensive reticence in controversy may be compared with the self-abrogation, 'redigi in nihilum,' which Luther placed in the first rank of his religious requirements. The distrust of all external phenomena (language included) of the former became the distrust of external works and religious rites of the latter. The stress on intuition of the master easily passed into the faith, personal conviction, &c. of the disciple. Both alike shared the doctrine of 'double-truth;' both believed in the superiority of Scripture to the decrees and dogmas of the Church; both shared the same ideas on the subject of the Lord's Supper, even if Ockam's belief was not what Luther maintained it to be—his own theory of consubstantiation. No doubt Luther passed away in the latter stages of his creed-development from the standpoint of Ockam, but this departure was as undoubtedly a dogmatic deterioration, such as we saw exemplified in the case of Augustine. Whatever is best in Luther and Lutheranism must certainly be attributed to Ockam.

Thus many-sided and profound was the influence of Ockam on European thought in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Thus powerfully did he co-operate in the advance of human knowledge and liberty. His works, with their supersubtle ratiocination, shared the fate of all mediæval learning, but the man himself, in his true personality and in his noble struggle with the twin giants—

¹ Comp. Dr. Köstlin's *Luther's Theologie*, vol. i. p. 29.

the Gog and Magog of Scholasticism and Roman dogma—survived. Long after the disputes between realism and nominalism in their original forms had passed into oblivion, the anti-dogmatic and liberating tendency of Ockam's philosophy was recognised and valued by numberless disciples; so certain is it that the spirit of all true thought survives the form in which it was first embodied. The healthy Skepticism of Ockam was a vitalizing power in religion and philosophy when both his name and his writings had passed out of human recollection, except for the rare students who, like ourselves, have occasionally thought him worthy of disinterment and appreciative investigation.

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HARRINGTON. Candidly, Doctor, your account of Ockam reveals him in quite a new light—I don't mean as to his Skepticism, for that all historians of philosophy impute to him, but as regards his nominalism. If your presentation of him be correct, he is termed a nominalist on the *lucus a non lucendo* principle of being an extreme idealist.

TREVOR. Ockam was a nominalist in the sense in which the term was employed in his day, *i.e.* he maintained that universals were mere names, and not real beings existing outside the mind. But, as you remark, he was in truth a Skeptical idealist—a man who distrusted all knowledge and all methods of knowledge-communication not in immediate contact with his consciousness. The modern English thinker to whom he bears most resemblance is Bishop Berkeley.

ARUNDEL. Do you mean to say that Ockam has more affinity with Berkeley than with Hobbes?

TREVOR. Undoubtedly I do. Ockam's points of contact were not only more numerous but far more important with the former than with the latter. With Berkeley he shared a rooted distrust of language; together with the philosophical convictions that knowledge exists only in the mind, no cognition of external things as such being possible; that there is no distinction between the essence and attributes of an object; that all we can know of any being or object are the attributes, not the essence, &c. No doubt the terminology in the two cases are distinct. Thus, Ockam's essence is Berkeley's substance or matter. Ockam's intuitions or mental

propositions are Berkeley's ideas. Further similarities might also be adduced relating to general character, estimate of Christianity, opinion as to the need of simplicity both in religious and philosophic thought, a common inclination to mysticism. . . . With Hobbes, on the other hand, Ockam would have had scant sympathy. His nominalism was too one-sided to satisfy Ockam's profound and comprehensive intellect. A superstructure of knowledge based on names was just that feature of realism which Ockam most opposed, while his whole soul would have revolted from the despotism which Hobbes thought the *summum bonum* of good government.

ARUNDEL. Do we then understand you to hold that the good Bishop of Cloyne was also a Skeptic?

TREVOR. Most certainly I do. He was an unconscious Skeptic in his method. His standpoint was almost identical with that of Sextos Empeirikos, as we saw on a previous occasion, and his theological conclusion is not an essential outcome of his philosophy. It is rather an unconditional affirmative, like Ockam's mysticism.

MISS LEYCESTER. For my part, I cannot help regretting Ockam's Skeptical iconoclasm, and the ruthless destruction of all those abstractions and generalizations of the realists: not that they added to our knowledge, but they were so convenient as receptacles or metaphysical pigeon-holes into which we could thrust every individual attribute or existence of any kind. They were such admirable contrivances for saving intellectual labour, and I do not see why 'labour-saving' should not be deemed a virtue in a philosophy as well as in a machine, especially on the hypothesis that truth is unattainable. I am not sure that we have gained so much more positive knowledge by the rejection of universals and all their train of supersensuous entities, or by the transformation of metaphysical into physical abstractions. Modern science teems with 'universals,' both as entities and as processes or laws, of which we know just as little as did mediæval theorists of the ideal creations of realists. We must, for instance, no longer speak of species as anything existing without the mind; we must only speak of them as manifested in a certain number of individuals. Yet when

I take up a book on modern science, I see a skeleton which I am told is the bony framework of the genus 'homo,' or I see another plan which represents the typical formation of the species mammalia; or, again, I see a botanical diagram of a certain class of plants: allowing that some of these species are mere varieties, and that their characteristics are modifiable by their surroundings, &c. still some of them are, so far as we know, fixed species. Now why may not I conceive these unchangeable types as ideas existing in the Divine mind? or, if that notion is too Theistic for our Atheistic age, why should they not be represented as a finality grounded on irreversible laws of nature?

TREVOR. Yes, but the realist maintained that the type in the Divine mind originated the actual species or genera; but in the diagrams you speak of, inquirers infer the common structure by an examination of individuals. In scholastic terminology, what the realists asserted was the universal *ante rem*, prior to any human experience. What you assert is the universal *post rem*, the result of experience and induction.

MISS LEYCESTER. The distinction seems to me trivial. If there are laws of nature, which finally determine species in any given case, and which limit stringently the operation of modifying agencies, it is open to any one to say that such a morphological or physiological type is, so far as our experience can extend, an 'universal;' it has the properties of fixity in form as well as, given similar circumstances, eternity in time. I should apply similar reasoning to the question of morphological integration in the case of individuals. As to a solution of that problem, it does not appear to me that science has really progressed much since the time of Aquinas and Ockam. All we seem to have gained is a change of terminology. Thus what Aquinas and the Schoolmen called individuation we are now taught to call 'equilibration,' but the latter does not tell me any more than the former why of two brothers, *e.g.* one attains a stature of five feet six inches, the other six feet.

HARRINGTON. I know your affection for paradoxes, Florence, but you would not surely carry your veneration

for realism so far as to refuse assent to the doctrine of evolution? But once grant that theory, and the finality of species will be an impossible assumption.

MISS LEYCESTER. As a conceivably demonstrable truth, I neither affirm nor deny the doctrine of evolution; indeed, as opposed to creationism in the older sense of the term, I think it the more probable theory; but still, I cannot wish to affirm my subjective notion of likelihood as an inevitable law of the universe, nor am I able to make the connecting links which seem to join two or more given species sufficiently elastic to connect all kinds of living beings in space and time.

ARUNDEL. But how far would you extend your apology for the defunct entities of realism? Would you say, *e.g.* that Trevor there is an ingenious amalgam of two species—one general, *i.e.* humanity, the other personal, *i.e.* Trevoreity; just as the realists said that Sokrates was compounded of humanity and Sokrateity.

MISS LEYCESTER. I am not concerned to defend the exaggerations of realism, but I doubt whether its main positions are as defunct as you think. Change of terminology does not imply an altered state of things any more than a change of place implies a transformation of those who make it. Each successive cycle of philosophy seems to me like a new shuffle and a new throw of cards or dice. Every new thinker renames the cards and the tricks, and thereby thinks he has established a claim to entire novelty. He has constructed 'a new heaven and a new earth' (not necessarily 'wherein dwelleth righteousness'). But the cards and dice remain what they always were; the tricks or possible combinations are also the same as before, both in number and kind. Thus by a new shuffle of the old cards we have substituted evolution for creation, but we are no whit nearer to the omniscience which would alone suffice to give us the true genesis of existing things. Again, what our forefathers called providence we call law or order, and by the change of name we think to get rid of the volitional element, but we bring back volition by ascribing intentions, tendencies, and proclivities to brute matter or unconscious agencies. You

may see this ingenious *hocus pocus* in two of the later manifestations of German philosophy—I mean Schopenhauer and Hartmann—the volitionless will of the former is as instinct with purpose and determination as the most personal conception of Deity ever evolved from the brain of a theologian ; while the unconsciousness of the latter presents all the properties and discharges all the functions which we identify with perfect consciousness.

ARUNDEL. With the gist of your remarks I fully agree. I wonder, by the way, what Ockam would have said of our new abstractions, as evolution, animism, &c. ?

TREVOR. No doubt he would have treated them with the same Skeptical scorn as he did the universals of realists. He would have demanded that the induction on which they were based should be rigidly confined within the scope of actual experience ; in other words, he would have us reduce universals to singulars, and general concepts to particular.

HARRINGTON. Ockam's distrust of words in that word-oppressed age was very natural, but I am inclined to think that he required an impossible standard of verbal perfection and definiteness. All common names and general terms must from the necessity of the case have meanings that are indefinite, and this is especially the case with words largely employed in controversy. Like old coins that have been long in circulation, the image and superscription must needs become indistinct.

MISS LEYCESTER. So much the better, in my opinion, if old words like old coins are to be media of communication between men of diverse opinions and modes of thought, because then there will be a fair pretext for every man to do what most men are in any case resolved to do—I mean, to devise an image and superscription for himself. The utility of these somewhat vague terms in controversies, religious or political, is indisputable. It permits a kind of eclecticism in verbal meanings which nevertheless allows the use of the same literal terminology ; it postulates a healthy distinction between letter and spirit, and it brings language more nearly to the condition of the philosophic thinker, who sees that

every object of thought is many-sided, and cannot therefore be wholly expressed by a single verbal symbol.

ARUNDEL. Vagueness, no doubt, is a necessary concomitant of linguistic growth; how far it is a desirable one is quite another question. I have a friend who, more in the spirit of Ockam, thinks it would be advantageous if the world were again visited with a Babel-confusion of tongues, so that the operation of naming, &c. might start afresh in human history. He thinks grammars and dictionaries might be advantageously curtailed, and that our sciences would greatly benefit in distinctness by such a catastrophe.

HARRINGTON. Certainly a thorough-going remedy for what, if a defect at all, is probably congenital. It is like sinking a ship to clear it of rats. The only advantage I can perceive as likely to result from it would be the opportunity afforded of establishing a single uniform language throughout the civilized world, and even that would be an infinitesimally small recompense for the loss of centuries of wisdom, truth-search, and philosophy. Besides, how long would the new tongue be in circulation before the old vagueness, the synonyms, connotations, equivocal terms, again came into use? If your friend desired his scheme to be completely successful, he should also stipulate for an entirely new constitution of the human intellect and its *modus operandi*.

MRS. HARRINGTON. What a curious feature in the history of nominalism and realism must have been the factions and street fights to which they gave rise in university towns. Now-a-days we can hardly imagine men's passions stirred by such questions as the existence or non-existence of universals.

TREVOR. Both parties derived their dogmatic virulence from the teaching and example of the Church; its infallibility and intolerance extended their baleful influence to every controversy that emanated from or could claim connection with it. Moreover, it must be remembered that the antagonism of realists and nominalists extended beyond its *primâ facie* object. The two great forces opposed to each other in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were really contending for most important interests. The conflict was between the old world of ecclesiasticism and ignorance, and

the new world of the Renaissance. It was a contest between religious tyranny and Free-thought, and later on it resolved itself into the irréconcilable feud between Romanism and Protestantism. Realism summed up all the diverse influences which might be called mediæval conservatism. Nominalism comprehended all the varied activities that were free, vigorous, self-asserting, and innovating, which, therefore, might be called Liberalism. But, as you say, the contests between the sectaries present a curious characteristic of thought and manners. In Paris, the academic birthplace of nominalism, the new philosophy was compelled to give way for a time to the more orthodox realism. The decree forbidding Ockam's works in 1340,¹ but afterwards allowed to become inoperative, was repeated in 1373, in order to put a stop to the contentions between realists and nominalists.² On that occasion the writings of our Free-thinker were treated like other suspected books of the time, they were chained down to the desks on which they were placed.³ But in 1381 the prohibition was removed, the restless spirit that breathed in Ockam's works was again let loose, and the Parisian students were allowed to study what they liked. The Ockamists of Paris seem to have been very generally his own fellow-countrymen, for the news of this liberation of his works was received with acclamation by the German, originally known as the English, nation.⁴ Nominalism found a home in Ockam's own university of Oxford, where again we are told that the feuds between it and realism endangered the peace of the university. In Basle nominalism, as elsewhere, ranged around it all the neologian and anti-Romanist sections of the university, and, combined with the followers of Eckhart and Tauler, formed an influential party against the Catholics. At Tübingen too, to take one more example, nominalists and realists were located in different houses, called respectively the Houses of the Eagles and the Pea-

¹ D'Argentré, *Coll. Jud.* vol. i. p. 338.

² Le Gendre, *Traité de l'Opinion*, ii. p. 424.

³ Le Clerc and Renan, *Hist. Lit. de la France au 14^{me} Siècle*, vol. i. p. 358.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 359; comp. Mr. Bass Mullinger's *History of the University of Cambridge*, p. 196.

cocks, and the warfare between the rival birds was at one time of very frequent occurrence.¹

MRS. HARRINGTON. But why eagles and peacocks, Dr. Trevor? I should have thought the peacocks, not the eagles, best represented realists, accustomed to deck themselves out with the gaudy trappings and many-hued flowers of their imagination.

TREVOR. It was not the colour but the different habits of the birds that suggested the comparison. The eagle, as the bird of heaven, symbolized the soaring idealist. The peacock, as the bird of the earth, represented the claim of nominalists to be based upon solid fact and actuality.

MISS LEYCESTER. The comparison, I think, must have been originated by the realists. It is altogether in their favour.

HARRINGTON. I noticed you did not in your account of Ockam's fellow-Franciscans tell us anything of the curious controversies on the subject of poverty which divided them from their great enemy John XXII., maintaining that Christians could have only the usufruct, not the ownership, of anything. They were sometimes driven to ludicrous dilemmas in applying their principles in detail. Thus they gravely debated whether a man who ate bread or drank wine could be said to have any power over or property in the food or drink.² Common sense would have asserted that he must have exercised the fullest ownership over the food which he ate; but the Minorite doctors gravely decided that eating did not imply possession: it only inferred use.

ARUNDEL. A convenient argument for a thief who had stolen his dinner; he might at least have denied the possession of the viands he had used.

TREVOR. The fact was, that Scholasticism carried a minutely refining, pettifogging spirit into every subject-matter of discussion: and in method, as I have admitted, Ockam was almost as scholastic as Duns Scotus. One wonders

¹ Comp. Ulrich Hutten, *Opera*, ed. Böcking, Supplem. ii. p. 329.

² This ingenious problem was called 'The bread of the Cordeliers.' Comp. Le Gendre, *Traité de l'Opinion*, vol. ii. p. 424; and *Dict. Historique*, of MM. Chaudin et Delandine, art. 'Occam.'

how he contrived so well to dress up his novel conclusions in the antique armour of the realists. He is in this respect an instructive example of the occasional possibility of putting new wine into old bottles. But in truth, Ockam is a Free-thinking philosopher in the garb of a Minorite Friar, and the incongruous appearance he thus presents is reflected in his writings. Hence, if he rises occasionally to the height of the Philosopher's far-reaching outlook, his cosmopolitan sympathies, his appreciation of freedom, he also sinks sometimes to the level of a monkish enthusiast. His ideas on property are nearly as fanatical as those of his brother Franciscans. He discusses the various kinds and modes of usufruct, with the subtlety which he expended on realist metaphysics. After all, Ockam's spirit, restless, daring, innovating, is to be found not in his method but in his conclusions. By these he contributed more than any Schoolman to break the yoke of Scholasticism, and for this he will always be remembered with gratitude and veneration.

MISS TREVOR. I presume our Ockam discussion is finished. As a matter of curiosity, I should like to ask a question as to the close of this the first session of our philosophical parliament. Alfred said some time back we were to have twelve sittings.

TREVOR. True. We have already had ten evenings, and for the remaining two on Raymund of Sabieude and Cornelius Agrippa, Harrington has agreed to hold himself liable.

MISS LEYCESTER. So I understand. But I thought you meant us to break off just at the Italian Renaissance. Now Raymund and Agrippa belong to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. We shall therefore have gone beyond our limit.

TREVOR. No doubt. But we found both Raymund and Cornelius Agrippa difficult 'to place' in relation to the Italian and French Renaissance. They are outcomes of general Free-thinking influences existing in mediæval times rather than the special products of those great movements. We therefore decided to take them first, and so to clear the ground for our examination of the Sceptics which can clearly be classified as belonging to the Renaissance.

MISS TREVOR. But when then may we expect our discussions to terminate?

HARRINGTON. It is now the last week in February. I shall be ready, I hope, with Raymund of Sabieude about the end of March; and so far as professional duties permit a forecast of the future, I trust my survey of Agrippa will be completed about the same time in April.

TREVOR. That will do very nicely. We shall in that case close our winter, but philosophical, evenings before the arrival of the merry month of May.

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EVENING XI.

RAYMUND OF SABLEUDE.

‘Est animorum ingeniorumque naturale quasi pabulum, consideratio, contemplatioque Naturæ. Erigimur, latiores fieri videmur, humana despiciamus; cogitantesque supera atque cœlestia, hæc nostra ut exigua et minima contemnimus.’

CICERO, *Acad.* lib. iv.

‘Magnus Dominus noster et magna virtus ejus et sapientiæ ejus non est numerus. Laudate eum Sol, Luna et Planetæ . . . quacunq̄ue lingua ad eloquendum Creatorem vestrum utamini. Laudate eum, harmoniæ cœlestes, laudate eum, vos harmoniarum cœlestes, laudate eum vos harmoniarum delectarum arbitri.’

KEPLER, *Harm. Mundi*, *Op.* x. p. 327.

‘Homo naturaliter semper quærit certitudinem et evidentiam claram: nec aliter quiescit, nec quiescere potest, donec venerit ad ultimum gradum suæ certitudinis.’

RAYMUND OF SABIEUDE (*Theol. Nat.* chap. i.).

‘Dubitationem tuam non invitus accipio; significat enim animum minime temerarium: quæ custodia tranquillitatis est maxima.’

AUGUSTINE, *Liber de Magistro*, *Op. om.* i. p. 558.

EVENING XI.

RAYMUND OF SABIEUDE.¹

HARRINGTON. Our subject on this occasion is a very remarkable but little known man, Raymund of Sebonde, as most of the historians of philosophy call him, or of Sabieude, as we are now taught to name him.²

ARUNDEL. Either designation is equally a puzzle to me. Where on earth is Sebonde or Sabieude? Is it one of the Society Islands, or a native settlement in Central Africa?

HARRINGTON. Not quite so far as either. It is probably derived from some village or township in Spain, which none of Raymund's biographers have succeeded in identifying, but

¹ The following are the chief authorities referred to on the subject of Raymund of Sabieude:—

Raimundi de Sabunde Theologia Naturalis seu Liber Creaturarum. Solisbaci 1852. This edition, however, does not contain the remarkable Preface which is quoted from the next-mentioned work.

Le Christianisme de Montaigne. (Labourderie.) Paris 1819.

La Théologie Naturelle de Raymond Sebon. Traduite nouvellement en François, par Messire Michel Seigneur de Montaigne. Paris 1581. This is the second edition of Montaigne's celebrated translation.

De Natura Hominis Raimundi Sebundii Dialogi: Viola Animi ab ipso auctore inscripti. Lugduni 1544. This work is only a summary, 'un plat rechauffé,' as it has been called, of the *Theologia Naturalis*.

Of German monographs, the following have been consulted:—

De Theologia Naturali Raimundi de Sabunde. F. Holberg 1843.

Dissertatio de Raymundo de Sabunde. Auctore Rotherio 1846.

De Raimundi quem vocant de Sabunde vita et scriptis. Kleiber 1856.

Montaigne, *Essais*, book ii. chap. xii.

Bayle, *Diction.* art. 'Sebonde.'

Zöckler, O., *Theologia Naturalis.* Frankfort 1860. *Geschichte der Beziehungen zwischen Theologie und Naturwissenschaft*, vol. i. parts i. and ii.

² Comp. Dr. Kleiber's monograph, pp. 7, 17. He informs us that there are places in Spain which have the names Sabade, Sabaido, Sabando, Sabante, but no place called 'Sabunde.' See his essay contained in *Jahresbericht über die Dorotheenstädtische Realschule.* Sept. 1856.

which we may take to have been either his birthplace or the dwelling-place of his parents; and is indebted to that fact for the small amount of immortality it may be said to possess.

MISS LEYCESTER. Well, the place escaping our cognisance, what is known of the man?

HARRINGTON. Unluckily not very much, most of the statements about him being disputed. In the greater number of his biographies, you will find it said that he was born at Barcelona, but this is probably owing to his being confounded with another Raimund (Martin) who wrote the 'Pugio Fidei.' As his native place is uncertain, so is also the date of his birth, which is vaguely placed at the end of the fourteenth century. In short the only guaranteed fact about him is that he flourished as a professor in the University of Toulouse about 1432 to 1436.¹ In the oldest MS. of his 'Theologia Naturalis,' contained in the imperial library at Paris, Dr. Kleiber found the author thus described: 'compositus a reverendo magistro Raymundo Sabieude in artibus et medicina magistro, et in sacra pagina egregio professore.' And a similar description is found in some early printed editions of his work, whence we may infer that Raymund received a medical education, which he supplemented by a study of theology. Whether he entered into holy orders is not known, though, as he was permitted to lecture on theology, it is most probable that he did so. The time of his death is as uncertain as every other particular relating to him. However, he bequeathed to the world in his 'Natural Theology' the first treatise on an important subject which is far from being exhausted even in our own day; and though we cannot credit him as some have done with the invention of the phrase 'Natural Theology,'² his is undoubtedly the earliest systematic attempt to give it the signification it has borne ever since.

¹ This seems the date of the completion of the *Theologia Naturalis*, if we may credit the note appended to the older MS. of the work. See Dr. Kleiber, p. 4.

² The earliest use of the term is by Varro, quoted by Augustine, who discriminates three kinds of 'Theologiæ,' viz. 'fabulosa, naturalis, et civilis.' Comp. Augustine, *Op. om.* vii. col. 150-58.

MRS. HARRINGTON. The only account of Raymund I had ever met,¹ until Charles began talking to Florence and myself about him, was in the well-known twelfth chapter of the second book of Montaigne's *Essays*. He evidently thought, and we must remember that this is the judgment of the father of French Free-thinkers, that Raymund's work possessed no small merits as a free-speaking and enlightened production. He describes its object, which he truly says was 'bold and courageous,' as 'an endeavour by human and natural reasons to establish and verify against Atheists all the articles of the Christian religion.'²

TREVOR. But as an orthodox divine would say, *more Atheistico*—in an Atheistical manner; or as Toland established Christianity, by attempting to prove it 'as old as the creation.' There is no doubt of Montaigne's interest in Raymund's treatise—it is overwhelmingly attested by his translation of it from the Spanish, a task which must have proved much more irksome to his desultory and dilettante methods of study than the composition of his *Essays*.

HARRINGTON. Montaigne's translation appears to have been made, not from the Latinized-Spanish, which he calls it,³ but probably from the Latin itself. There is no trace, according to Dr. Kleiber, of the work having been written in

¹ Meric Casaubon is almost the only English writer of repute who has noticed Raymond and his work, though he, like Hallam, speaks of him in depreciatory terms: 'Raimundus de Sabanda, who lived about the year of the Lord 1430, hath set out a book entituled *Theologia Naturalis*; by which he doth undertake to prove all the mysteries of our faith by plain reason. I had once the book, but do not remember that I found much in him to satisfy me, or any sober man, I thought. Yet learned Grotius de Veritate mentions him as a considerable man, which I wonder at.'—Cf. *Credulity and Incredulity*, p. 16. Grotius classes Raymund with Vives and De Mornay as a writer on natural theology, and credits him with 'philosophical subtilty.' It seems needless to point out which verdict would stand highest in the opinion of modern scholars, that of Meric Casaubon or Hugo Grotius.

² Montaigne, *Essais*, bk. ii. ch. xii. Didot's edition, p. 219.

³ 'Ce livre est basty d'un espaignol barragouiné en terminaisons latines.' (*Essais*, ii. 12.) But the title to Montaigne's own translation tells us that it was 'traduite nouvellement *du Latin en François*, par Messire Michel Seigneur de Montaigne.' Cf. Rothe, p. 25; cf. also Brunet, *Manuel*, voce 'Sabunde.'

Spanish, and I observe that Victor Leclerc in his notes calls it 'the Latin work of a Spanish divine.'¹

ARUNDEL. I have just been glancing at your copy, Harrington. I see Raymund gives his book the cognomen, 'Liber creaturarum.' What a queer title! It is not what we should call a natural history, is it?

HARRINGTON. Oh no; and yet there is a good deal of natural history in it, conceived from a theological standpoint. 'Creatura,' as you know, is an awkward rendering of the Greek word *κτίσις*, and is Jerome's translation of the word in the well-known passage of St. Paul, Romans viii. 19-22; originally, therefore, it was the collective designation of the whole created universe, comprehending inanimate as well as animate beings. But this primary meaning seems to have been partly lost sight of by the Latin Schoolmen, who used the word in the same way that we now employ 'creature' to signify an individual part of the creation. Hence, when they wished to speak of the whole collective universe they were obliged to use the plural. Thus Albert the Great wrote a treatise on natural history which he called 'De creaturis,' and Raymund calls his book 'Book of the Creatures,' or created beings. A better title might have been obtained by reverting to the Greek original of the term and calling it, *τὸ βιβλίον κτίσεως*—'The Book of Creation'—in fact, he sometimes gives it in Latin this very name.

TREVOR. I suspect Raymund's Greek was not equal to the occasion, but it is an interesting fact that my profession may lay claim to him as a member. Of course this one circumstance goes far to account for the Free-thought and enlightenment which are said to mark his work, as well as for the scientific character of his method, which, I take it, was an attempt to base a system of theology on the little that was then known of natural science. The effort was in every respect commendable. Indeed, I think theologians generally ought to have a thorough preliminary training in physical science. Their theology would be thereby greatly improved. You remember Abelard's curious remark on the increase of Divine Grace, which falls to the lot of theologians

¹ This is also the opinion of Roth. See his monograph, p. 12.

in proportion to their previous acquaintance with profane literature.¹

HARRINGTON. Very true, but it is a serious detraction from Raymund's merits to find how completely the man of science finally becomes merged and lost in the theologian in the latter part of his work.

TREVOR. Well, his is not a solitary instance of a bipartite formation, to which one might perhaps apply the words of Horace :—

ut turpiter atrum
Desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne.

I know you don't mind my jokes, Arundel.

ARUNDEL. Not in the least, especially when they are so utterly devoid of *vraisemblance* as the one you have just perpetrated. Horace's mermaid would be infinitely better represented by theology—the Divine science—degenerating as to her nether members by an alliance with a brutal and inhuman materialism.

MISS LEYCESTER. Raymund's chief importance, I presume, lies in his having influenced Montaigne so powerfully. I should like to know what elements in common Raymund's natural theology has with Montaigne's Essays—a question which the latter writer's celebrated 'Apology Chapter' answers very inadequately.

HARRINGTON. As adequately, perhaps, as we could have expected. No doubt he takes Raymund's book as a text or thesis for a desultory discourse on Pyrrhonism, Free-thought, the similarity of the reasoning faculties in animals and in man, and other general topics pertaining more or less to these subjects. But that is just Montaigne's careless, informal manner of treating everything. Even his translation of Raymund's book is stamped with his easy genial freedom and his impatience of restraint, for it is much more of a paraphrase than a translation. But he describes accurately enough the purport of the book, and eulogizes its merits; he says it is an appeal to nature to prove the doctrines of theology, thinks it might be usefully employed to counteract the

¹ See Evening IX. p. 278.

Atheism then prevalent, and especially to oppose the teaching of Luther ; for as the reformer had pronounced Romanism irreconcilable with Scripture, Raymund had demonstrated, according to Montaigne, that it could plead the sanction of the older revelation of nature in its favour. He further acknowledges that the arguments of Raymund being founded on reason are not of themselves conclusive, but require the sanction of faith. He also says that he knew a man in authority who had been converted from unbelief by Raymund's arguments ; but with all these admissions I willingly admit that Montaigne's estimate of the 'Theologia Naturalis,' judging from the Essays, appears altogether insufficient, and for that very reason his obligations to the work are fewer than we might have expected. He evidently did not perceive either the strength or the weakness of the position Raymund had taken up ; nor, although he admired its freedom and the novelty of its ratiocination, did he adequately realize their purport and extent. He did not discern, or at least did not choose to avow, the importance for all future freedom of thought, of Raymund's primary postulate, that nature itself was a Divine Revelation, both prior and superior to every other.

ARUNDEL. But does Raymund deliberately avow a principle so startling ?

HARRINGTON. Undoubtedly he does, as you will shortly find when I come to my essay ; and he so words his statement as to secure its fullest amplitude of meaning.

MISS LEYCESTER. But as you have told us that he ultimately makes nature testify to the truth of theology, his motive for exalting the former may have been his consciousness of the supreme importance of the latter.

HARRINGTON. Very likely. But if so, he acted in forgetfulness of the maxim : 'The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.' For centuries Christian theology had proudly asserted her sovereignty above all rival or pretended revelations. Nature, Judaism, Gentile wisdom, were regarded only as partial, imperfect communications of the Divine will ; whereas, according to Raymund, nature constitutes the first and perfect revelation, the others being intended solely to throw fresh light on those features of it

which had been obscured, not by its own defects, but by human blindness and infirmity. This is his starting-point. I have already warned you that in working it out he is far from being consistent.

TREVOR. Most great principles, when inchoative, have only a brief existence. Oftentimes they attempt, but fail, even to exist. One might say of them, 'The children are come to the birth, but there is not strength to bring forth.' What I consider remarkable in Raymund is that he stands on the verge of the most distinctive principles of the Renaissance. From the casuistical cobwebs of Scholasticism he appeals at once to nature and experience. I have heard the intellectual liberty that comes of idealism, dialectic, and metaphysics described as 'indoor freedom,' while that which arises from a study of nature was denominated 'outdoor freedom.' We are now, therefore, on the point of walking out into the fresh air after our confinement in the close cells and long labyrinthine corridors of the prison of the Schoolmen. The idealism of Erigena, the rationalism of Abelard, the eclecticism of Aquinas, the nominalistic Skepticism of Ockam, though I am far from denying their services to the cause of Free-thought, all pale into insignificance compared with the direct appeal to nature which Raymund initiated.

ARUNDEL. You are beginning to catch the nature-enthusiasm of the Renaissance, but of that I suspect Raymund was altogether innocent. Besides, you forget the moral of your last essay, and the lesson of Lovelace's lines—

Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage.

We shall, moreover, discover all too soon that if nature gives her votaries mental freedom, the gift is not unalloyed with manifold dangers and temptations in the direction of lawlessness and licentiousness. . . . But if Raymund was so free, as you say, from the methods of the Schoolmen, at a period when those methods governed the thought of Europe, whence did he derive his education and training?

HARRINGTON. Raymund, as I have said, was a Spaniard, who came to Toulouse to lecture on, and probably to practise,

medicine. We can have little doubt, therefore, that he received his medical training in the schools and universities of Spain—in other words, from Arab teachers. This fact is clearly attested by his book. Not only do incidental doctrines and opinions reveal an affinity to the teachings of Averroes, and other less celebrated teachers, but the very aim and scope of the work seems derived from Arab sources. Its intention, I have told you, was to derive all the dogmatic teaching of the Church from nature and reason, without the least aid from Revelation or any external authority of whatever kind. Now this appears to have been a favourite speculation among Arab thinkers. They were fond of imagining what religious or intellectual attainments a man would acquire guided solely by his own natural powers. The problem they set themselves was this: Given the outer world of phenomena as the object of thought, and the human reason as its appropriate subject, it is required to determine the ultimate conclusions as to religion or social duty that such a relation would generate; or, to put the matter otherwise: Given Robinson Crusoe, shipwrecked on a desert island, to find the approximations his unaided ingenuity would be able to effect towards satisfying the wants of civilized life. Two examples of these intellectual Crusoes belong to the Arab literature of the twelfth century. The first of these was the so-called ‘Régime du Solitaire’ of Ebn Badja, and the second and better known the ‘Hay ben Jakdan’ of Ebn Tophail.¹ The common purport of the two may be inferred from the expressed object of the latter, which is thus set forth in Ockley’s English translation, ‘The improvement of human reason . . . in which is demonstrated by what methods one may by the mere light of nature attain the knowledge of things natural and supernatural, more particularly the knowledge of God, and the affairs of another life.’² Now nothing is more likely than that a Christian,

¹ On these two works comp. Le Clerc, *Hist. Med. Arab.* ii. pp. 9, 114; Renan, *Averroes*, pp. 98, 99; Munk, *Mélanges*, p. 388.

² There are two English translations of *Hay ben Jakdan*, the first by George Ashwell (1686), from Pocock’s Latin version, the second by Simon Ockley (1708), from the original Arabic. Most students of English literature are aware that this work suggested to John Kirkby his *History of*

brought up at the feet of Arab teachers, as so many were in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, or else a convert from Mahometanism (and Raymund may have been either), should have applied this method to Christian dogma. Indeed, the evolution of nature-teaching which purported to reach its climax in Romanism was not greater than the development which by following the same course was alleged to terminate in the airiest summits of transcendental mysticism. Besides, there was the general movement of Arab rationalism and Free-thought of which Averroes is the most salient example, which maintained generally that Revelation is a natural product of the human faculties.¹

ARUNDEL. Are we, then, to understand that Raymund's book, with its insistence on Church dogmas, was inspired solely by Mahometan influences?

HARRINGTON. No. Arab philosophy furnished the original conception and the foundation of the work, but in its construction Raymund made considerable use of Christian materials. This, however, is a point touched upon in my essay. Here I will only observe that there are in particular many incidental resemblances in his book to teachings of Aquinas, especially to his *Summa contra Gentiles*. You remember that when Montaigne consulted Turnebus as to its origin, the latter suggested that it might be a compilation from Aquinas—which it certainly is not.

MISS LEYCESTER. Well, we can now understand why the 'Theologia Naturalis' is Free-thinking. Men do not ordinarily take nature as their guide until they are dissatisfied with other and more directly authoritative expositions of truth—in other words, until they have already become Skeptics.

TREVOR. I think you are wrong, Miss Leycester. Men who are far from suspecting the veracity of their convictions often have recourse to nature to test or corroborate them. But I cannot say I think highly of the plan of appealing to nature as an exclusive test of truth. Men find in nature, as

Automathes, as to which comp. *Retrospective Review*, vol. x. 78-88, and Gibbon's *Miscellaneous Works*, ed. 1796, vol. i. p. 20.

¹ Renan, *Averroes*, p. 104.

they do in Scripture, just what they themselves bring to its study. The countless systems evolved from nature prove the diversity of her utterances. Nevertheless, we must not underrate the service she has conferred on intellectual progress by opposing theological dogma, as well as on political freedom by resisting tyrants and lawless despotisms.

ARUNDEL. Thanks, Doctor. Your warning is timeously made, when we are now approaching the 'storm and stress' of the Renaissance, of which nature-worship formed one of the main principles. We must in truth use nature like every other great many-sided authority, eclectically, taking from it those principles, analogies, and truths which serve to counteract the mischief of other extreme conclusions, whencesoever drawn. The truth insisted on by John Stuart Mill and other modern thinkers, viz. that genuine civilization, refinement, with the other human graces that follow in their train, are attained rather by contravening than deferring to the dictates of nature, appears to possess an ethical and religious significance far in advance of most doctrines of current philosophy.

HARRINGTON. The Arab philosophers from whom Raymund drew, as I think, his information, would have cordially concurred in that. Nature was merely their *Gradus ad Parnassum*, the path by which they scaled the sublime heights of mystic rapture and poetic enthusiasm. Raymund also, notwithstanding his starting-point of the superiority of nature to Revelation, repeatedly insists in the course of his work that the different orders of beings in nature are but so many rungs of a ladder by which men ascend to God. . . . I will now begin my paper.

TREVOR. Before you do so, there is one question more I should like to ask, especially as I cannot boast a full acquaintance with the 'Theologia Naturalis.' Did you observe any distinct traces in it of Raymund's medical education?

HARRINGTON. Yes; the book is studded with quaint illustrations derived from the natural history of the day, from the supposed properties of bodies, which are often described as magical, and from the sacred attributes of numbers, letters, &c. I also made a note of some curiosities in phy-

siological and pathological lore which I thought would interest you. Raymund propounds a grotesque analogy, in which the chief organs of the body and their functions are likened to the Persons of the Trinity and to man. Here is an extract: ¹ 'The heart, the liver, and the head influence other members and give to them what they possess; for the liver gives grossness, and is as it were a body to the members, because it imparts to them gross humours, from which the members are made and nourished, and this it effects by the veins through which it sends and gives blood to the members. It is therefore the first man, so to speak, who gives only flesh. Then the heart itself gives to all members natural heat and vital spirit, by which all the members live and have vital being, and this it does through the arteries. And the heart itself resembles God, who gives life to the body, because as the soul animates the body so does that spirit or natural heat which the heart gives vivify the members. Hence it is like the soul to the members, because without such a spirit and heat the members would be dead and cease to exist. Next, the head itself, occupying the highest place above all the members, imparts to them sense and motion through the nerves. And the head is Christ,² because as the motion and sense proceeding from the head constitute the advantage of the members, so that which Christ gives conduces to the well-being of the soul and of the man.'³ Raymund also gives us the contemporary theory of paralysis—a member is paralysed because it has lost its flow of spirits from the head, &c.; and other not less grotesque hypotheses are scattered up and down in his book. These theories are of course no more than the current suppositions of that period, and which always mark what Comte called the metaphysical stage of human knowledge. But inasmuch as we shall shortly see proofs of Raymund's enlightened and independent thought, we may be usefully reminded that on

¹ This analogy seems to be a modification, in the interests of Christianity, of the cabalistic lore respecting the correspondence of the Sephiroth, or high intelligences, with parts of the human body. Cf. Dr. Ginsburg, *Kabbala*, p. 11.

² This may possibly be an allusion to St Paul (Col. i. 18).

³ *Theol. Nat.* p. 476.

many points he shared the crude ideas and superstitions of his time.

MRS. HARRINGTON. What seems the most remarkable feature of old medical lore is its blending so curiously theology with science.

TREVOR. That, however, is no more than we might have anticipated. Theology had for so many centuries insisted on being the nursing mother of physical science, and had kept the infant so long in swathing-bands, that when, rickety and infirm, it began to walk, it was compelled to adopt for a time the old leading-strings. In fact, we have presented in successive stages of thought the same phenomenon of 'survivals' that we have in the evolution of species. History no more than nature *facit saltum*—proceeds by leaps. Every thought-formation contains distinct traces of that which preceded it, and that is the reason why classified stages of intellectual progress, like that formulated by Comte, can never be more than approximately true. The successions are much too gradual for distinct discrimination.

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Harrington then began to read:—

With Raymund of Sabieude we arrive at a distinctly new phase of Free-thought. He first propounds unconditionally the theory of nature being a Revelation of God's mind both prior and superior to any other. He asserts its self-sufficiency, interpreted by reason and experience, to lead men to all necessary truth, whether theological or ethical. Here therefore we have the commencement of a new antithetical to religious dogma of a peculiarly powerful kind, with which we shall have to reckon during the whole of our remaining survey of Free-thought. We might perhaps classify the disintegrating forces which at different epochs have exercised their power on ecclesiastical dogma as follows:—

1. General influence of classical literature.
2. Special influence of dialectic and Aristotle.
3. Considerations arising from reason, common sense, and human utility.
4. The Bible, regarded especially in its anti-sacerdotal aspects.
5. Nature, or physical science.

With the exception of the second, which may stand for the mainspring of Scholasticism, and the fourth, which is the ground-

thought of the Reformation, these influences cannot be demarcated by separate historical epochs; for as we have seen two or more are frequently found co-operating, even in the case of a single mind, in liberating men from the thralldom of extreme dogma. Hence we are also unable to institute a comparative estimate of their effectiveness as agencies of Free-thought; for the degree of dissidence from or opposition to dogma attainable either by one or more of these causes will depend on the circumstances of the epoch, or the characteristics of the individual mind on which they operate. At the same time the experience of modern history tends to show that an intensity of antagonism to dogma, or, as it might be called, an appreciation of intellectual freedom, is attained by an exclusive devotion to natural studies far exceeding that inspired by other causes. The reasons for this are not difficult to find, and they have so often been discussed by different writers that we may for the time being omit their consideration. We shall presently have opportunities of studying the development of Raymund's naturalistic standpoint in the nature-worship of the Renaissance, especially in the instances of Bruno and Vanini.

Meanwhile, as we are now encountering a new force in the history of modern Free-thought, we may cast a retrospective glance at the part which nature and nature-ideas had played in Christian theology previous to the publication of Raymund's 'Natural Theology.'

We may accept it as a rule that a stress upon nature-teaching as a sanction or evidence of theology will always be in inverse ratio to the importance attached to dogma at any given time, or by any individual intellect. Extreme dogmatists and sacerdotalists regard the very conception of natural theology with suspicion, if not with positive aversion. On a previous occasion I insisted on the emphasis which Christ Himself laid upon the teachings of nature as exemplifying both the unjewish and undogmatic character of His gospel. Thus the impartiality of God's dealings is founded upon the unchangeable operation of natural laws, while implicit dependence on His Providence is urged by such purely naturalistic considerations as the feeding of birds and the painting of flowers. A similarly broad conception of the Divine government was held by St. Paul, who maintained the sufficiency for Gentiles of the law of nature. But with the growth of dogma in the Church, arguments from nature, reason, &c. met with the same fate as appeals to Gentile literature. Natural theology, as a witness outside the pale of ecclesiastical Christianity, was regarded as fatally biassed. Its testimony was assumed to be warped, or, if

prejudice could not be proved, it was a sufficing cause of suspicion that it was independent. It drew its evidence from laws and phenomena over which the Church could have no control. Hence it was soon assigned, especially by the Latin Church, that subordinate, ancillary position it has generally occupied in the history of Christianity. Such a position was not only inferior, but of itself tended to contravene, falsify, and suppress the obvious lessons of nature. Her clear utterances were to be listened to just as long as they were in harmony with the dictates of the Church, or might be made so with a little adroit manipulation. The consequent perversion of her teachings in support of foregone conclusions was analogous to the misconstruction of them which attended the theory that the whole creation was designed for the pleasure and advantage of the denizens of our earth. Nor was it only the dogmatic self-assertion of the Church and the growth of sacerdotalism that thus perverted or inhibited the teachings of nature; other secondary causes contributed to the same result. The excessive development of particular doctrines, as, *e.g.* the Fall of Man, justified, even if it did not demand, a vilification of the nature which was assumed to lie under the primæval curse. The dogma of eternal punishment and the physical tortures of the damned, the manifold personification and materialization of the powers of evil, their supposed activities in every domain of nature, imparted a terribly sinister aspect to all natural phenomena. The development of that fanatical disdain of all mundane affairs, well styled 'other-worldliness,' suggested a contempt for nature as a mean and transitory halting-place on the road to a better order of things. The Apocalyptic vision of a new heaven and a new earth, common as it was to philosophers and divines, presupposed the inferiority of those in actual existence. Besides, and above all, the rapid and enormous growth of asceticism, the systematic repression of whatever could conduce to the pleasure of humanity, rendered even the most innocent delight in nature a sinful and forbidden indulgence. I am far from maintaining that these anti-naturalistic influences were coeval with the apostolic age, or with the Church of the first two centuries. The earliest teachers of Christianity—in harmony with the spirit of its Founder—seem imbued with a cordial appreciation both of the beauties and wonders of nature.¹ Clement of Rome, Theophilus of Antioch, Minucius Felix, appeal to natural

¹ Comp. on this point, Dr. O. Zöckler, *Theologia Naturalis*, p. 12, &c. and the same author's *Geschichte der Beziehungen zwischen Theologie und Naturwissenschaft*, vol. i. pt. i. p. 83.

phenomena as independent evidence of the Divine wisdom and goodness. It was with the mischievous dogma-induration of the third and fourth centuries that the free testimony of nature became suspected and disregarded. Lactantius and Augustine—though the latter is not consistent in the matter—are foes of nature, and despisers of her teaching;¹ while Eusebius declares all researches into naturalistic and psychological subjects ‘useless, erroneous, and a vain waste of time.’

There is also a considerable difference between the Greek and Latin Fathers in respect of their estimate of nature, and its service to theology. Largely imbued with the genial spirit, as well as employing the language of ancient Greece, the Fathers of the Alexandrian School regarded nature with somewhat of that comprehensiveness and tender sympathy which distinguished the most nature-loving people of antiquity. Among these nature seems partly relieved from her ancillary position, and is awarded her own merits independently of theology. Humboldt in his ‘Cosmos’² has pointed out the profound sensibility to natural phenomena, as well as the descriptive power, of St. Basil. He quotes a letter of his to Gregory Nazianzen, which, as manifesting a genuine susceptibility for beautiful scenery, as well as being an admirable example of what we now call ‘word-painting,’ appears to me unrivalled in ancient literature.³ I will read you a few sentences in which Basil describes his abode: ‘A high mountain clothed with thick woods is watered towards the north by fresh and limpid streams. At its foot lies an extended plain rendered fruitful by the vapours descending from the mountain. The surrounding forest crowded with trees of different kinds incloses me as in a strong fortress. This wilderness is bounded by two deep ravines; on the one side the river rushing in from down the mountain forms an almost impassable barrier, whilst on the other all access is impeded by a broad mountain ridge. My hut is so situated on the summit of the mountain that I can overlook the whole plain, and follow throughout its course the Iris, which is more beautiful and has a more abundant body of water than the Strymon, near Amphipolis. The river of my wilderness, which is more impetuous than any other that I know of, breaks against the jutting rock, and throws itself foaming into the abyss below, an object of admiration to the mountain wanderer, and a source of profit to the natives from the

¹ See Dr. Zöckler, *Geschichte*, &c. p. 86.

² Eng. trans. (Bohn), vol. ii. p. 393.

Ep. xiv. *Opera omnia* (ed. Paris 1730), vol. iii. p. 93.

numerous fishes found in its waters. Shall I describe to thee the fructifying vapours that rise from the moist earth, or the cool breezes wafted over the rippled face of the waters? Shall I speak of the sweet song of the birds, or of the rich luxuriance of the flowering plants?¹ What charms me beyond all else is the calm repose of this spot. It is only visited occasionally by huntsmen; for my wilderness nourishes herds of deer and wild goats, but not bears and wolves. What other spot would I exchange for this? Alcmaeon, when he had found the Echinades, would not wander further.' We must allow that the feeling of the religious recluse is blended in this passage with a true sensibility to the beauties of nature, but the latter characteristic is so strongly marked as to make the extract very noteworthy. Humboldt has also adduced other evidences of nature enthusiasm from the two Gregories and Chrysostom, which tend to prove that among the Greek Fathers dogma-growth had not yet stifled the sensibility to beautiful scenery, and the passion for nature for her own sake and independently of all utilitarian considerations, which are the marks of refined and cultured minds.

But, as I have already intimated, this was by no means the favourite conception of patristic writers in general. With them nature was subordinated to dogma. Her instructions were predetermined by the foregone conclusions of Church councils and bishops. She had no independent standpoint as a teacher, and her lukewarm ecclesiastical suitors always seemed afraid lest her beauties, if conceded, might divert men's attention from her Creator, or rather from the Moloch representation of Him which it seemed the aim of Church-dogma to create and foster. Oftentimes no doubt she shared with Scripture the attribute of being one of the books by which God revealed His mind to men; but even this undoubted right was granted grudgingly, and with the tacit condition that nature, like all inferior servants, was required 'to know her place,' and on no account to contradict the utterances of her superior fellow-servant, Scripture. Of this distrustful disposition to nature Augustine is a notable example. His Manichean training, superimposed on an intellect originally broad and many-sided, induced him to regard with favour both the sacred character of nature-teaching and its coequality with Scripture. Thus he maintains that men have two ways of attaining to the knowledge

¹ St. Basil, however, admits, what Humboldt's version of him does not notice, that these natural beauties would have more interest for others than they had for him.

of God, 'creatura et Scriptura.' He terms the creatures the footsteps and signs of God, says that their different kinds are voices praising the Creator, and calls the collected universe a certain great book containing the nature of things. But with the advance of his sacerdotalism we discern the growth of a different spirit. Nature's equality or even proximate equality to Revelation is regarded with suspicion. The dualism implied in the unqualified juxtaposition of 'creatura et Scriptura' appears tainted with his own youthful heresy of Manichæanism, while an over-estimate of nature-teaching is one of the charges he presses against the Pelagians, and one of the causes he assigns for their heterodoxy.

During the dark ages, so called, the still small voice of nature was well-nigh drowned among the loud dissonances of the fall of the Roman Empire, the invasion of the Barbarians, and the political and social convulsions that followed these events. If we except those rare intellects both within and without the Church who resorted for their intellectual aliment to the yet unforgotten sources of Gentile wisdom, the true teaching of nature was either perverted or lost sight of. Magic, alchymy, and astrology became the chief forms of natural science. The inquirer into the laws of nature or the properties of natural objects was regarded as a pryer into forbidden secrets. Any knowledge he might acquire, *e.g.* into the medical properties of herbs was the accursed outcome of an alliance with the powers of darkness. The Church helped to diffuse and intensify this unworthy conception—(1) partly by an exclusive insistency on her own dogmatic teaching; (2) and still more by the direct inculcation of dogmas and superstitions precisely similar in kind to the vaunted wonders of the alchymist or magician. Hence in the darkest period of her history nature was only the armoury whence she drew without scruple or reserve her most potent weapons for the subjugation of her benighted followers. As the 'Ancilla Theologiæ'—deriving both status and name from her arrogant and narrow-minded mistress—nature was required to perform functions and subserve interests from which, had she been anything more than an impersonal abstraction, she must have instinctively recoiled.

With the general revival of learning that commenced in the ninth century came the gradual awakening of nature-studies. The two chief impulses, *inter alia*, that contributed to this were—(1) the researches of the Arabs into natural phenomena; (2) the influence of the study of Aristotle. Both of these are found united in Albert the Great. Of all mediæval theologians he contributed most to the revival of interest in nature which marked the Renaissance.

This he effected both by his commentaries on Aristotle and the Arab teachers, especially Avicenna, and by his own investigations into natural phenomena. These researches were of a very elementary kind, but they sufficed to procure for him the fame of a magician. His general interest in these pursuits is attested by the catalogue of his voluminous works, nearly half of which bear on subjects directly or indirectly connected with natural history. Not the least of the services he thus rendered to the cause of genuine intellectual progress was his reassertion of the value of nature as a co-rival of Revelation, in teaching men their relation to God. His disciple Aquinas carries the sacredness and independence of nature a stage further; his work 'Contra Gentiles' being, to a considerable extent, an apology for the religion of nature. He repeatedly recommends the contemplation of the created universe as useful to the instruction of faith, and as inculcating of itself the wisdom, power, goodness, and other qualities of the Supreme Being. The law of nature he regards as common originally to all, though its utterances in certain cases have been obscured; but this partial recognition of the standpoint of Raymund of Sabieude is rendered nugatory by his opinion that the law of nature is abrogated by Christianity. But in truth, his opinions on this subject are no more consistent than they are on others. His doctrine of 'infused' and 'acquired knowledge,' the first being intuitional and Divine, the second experimental and natural, appears to me to involve the admission of double-truth. Still more decisively naturalistic, and hence in closer approximation to Raymund's position, is the theory of nature put forth by the celebrated Roger Bacon. He, I need not say, insists on personal investigation of nature by means of experiment, but even he subordinates her teaching to the supposed requirements of theology. Natural science is useful not for its own sake, but for the aid it affords to the higher sciences of the Church. His general tone on the subject is apologetic, though this is in my opinion less the result of his own will than the effect of external compulsion. He evinces a strong inclination to put nature in advance of theology, at least to accord her an independent scope; but the terrorism of dogma necessitates another arrangement, and nature is forced to confine herself to the ancillary offices usually assigned her. He indeed still further limits the significance of his nature-enthusiasm by making theology synonymous with Scripture, and pleading that every utterance of Scripture is necessarily infallible, though in relation to Romanism this anticipation of Protestantism has also its aspect of freedom.

Roger Bacon has often been regarded as a direct precursor of

Raymund; but the latter is as much Bacon's superior in laying down the true relation of nature to theology as he is inferior to him in the inculcation of experimental research. In truth, Bacon's theory of the mutual position of nature and Revelation is the customary one which we have seen was adopted by the Church—we might term it 'the theory of the two books.' It is thus defined, *e.g.* by Erigena: 'In a twofold manner does the Divine light declare itself to the world, viz. by Scripture and creation. For in no other way is the Divine knowledge received in us unless by the prominent places of Holy Scripture and the different species of created beings.'¹ In a similar sense speaks Maximus the Confessor: 'Scripture and nature are like two books given us by God, which disclose the same single reason; the one by words and what is manifest, the other by insight and what is veiled. As a distinction is made in Scripture between the verbal clothing and the spirit, attention being directed especially to the latter, so also the forms and species of nature which we see are only garments which envelop those eternal grounds of reason by which all things are ruled.'²

This survey, necessarily brief, of the general position assigned to nature-teachings on the part of the Church, will enable us to estimate the higher value placed on them by Raymund in the Preface to his 'Natural Theology,' portions of which I now proceed to lay before you.

After the dedication of his work to the Trinity, Raymund proceeds:³ 'Here follows the science of the book of the creatures, or the book of nature, the science also of man, which is proper to him as man, which is necessary, natural, and becoming to every man, by means of which he is enlightened to know himself and his Creator, and every duty to which as man he is bound.'⁴ It is moreover the science of the rule of nature by which every man learns all his natural obligations as well towards God as towards his neighbour. And not only will he be enlightened to know, but

¹ 'Dupliciter ergo lux æterna se ipsam mundo declarat, per Scripturam videlicet et creaturam, non enim aliter in nobis divina cognitio renovatur nisi per divinæ Scripturæ apices et creaturæ species.'—*Hom. in Prol. S. Ev. Joan. Opera* (Migne, *Patrol.* cxxii.), p. 289.

² Comp. Hüber, *Philosophie der Kirchenväter*, p. 344.

³ *Le Christianisme de Montaigne*, p. 155.

⁴ 'Per quam ipse illuminatur ad cognoscendum se ipsum et suum conditorem, et omne debitum ad quod homo tenetur.' Montaigne apparently thought the last phrase too unqualified, for he translates: 'et *presque* tout ce, à quoy il est tenu comme homme.'—*Trans. ed.* 1581, p. 1.

by this science the volition will be moved and stimulated spontaneously and joyfully to desire and perform out of pure love. Nor is this all, but this science teaches every man to know truly, and without difficulty or labour, every truth needful to man both as regards his neighbour and his God, as well as all things necessary for man's salvation and perfection, and his attainment of eternal life. By the same science too a man learns without difficulty and truly whatever is contained in Holy Scripture, and whatever is commended and prescribed in Holy Scripture, and is able to solve every question it behoves him to know concerning God, as well as himself, &c.

'2. Further. By that science each man understands easily all the sacred doctors. Indeed, it is contained in their books, though not apparent, just as the alphabet is incorporated in all books. Whoever therefore wishes to understand all the doctors, and the whole of Holy Scripture, let him acquire that science which is the light of all sciences. Hence if you wish to be consolidated, well rooted, strengthened, and certain, learn first of all this science, otherwise you will be vacillating and uncertain, not having stability in yourself, because this is the root, origin, and foundation of all sciences necessary to man's salvation. Therefore he who hopes to be saved ought to have in himself that root, and whoso has that science has the foundation and source of all truth.

'3. Moreover, this science needs no other science or art. It does not presuppose grammar nor logic, nor any other of the liberal sciences or arts, neither physics nor metaphysics, because this is first and most needful to man, and orders all others to a good end and to the real truth and advantage of men; since this science teaches a man to know himself, and why he was made, and by whom he was made, what is his good and what his evil, what he ought to do, and to whom he is under obligation; and unless a man knows these things, what do other sciences profit? For all sciences are in reality vanities if this of self-knowledge be wanting. . . . This science is common to laymen as to clergy, and to every condition of men, and may be learnt within a month and without labour, nor is there need of learning anything by heart, nor to have any book or writing. It makes a man joyous, humble, kindly, obedient, to hate all sins and vices and to love virtue, nor does it inflate or render arrogant its possessor.

'4. Moreover, this science argues by infallible reasonings which no man can contradict, because it argues from premisses which are by experience most certain to every man—in other words, from all the creatures and from the nature of man himself.

It also proves all things by man himself, and by those things which a man knows most certainly of himself by means of experience. Hence this science does not need other witness than those a man has in himself.

‘5. This science at first seems very mean and of no value, because it begins with small things which every one despises, but in the end it issues in the most noble and infinite fruit, *i.e.* the knowledge of God and man. For so much the lowlier its origin, so much the higher does it mount to lofty and celestial things. Hence, whosoever would reap its fruit should exercise himself in the humble beginnings of this science, and not despise them, otherwise he will not attain the fruit. Because a boy, unless first well drilled in the knowledge of the alphabet, and of every letter by itself, cannot learn to read. Hence it should not seem difficult, because a man would learn more by this science in a month than by studying the doctors for a hundred years. Moreover, it does not allege any authority, not even that of Holy Scripture nor any of the doctors—on the contrary, it confirms Holy Scripture, and therefore, so far as we are concerned, is prior to it.

‘6. For there are two books given us by God. The first is the book of the universe of creatures, or the book of nature, and the second is the book of Holy Scripture. The first book was given to man in the beginning, when the universe of things was established, because every creature is only a certain letter written by the finger of God, and from the many letters is composed the book of the creatures, just as an ordinary book is made up of the letters of the alphabet. In this book (of the universe) is also contained man, and he is the chief letter of that book. And just as the letters of the alphabet, and sentences composed of them, imply and include knowledge, and different meanings and wonderful opinions, so also the creatures, being similarly joined together and compared with each other, purport and signify various implications and opinions, and contain the science needful to man.

‘7. The other book of Scripture, however, was given to man secondarily, and on account of the failure of the first book, for man at first knew not how to read it because he was blind. Nevertheless the first book of the creatures is common to all, but the book of Scripture is not common to all, because only the clergy know how to read it.

‘8. Moreover, the first book, that is of nature, cannot be falsified, nor erased, nor wrongly interpreted: hence heretics cannot understand it erroneously, nor can any man with regard to

it become heretical; but the second may be falsified and misconstrued and ill-understood. Yet each book comes from the same author, since the same God both established the creatures and revealed Holy Scripture. Hence they agree among themselves, and one does not contradict the other, but for all that it is the first that is con-natural to us, the other being supernatural. Moreover, since man is by nature a thinking being, capable of learning and knowledge; and since by his natural creation he actually possesses no learning nor knowledge, though capable of acquiring them; and since he cannot have learning and science without the book wherein they are written; it was most necessary, in order that he might not have the capacity of learning and knowledge in vain, that Divine wisdom should create for him a book in which of himself, and without a master, he might study needful doctrine. For this reason God created for him the whole of this visible world, and gave it him as his own natural and infallible book, written with the finger of God—single creatures being its letters—to demonstrate to man, by the aid of Divine, not of human, judgment, the wisdom and knowledge necessary to his salvation.

‘But no man is able to discern this wisdom, nor to read by himself in the said book, which is always open, unless he is enlightened and purified from original blindness. Hence none of the ancient philosophers were able to read that science, because they were blind so far as their own salvation was concerned, though they derived some knowledge—indeed all they possessed—from that very book; but the true wisdom that leads to life eternal, although within it, they could not read.

‘9. This science, lastly, is nothing else but thinking and recognising the wisdom written in the creatures, to extract it from them, to lodge it in the mind, and to ascertain the meaning of creation. Thus by comparing one creature with another, and combining them like different sentences, a man may attain the final opinion and the meaning respecting them, for every man has it in his power to understand and obtain knowledge.’

Such is the remarkable preface (with a few unimportant omissions) to Raymund’s ‘Natural Theology.’ I have translated it as literally as possible, to give you some notion of its artless unformed style, full as it is of parentheses, repetitions, redundancies, and literary blemishes of every kind save one, *i.e.* obscurity; for Raymund’s meaning is pretty clear, and it is just this that makes the preface so noteworthy. As a half-suppressed indictment of the past and an anticipation of future time, or as an outspoken manifesto of the claims of nature-teaching in an age

when theology and its methods asserted an exclusive right to be heard, no more important utterances were delivered in the first half of the fifteenth century.

Its chief feature in relation to the past is its antagonism to Scholasticism. From the heavy tomes, the involved methods, the trivial disputes of the Schoolmen, Raymund appeals to nature and her teachings. More can be learned by a brief study of 'the creatures' than from centuries poring over the doctors and Fathers of the Church; while hardly less marked is his implied protest against ecclesiasticism and its exclusiveness. He especially eulogizes nature as being an open book, contrasting it in this respect to Scripture, which was confined to those able to read, *i.e.* the clergy. Hence nature was the Bible of the laity, adapted not for one but for all classes of men alike. A similar advantage consisted in its being con-natural instead of supernatural. We also trace in Raymund's preface a repugnance to external authority as a source of truth. He lays almost as much stress as Sokrates on self-knowledge, and the direct utterances of the human conscience and reason. According to Raymund man is the microcosm from which the whole macrocosm of theology is evolved. From himself, from the laws of his being, from his external surroundings, he may derive all the knowledge really necessary to his salvation. His preface is also a much-needed protest against the complicated and difficult forms of dogma-growth, and a plea for simplicity. He is never weary of insisting on this, which he deems a prime characteristic of nature-teaching, that it can be acquired 'within a month,' though one would gladly learn in what this month's tuition consisted, unless it were a diligent reading of the 'Theologia Naturalis.' It is also a distinguishing feature of the mediævalism, of the breaking up of which Raymund's work is a distinct symptom, that all nature-studies were held in contempt, and this is marked by the apologetic tone in which Raymund pleads for the new study. He almost seems to share the disdain of ecclesiasticism for the lower orders of the creatures, and consoles himself by the reflection that investigation into them leads ultimately to the highest knowledge.

But if Raymund's preface thus possesses a profound significance as to the past of mediævalism, its implication with regard to the future of modern science is not less important.

Reading it, we might almost suppose ourselves transported from the first half of the fifteenth to the latter half of the nineteenth century. That the creation is the primary and perfect reflex of the Divine mind is as distinctly maintained as by a modern

scientific theologian. That its knowledge is an illumination to man, and sufficient to teach him all duties both to his Creator and himself, is asserted as boldly as by Helvetius or Jean-Jacques. That all truths necessary to human salvation are revealed by it, is affirmed as explicitly as by an English Deist. That it is the alphabet, the alone source of truth and existence and light to all other sciences, that its arguments are infallible because they appeal to experience, that a man may learn more from it in a month than by studying learned doctors for a hundred years—all these oft-repeated assertions of the physical philosophy of our own day are laid down in the preface to the ‘*Theologia Naturalis*.’ No wonder that it has been compared to Kant’s ‘*Religion within the bounds of Pure Reason*’ and to Locke’s ‘*Essay on the Reasonableness of Christianity*,’ or that it speedily obtained the honour of being placed on the ‘*Index Expurgatorius*!’¹

Nor is the relation of this first science of nature to the Bible as laid down by Raymund less remarkable. As you observe he does not hesitate to affirm the superiority of the book of nature to Holy Writ,² and assigns reasons for this estimate which, if

¹ The Preface was placed on the Index under Clement VIII.

² Compare, on this subject, O. Zöckler, *Theologia Naturalis*, i. pp. 18–36. The peculiarity of Raymund’s position is that he makes nature *the First Book*. Roth has apparently forgotten this fact when he chooses, as a motto for his study of Raymund, an adaptation by Herder of Campanella’s sonnet beginning—

‘Il mondo è il libro, dove il senno eterno
Scrisse i proprii concetti, &c.’

‘Die Welt, das *zweite* Buch, darinnen ewiger
Verstand selbst eigene Gedanken schrieb
Ist der lebend’ge Spiegel, welcher uns
Das Antlitz Gottes im Reflexe zeigt.’

Moreover, Raymund does not limit the use of the Book of Nature, after the usual and more orthodox manner, to the Gentiles. In this respect his view forms a pleasing contrast to that of another Skeptic, Cornelius Agrippa, who thus determines the evidential object of nature, ‘*Primum librum creaturarum propositum gentibus qui sub lege naturæ vivebant, qui habuerunt philosophos doctos per sensibiles creaturas cognoveruntque Deum per illas, quemadmodum inquit Paulus “Invisibilia Dei per ea quæ facta sunt intellectu conspiciuntur.”*’ (C. Agrippa, *De Triplici Ratione cognoscendi Deum*, Op. om. ii. p. 482.) More in harmony with Raymund’s view of nature being the *First Book* is the opinion of a liberal English divine: ‘God hath set up two lights to enlighten us in our way, the light of reason, which is the light of His creation, and the light of Scripture, which is *after-revelation* from Him.’ (Whichcote’s *Aphorisms*, cent. ii. 109.) Lord Bacon also considers the Book of Nature the key to Holy Scripture. *De Aug. Sci. Works* (Ellis & Spedding), vol. i. p. 469.

advanced in a modern pulpit or periodical, would undoubtedly be stigmatized as Skeptical and profane. He says: 1. That nature excels Holy Scripture both in priority and importance, and is the source of its confirmation to us. 2. That Holy Scripture was given to man because of his deterioration and blindness, which made him unable to peruse the book of nature, and is therefore a supplementary revelation imparted, not on account of any inherent defect in the first, but because of the corruption of those for whom it was designed. 3. That the book of nature is superior, because it is common to all, while the Bible is reserved for the clergy. 4. That the book of nature cannot be falsified, nor destroyed, nor wrongly interpreted, and therefore it can have no heretics, whereas Holy Scripture is perpetually liable to falsification and misunderstanding. These statements, which so closely resemble the speculations of our modern science teachers, are probably unsurpassed for audacity by any Christian writer of the Middle Ages. How far they justify the opinion that Raymund was an avowed Skeptic may perhaps be doubted. That they tend to prove him a rationalist¹ and unconscious Skeptic must, I think, be manifest to all. The expression of submission to the authority of the Church, with which he concludes his preface, cannot be held to prove much either way as to the sincerity of his orthodoxy. It is the ordinary stereotyped formula which the Church exacted of all literary productions in the Middle Ages, and is affixed to works of whose questionable and heterodox tendencies there can be no doubt. The stress she herself attached to such a declaration is shown in this case by the fact that it did not prevent the prohibition of Raymund's preface.²

But before we leave the preface, I must call your attention to its most remarkable feature as an outcome of Free-thought—I mean the full recognition of the claims of the Book of Nature on mankind. We have already noticed the inevitable tendency on the

¹ A not unfair estimate of Raymund, from the Roman Catholic point of view, is given by Stöckl, in his *Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters*, ii. 2, p. 1055, &c. After stating that Raymund derived his method from Raymund Lull, he adds, 'Sie ist keineswegs die christliche, sie ist vielmehr wesentlich rationalistisch.' Nor is Dr. Stöckl blinded by Raymund's defence of the dogmas of the Church. Cf. pp. 1057-78.

² The works of Jerome Cardan, Vanini, Telesius, and Patritius, e.g. were generally accompanied by the author's declaration of attachment and submission to the Romish Church, but this circumstance does not seem to have fettered their own freedom of speculation, and certainly did not prevent the customary proscriptions and anathemas on the part of the Church. Cf. Erdmann, *Grundriss*, i. p. 530.

part of every special revelation to lessen and if possible to nullify the claims of all general or ordinary methods of obtaining Divine knowledge, and consequently the antagonism which must always exist between the religion of nature and any revelation which claims to be supernatural. Hence the Book of Nature has always occupied a more or less subordinate position in all the great religions of the world. Buddhism despises nature and tramples it under foot; Judaism, in its later phases, has recognised it, but by no means admits it to a footing of equality; Mahommedanism ignores it; Christianity has for the most part patronized it as a corroborative but altogether subsidiary proof of its own truth. Raymund is the first Christian writer who not only vindicates the right of the Book of Nature to an equality with Holy Writ, but who asserts the superiority in many respects of the former over the latter. According to Raymund, the Bible is only true so far as its utterances agree with and are confirmed by the higher testimony of nature. I will not dwell further on this point, except only to suggest whether the progress of modern thought on this question does not point with increasing emphasis in the direction thus indicated by Raymund of Sabieude.

The objection has frequently been made that the promise of the preface is belied by the treatise following it, that on a novel heterodox basis Raymund has erected a commonplace orthodox superstructure. We shall presently see what foundation there is for such a statement; which, even supposing it well-grounded, appears to me very ungenerous. Truth does not come to men like the sunrise in the tropics, showing herself at once in her full glory without any interval of mist or twilight. Her first illumination consists generally of a few straggling rays, striving to appear through the dark clouds of prejudice and error which necessarily attend her rising. Few systems of religious philosophy, if exposed to unfettered criticism, would yield more grains of truth than Raymund's 'Natural Theology;' and we may surely consider it enough for the digestive powers of the fifteenth century to have had the claims of natural science, as well as the analogy between natural and revealed religion, so distinctly placed before it that most of Raymund's successors in the same inquiry have, whether knowingly or not, followed in his footsteps.

Turning now to the main treatise, we have to remember that Raymund inherited the thoughts of some of the noblest intellects among the Schoolmen, as well as the Arabic philosophers of his own native land, with whose works his own medical education must inevitably have brought him acquainted. It is quite impos-

sible to ascertain from his own confession the name of any especial teacher who has influenced his opinions, for it is a peculiar feature in his work that from beginning to end no authority is cited, no quotation formally made; even texts of Scripture are used without any indication of their origin. The energy and acuteness of German scholars in this species of literary handicraft have determined that among Raymund's authorities are comprised most of the great leaders of Christian thought prior to his own age. Among those whose opinions have been found in his treatise may be cited the Neo-Platonists, St. Augustine, Dionysius the Areopagite, Scotus Erigena, Duns Scotus, Albertus Magnus, Abelard, Aquinas, Ockam, Roger Bacon, Raymund Lull, and Gerson; but the historians and German monographists differ so much in assigning to these names their respective influence in the formation of Raymund's opinions that we must leave the question unsolved. And yet (as I have already remarked in our discussion), if I might be allowed a suggestion on this matter, I should be inclined to think that Raymund's inspiration may have been derived from an Arab source, at least so far as the main idea of his work is concerned. A very remarkable book was written by a Spanish-Arab philosopher about the year 1180, in order to show that the main doctrines of Islamism are capable of being discovered and proved by purely natural means, without the aid of any teacher or revelation of whatever kind. The hypothesis is not unreasonable, that Raymund thence adopted the similar argument which he employs to prove the truth of Christian doctrines. But, however this may be, it seems certain that his adoption of the thoughts of others was merely by way of suggestion, and that he thoroughly assimilated and made them a coherent and indivisible portion of his own mental structure.

The book begins with a discussion on the different orders of existing beings found in creation. These he determines to be four, viz. (1) being; (2) life; (3) feeling; and (4) intelligence; the fourth also including free-will.¹ From these different grades or orders of being, Raymund infers the existence of Deity, by the ascending process which is customarily employed for this purpose by metaphysical theologians. Hence he identifies the Divine existence with abstract being, and makes it comprehend all other modes of existence. The reference which his commentator, Roth, makes to the similar conclusions of Hegel is sufficiently obvious. In fact,

¹ A similar classification is to be found in Aristotle, Dionysius the Areopagite, Albertus Magnus, and Thomas Aquinas. Averroes makes it the starting-point of his natural-history researches, whence it has received the designation of 'the ladder of Averroes.'

in this portion of his work Raymund is a thorough-going Pantheist. He not only makes the being of God inclusive of all other existences whatsoever, but says that every being includes God. Nor is he afraid to carry out this idea into its extreme logical consequences, for he proceeds to say that 'the being of God includes or possesses in itself the being of land, of water, of air, and of fire; and the being of all the four grades and of all things included in those grades, for no being can be devoid of God, and hence the being of God is the universality of all things.'¹ It is probable that most of his historians and commentators have derived the idea that Raymund was a realist from this portion of his work. His realism was in truth a corollary from his Pantheism. Hence, after asserting that the being of God includes the being of all other things, he is compelled, in order to prevent the Deity from being degraded into a fetish, to add that the being of those things is double, one in their own proper nature which we see, the other in the being of God which we cannot see. He compares the latter to the plan of an unbuilt house existing in the mind of the architect.² This argument is repeated more than once, so that there can be little doubt of the realism of Raymund. If on a subsequent occasion he denies that universals can have any existence outside the mind, and thereby renders himself amenable to the charge of nominalism,³ we must accept the inconsistency as an example of the dualism, which, besides being a characteristic of the time, is an essential feature of his own intellect, and justifies his position among unconscious Skeptics. No one can read this earlier portion of the 'Theologia Naturalis' without being convinced of Raymund's metaphysical power. As might have been expected from his Platonic principles, he indulges in speculations as to the existence, &c., of all things in God, which remind us of Malebranche and Berkeley.

The doctrine of the Trinity Raymund expounds in accordance with the mode adopted by Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus, and which has been revived in our own day by Hegel. He says that

¹ 'Et per consequens sequitur, quod esse Dei habet in se esse terræ, esse aquæ, aëris et ignis, et esse omnium quatuor graduum, et omnium quæ continentur in ipsis gradibus, quia nullum esse Dei deficit. Et ideo esse Dei est universale omnium.'—*Theol. Nat.* p. 21, Tit. xiv.

² This illustration is employed for nominalistic purposes by Ockam. Indeed, there are not a few phrases and arguments in the *Natural Theology* which suggest both an acquaintance and appreciation of Ockam's writings.

³ *Theol. Nat.* p. 331. Erdmann seems to have been the first among the historians of philosophy to call attention to Raymund's nominalism. *Grundriss*, i. p. 438.

the Father produced the Son 'intelligendo suum esse, et suam substantiam ;' a mode which, if it savours of Sabellianism, is, in my opinion, greatly superior to the crude tritheism of some of our contemporary divines. Indeed, he lays especial stress on the unity of the Deity, and affirms its simplicity in such terms as to jeopardize the Trinity of Persons. He employs a curious illustration in order to represent the mutual relation of Father and Son: 'As in an active and passive verb there is an intellectual relation, so is there in the Father and Son, because the Father by understanding produced the Son, just as an active verb by virtue of the intellect produced of necessity a passive verb.'¹ It must be observed that throughout the whole of this discussion on the fundamental doctrines of the Christian Church, no appeal is made or even suggested to any extrinsic authority whether ecclesiastical or scriptural. The dicta of popes and councils are as thoroughly ignored as they could have been by the most ardent of Protestants, Raymund's appeal is to what he conceives to be natural, self-evident, rationalistic, and utilitarian principles. Thus he expressly approves of the doctrine of the Trinity, because he believes it to be consonant with reason, inasmuch as it harmonizes with the construction of the world; and because it plainly has for its object the good of man. So far indeed does he carry this last argument of expediency that he makes it the source of most of the doctrines of the Christian Church. He proposes as a final test of truth—a rule and method of affirmation or denial—the question which of the various conclusions proposed is *best for man*. Apparently accepting as an ultimate fact the intention of nature to afford men pleasure rather than pain, he says that a man should affirm the truth of that particular conclusion which is most worthy of his love and desire, and pronounce false that which is hurtful or hateful.² Indeed, he maintains that a man is justified in believing what is false provided it is to his own benefit and utility,³ a prin-

¹ 'Et sicut in verbo activo et passivo est comparatio intellectualis ita est in Patre et Filio, quia Pater intelligendo produxit Filium, sicut verbum activum per virtutem intellectus produxit verbum passivum de necessitate.'—*Theol. Nat.* Tit. liv. p. 69.

² 'Quod debet (homo) affirmare illam partem tanquam veram, quæ magis est amabilis, desiderabilis de se, et de sua natura, et quæ magis habet de esse, et de bono, et aliam partem oppositam tenetur negare tanquam falsam, et a se fugare tanquam inimicam sibi.'—*Theol. Nat.* Tit. lxxvii. p. 91.

³ 'Et si aliquis dicat, quare tu affirmas et credis illud quod non intelligis quia forsitan est falsum? ad hoc respondetur quod excusatur per hoc, quia credit ad suum bonum, et ad suam utilitatem,' &c. (*Theol. Nat.*

ciple, it may be added, by no means rare among men, but not often so frankly avowed. In accordance with this somewhat Epikourean doctrine, Raymund seeks to prove that it is for the real benefit of men that they should believe that God exists, that God is and can be only one, that He is omnipotent, wise, and good. Similarly it is best for man (*melius est homini*—a phrase which occurs with noteworthy frequency in this part of his book) that he should believe in the creation of the world out of nothing, in the Incarnation, and, in short, in most of the great doctrines of the Christian faith. Those who think that the utilitarian argument is necessarily opposed to religious faith may learn something from a study of Raymund's 'Natural Theology : ' they will perceive that the 'greatest happiness ' principle is not so incompatible with the doctrines of Christianity as some have thought. At the same time I must confess that the arguments employed on this head are often more ingenious than convincing.

We are necessarily ignorant of Raymund's personal character, but estimating it from his writings I should be inclined to ascribe to him a singularly happy and contented position. Dr. Pangloss can scarce rival him in the persistent affirmation that 'whatever is, is best.' Human life, according to Raymund, is a beautiful and lovely existence,¹ all other terrene existences being expressly contrived and adapted for it. Although the possibility of human sin is incidentally touched upon, yet Raymund, like Spinoza, merges individual evil in the general good.² His words recall Pope's lines :—

God sends not ill if rightly understood,
Or partial ill is universal good.

He is not, however, quite consistent in his maintenance of this view, for when he comes to deal with ecclesiastical dogmas he ascribes to human sin a sufficiently vigorous and independent existence of its own.

The crowning glory of man, according to Raymund, is his free-will. By this, as he excels all inferior creatures, so he is made a very portion of Deity. The language in which he points out the many excellences of free-will, calling it the ruler of all nature, and, speaking of it as a substantive, self-existing entity, occasionally

p. 91.) Lower down (p. 101) Raymund applies this principle as Pascal afterwards did, to belief in Christianity, saying that if it were false a man would be excused for believing in it as being what is best and most lovable.

¹ ' *Pulchrum et formosum esse.*'

² ' *Et quamvis permittat (Deus) fieri malum, tamen nunquam relinquit illud inordinatum, sed ordinat illud malum in bonum.*'—*Theol. Nat.* p. 47.

reminds one of Schopenhauer's 'Die Welt als Wille und als Vorstellung.' 'Behold!' he exclaims, 'the wondrous rule of nature: free-will is king.'¹ Of course this extravagant and somewhat dangerous outburst is only due to a momentary enthusiasm. Further on we find free-will placed in due submission to the Deity, though otherwise dominating over and controlling the whole of creation.

Of Raymund's mysticism all his commentators have taken notice. The literary sources whence he drew his inspiration is in this as in other respects uncertain; but if the same arguments couched in precisely similar language may be taken as a proof of indebtedness, his obligations to Gerson appear to be well founded. Beginning with the love of God to all His creatures, proofs of which he discovers in every part of creation, he proceeds to the reciprocal obligation of man to love God, and all created beings as partaking of God. The terms which Raymund employs to depict the manifold excellences of love have all the fervid glow of developed mysticism, but still a mysticism sober, rational, and self-contained, not the wild incoherent raving of ecstatic passion which the word is sometimes taken to imply. The climax of his mystic extravagance may perhaps be found in his doctrine that men, by loving God, are themselves transformed into gods by love.² The extreme opposite of this love to God is naturally self-love, which Raymund makes the source of all human sin and misery, displaying in this part of his argument no inconsiderable amount of shrewdness and insight into the recesses of human nature. It is a noteworthy fact, as illustrating Raymund's method, that from the existence of these antagonistic emotions, love of God and self-love, he infers the necessity of two rival centres or abodes for them, *i.e.* heaven and hell. Men, through the love of God, ascend to heaven; by self-love they descend to hell. This reasoning is enforced with genuine eloquence and not a little hortatory power. Some of his arguments here, as elsewhere, may appear to us more curious than cogent; for instance, he gravely maintains that the love of God being light must ascend, whereas self-love being heavy must descend. But we must remember that such an argument was by no means ineffective in an age when magic and occult science were in their prime, and when material and spiritual existences and

¹ 'Ecce mirabile regimen naturæ: liberum arbitrium est rex,' and in a few sentences before he terms it 'Imperatorem et Regem totius naturæ.'—*Theol. Nat.* p. 134.

² 'Patet ergo, quomodo homo per amorem potest Deo correspondere, et ei assimilari, quod nulla creatura Dei habet alia, Maxima ergo est et dignissima res amor quia facit hominem Deo similem.'—*Theol. Nat.* p. 150.

qualities were so intermingled that facts and reasonings derived from one were conceived to be unreservedly applicable to the other.

As love, according to Raymund, is the crowning-point of a man's religious duty to God, so is it the mainspring and motive of his obligations to man. Nay, man being the living image of God, love to his fellows is a necessary result of love to God. It is the limitation of love to the individual that renders it evil, whereas its extension and diffusion makes it good. For these reasons a man can render to himself love only as being part of God. On this somewhat mystical basis, Raymund, without any further allusion to it, or noticing the source whence it comes, places the golden rule of the Saviour: 'Because every man is compelled to love himself by the fact that and so far as he is man, and the living image of God, it follows that every man is bound to love every other man as himself,'¹ which is moreover a remarkable illustration of Raymund's methods of deducing his conclusions from natural self-evident considerations, rather than from external authoritative principles. By similar reasonings he enforces the duty of love and sympathy for the lower orders of creation. Hence the whole created universe, from the Creator to the lowest creature, are knit together by this universal chain and obligation of love. 'Behold the wondrous order!' he exclaims, with one of his bursts of enthusiasm. God first loved and continues to love men, and the creatures continually manifest that love by serving man, and so God draws men to Himself by perpetual love and obligation, and, being drawn by love, men ought first to love God, and then they are bound continually to the mutual love of each other.'² Nor is

¹ 'Et quia omnis homo obligatur amare seipsum, eo et in quantum est homo et imago Dei viva . . . sequitur quod omnis homo tenetur amare omnem alterum hominem sicut seipsum' (p. 164). Raymund's curiously indirect manner of using well-known passages from the Scripture is shown a few sentences lower down, where he is speaking of the relation of love to men to love to God, he says the second obligation arises out of the first (Et secundum ligamen oritur a primo), in which words we have probably an unconscious reproduction of our Lord's 'And the second is like unto it.'

² 'Et sic creaturæ ligantur cum homine serviendo ei, et homines ligantur cum Deo eum amando, et per consequens tunc homines colligantur inter se, amando se ad invicem . . . Et sic per ordinem universum debet esse colligatum. Ecce mirabilem ordinem: Deus dilexit primo, et continue diligit homines, et creaturæ manifestant continue istam dilectionem serviendo hominibus: et sic Deus trahit ad se homines amando et obligando continue, et per amorem tracti debent amare Deum primo, et exinde obligati sunt se invicem amare continue.'—*Theol. Nat.* cxxiii. pp. 165, 166.

Raymund satisfied with establishing the need and obligation of the feeling as such : he considers that even the love which a man owes to God should overflow and revert to the utility and benefit of man, and hence by so much the more a man's obligation to God is multiplied and increased, by so much is also increased the sum total of the pleasure and advantage of the human race.¹

Closely connected with Raymund's doctrine of love is his view of sin and its punishment. From love to God proceeds pleasure ; from self-love can only come pain. Hence he conceives the soul makes for itself its own torment, which torment, he says, will of necessity be mental and spiritual, and exceed beyond comparison all bodily suffering. A close analysis is not needed to discern a discrepancy between Raymund's Eudæmonism and his opinions on future punishment, but we must remember that he infers its existence from principles already laid down as inherent in the creation. Hence he deduces the need of Divine punishment from the existence of free-will ; and the will of man as part of the Divine will being immortal, its punishment when evil must be eternal as well. What the will of God is, he thinks, is manifested to us by the order of creation. The terms in which he lays down this truth are so illustrative of his system and his style and method of argument that I must trouble you with his own short account of it.² 'What the will of God is, the creatures and their order make manifest to us ; for whatsoever created beings notify and say to us is altogether according to the will of God, and this God wishes, this He asserts ; because all created things are arranged according to the will of God. Therefore when created beings say or signify anything to us, this is according to His will ; because nothing in creation is ordained contrary to the will of God. And inasmuch as whatsoever is concluded in that book is deduced from created things themselves, and from their order and comparison, therefore whatsoever is concluded in that book is according to the will of God. Hence he who acts contrary to the things written in that book (of nature) acts against the will of God ; and he who does them, does the will of God.' On our mode of acquiring that knowledge of God which is contained in the works of nature Raymund dwells at some length : God and His attributes are inferrible by and from human experience.³ This, he says, is truly

¹ *Theol. Nat.* Tit. cxxiv.

² Tit. clxvi. p. 231.

³ 'Et iste est ultimus gradus cognitionis per experientiam ; et iste est certissimus, solidissimus et firmissimus, qui semper manet, et ibi est complementum cognitionis.'—*Theol. Nat.* Tit. cxciv. p. 275.

to know God, for the knowledge which comes of experience is superior to the knowledge derived from other sources, *e.g.* human testimony. The existence and diversity of the Divine attributes Raymund explains by the transference to Deity of the different moods and feelings produced by the works of nature on the human soul.¹

Raymund now passes on to the second or supplementary volume of Divine revelation, *i.e.* Holy Scripture. In harmony with his whole method, the truth of Jesus Christ being the Son of God is not concluded from Revelation—he infers it rather from natural probabilities. Just as there will be an agreement between a man's words and his actions, so the Divine words cannot be inconsistent with the Divine works, but the words of God are still to be interpreted by His works,² Holy Scripture is to be explained by natural science. Suppose the question had arisen in Raymund's days as to any disagreement between the deliverances of the two records, I have no doubt he would have given his unbiassed preference to the Book of Nature, as being the earlier, simpler, and more universal revelation. The general drift of his argument plainly points in this direction. At the same time we must admit that when he arrives to the question of the Bible as the basis of the dogmas of the Church, his testimony on behalf of nature becomes more uncertain and hesitating. Most of his commentators agree that in the latter half of his work the courage of the author, the breadth of his views, the directness of his purpose, exhibit a sad falling off. No doubt it is only what might have been expected from the circumstances of the case. Tennemann has well remarked that had Raymund adhered to the plan of which the preface gives an outline he would have produced an epoch-making work. The wonder is that, pursuing an entirely new path, and one beset by so many difficulties and dangers, he should have followed it so far as he did. Accordingly we find that the superiority ascribed in the preface and in some portions of the treatise to the book of nature is now modified. It is true he

¹ 'Et ideo sequitur quod secundum quod Deus multis modis operatur circa ipsum hominem, secundum hoc homo diversimode nominat Deum.'—*Theol. Nat.* p. 276.

² A similar view of the creation, *i.e.* conceiving it as the realization or materialization of the Divine λόγος, was rarely lost sight of by the more profound of the Fathers and Schoolmen: so Aquinas says, 'Creaturæ sunt quasi voces exprimentes unum Verbum Divinum' (*Sent.* i. dist. xxvii. qu. 2). A similar thought forms the basis of Giordano Bruno's philosophy. Its logical outcome is, of course, some form of Pantheism.

does not utterly relinquish it, for he still insists that the words of God are to be interpreted by His works, that the former are more easily recognised than the latter, and therefore ought to be learned first;¹ but in other respects he maintains the superiority of the written Revelation. Among the arguments employed for this purpose are the following: 1. The word of God excels His works, because the latter were made out of nothing, whereas the former proceeded from the mouth of God. The creatures themselves were made by the word of God: the latter therefore is superior. Creatures were made for the body and its requirements, whereas God's word was meant for the soul and its wants.² As he proceeds further in the dogmatic portion of his work his preference for the book of Scripture becomes still more unreserved and emphatic, until finally not even Luther can express himself more warmly as to the supreme perfection of the Bible. 'Further,' he says, 'it must be concluded of the book because it is of God, and it is God that speaks, that nothing in it can be false, nothing useless, nothing superfluous, nothing weak; hence nothing in it is to be condemned, nothing rejected, nothing deemed wrong.' And here I must observe, as another instance of Raymund's originality and mental independence, that in all his arguments on the Scriptures he accepts and maintains the ordinary Protestant standpoint. The Bible is with him supreme over the Church, not its vassal and servant; and yet in treating of the dogmas of the Church, which he does in Part V. of his work, he does not attempt to place them on the authority of the book, as we might have expected; for example, when speaking of the Fall of man there is not the slightest reference to the narrative in Genesis, and no allusion to St. Paul's epistles. That man has fallen is grounded on the fact that there is a continual conflict between human duty and human conduct. That he must have been created perfect is proved because the contrary supposition would be detrimental to God's honour and glory; and as the lower orders were created perfect, *à fortiori* must man have been so created. That it was the first man who committed the first offence against God is grounded on the universality of human ills and miseries. That he was tempted is deduced from the fact of his

¹ 'Sed verba Dei, si aliqua sunt in mundo, non sunt omnibus manifesta; et ideo per cognitionem creaturarum seu operum Dei tanquam per primo nota et magis manifesta, debemus ire ad cognitionem verborum Dei tanquam ad minus nota; ita quod ipsa facta et ipsæ creaturæ Dei ducent nos ad verba Dei.'—*Theol. Nat.* p. 307.

² *Theol. Nat.* p. 325.

original state of blessedness. In a word, his reasoning proceeds as usual on a logical and independent basis, and without—in appearance at least—any deference to an outward superimposed authority, whether literary or ecclesiastical.

I need not, I think, follow Raymund through the remaining portion of his work, in which he treats one by one most of the great dogmas of the Church. Although in terms he asserts the truth and perfection of the Bible, and somewhat less explicitly affirms also the truth of the Church and its Head, yet there is no attempt to make the doctrine he discusses depend either on one authority or the other. They are grounded, as usual, on such premisses as the nature of God, the constitution of the world, the needs and faculties of man, the reasonable fitness of things, connection of cause and effect, analogy between nature and Revelation. That his methods of reasoning are sometimes unsound, or that his analogies are occasionally pushed to grotesque and unseemly excesses, can surprise no one who reflects on the enterprise in which Raymund was engaged or the time in which he lived. We have, for instance, a very curious argument on the supposed necessity of the birth of a Saviour from a virgin.¹ Similarly the possibility of the two natures, human and Divine, being united in one person without any change of either is proved by a very grotesque piece of reasoning derived from the five vowels A E I O U. Equally conclusive is his argument of what he calls the sacramental scale, which is thus explained: 'As by the ladder of nature, which consists of visible things, man ascends to the knowledge of spiritual and invisible things, so has the Lord appointed to fallen man a certain scale in his restoration, so that by corporal and visible things a man might know things spiritual and invisible.'² Indeed, it is in his treatment of the sacraments that Raymund's taste for false analogies and similitudes attains what I must be permitted to call its climax of absurdity. He thinks, *e.g.* that the coldness of the water in baptism typifies the cooling down of concupiscence in the person baptized. The admixture of oil in the same sacrament, as it renders the water tasteful and sapid, so it signifies that the grace given in the sacrament gives a man a greater flavour in Christ, and renders him more acceptable and tasteful to other men in his fame and conversation. Occasionally, however, these analogies, even when superficial, are not devoid of a certain ingenuity; for instance, he illustrates the omnipresence of Christ's body in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper by com-

¹ *Theol. Nat.* p. 424.

² *Ibid.* pp. 488, 492.

paring it to a single voice sounding at the same time in many ears, and to the breaking of a mirror, each broken fragment giving a reflected likeness of him who looks into it. I am aware that there is nothing absolutely new or strange in these similitudes; in the symbolical and liturgical writings of the Romish Church the quaintest and most grotesque analogy of Raymund would no doubt pale into utter insignificance. The curious matter is that they should be found in combination with the rationalistic tendency and the keen perception of legitimate analogy which is indicated by the preface and other portions of his work.

It is time to sum up my subject. Raymund of Sabieude is undoubtedly one of the most remarkable characters of the Middle Ages, and his 'Natural Theology,' though very unequal in parts, is as a whole a wonderful phenomenon. No one who has carefully studied the work can help admitting the essentially modern spirit which characterizes portions of it, the comprehensiveness of its scope, the independence of thought and method which pervades it.

The question has been asked, and it is one which naturally suggests itself—Why is it that a work so original, powerful, and thought-provoking as Raymund's did not produce a greater effect on his contemporaries? Montaigne informs us that until he translated it, it was almost wholly unknown. Assuming it to have been written in or about 1436, and first printed in 1484, this would leave an interval of some years until the appearance of Montaigne's translation in 1569, during which it must have slumbered quietly on the library shelves of a few Spanish and French monasteries, or formed part of the hoarded treasure of some of the advanced thinkers of that time, such as Pierre de Bunel, who introduced it to the notice of Montaigne's father. The researches of modern bibliography seem to me to render questionable Montaigne's statement of the small renown acquired by Raymund's work. Roth enumerates twelve MSS. and as many early printed editions of the original work prior to Montaigne's French translation,¹ and a careful examination of every large collection of mediæval MSS. would probably result in the discovery of many more. But however this may be, it seems certain that towards the latter part of the sixteenth century Raymund's work became popular,² and that it was this popularity

¹ See Roth's dissertation as above.

² In addition to Montaigne's evidence on this point (see bk. ii. ch. xii.), where the work is said to have become popular, especially among ladies, we have the evidence of the different writers mentioned by Bayle in his

that procured the prohibition of the preface by the Church of Rome.¹ In the gradual awakening now beginning to take place in Europe, and which was soon to culminate in the secular Renaissance and religious reformation, I should myself be inclined to award a high place to the influence which the 'Natural Theology' could not fail to exercise.²

As to Raymund's title to a place among Skeptics, I must admit that his chief characteristics are intellectual independence, belief in the supremacy of reason and Free-thought, and, so far as I am able to judge, a decided disbelief in the methods and reasonings of the theology of his day. He also manifests distinct indications of the dualistic mode of thought which we have already considered. He is at once a realist and a nominalist; a Pantheist and a believer in a personal Deity; a rationalist and a defender of extreme ecclesiastical dogmas. But besides his Skepticism, he has other claims on our interest. He may almost be termed a pre-Lutheran Protestant. He is, moreover, a predecessor, and no unworthy one, of our analogists and Natural Theologians—of Butler, Clark, Fénelon, Chalmers, Simon—and, so far as he maintains the superiority of the Book of Creation over other modes of Revelation, declares that it should be learned first, and that it contains all that is needful to human knowledge and salvation; so far he may be said to resemble in some important points our very latest school of physical-science philosophy.

TREVOR. Many thanks, Harrington, for your summary. I know what a trial it must have been for such a classical

Dictionary, Art. 'Sebonde,' note D. Comp. on the same subject the letter of Dr. Payen to M. Gustave Brunet.

¹ The Abbé Labourderie tells us, in his *Christianisme de Montaigne* (p. 154, note), that the Preface was placed on the Index under Clement VIII. Other writers, as Oudin (*De Script. Eccles.*), assign its prohibition to Clement VII. But if we may credit the copy of the Index affixed to vol. ii. of the *Dictionnaire des Hérésies*, published by Migne, which contains the entry relative to Raymund's Preface as follows: 'Sabund, seu Sebunde (Raymundus de) Prologus in Theologiam Naturalem (*Ind. Trid.*),' the Preface was prohibited in the Index of Pius IV. which is called the Tridentine. The prohibition was taken off, adds the Abbé, under Benedict XIV., but he gives no authority for his assertion. The fact would seem to be that the Preface *still* retains its place on the Index, and is even now omitted in Roman Catholic editions of the *Natural Theology*, e.g. Sighart's ed. (Solisbaci 1852). Comp. Noack, *Hist. Biog. Handwort.* Art. 'Raymund.'

² Dr. Willis, in his *Servetus and Calvin*, thinks it possible that Servetus may have been influenced by Raymund's work. P. 15.

purist as you are to wade through the six hundred and odd pages of what Hallam calls the 'uncouth Latin' of the 'Theologia Naturalis.'

HARRINGTON. Yes, that was the worst part of the business, until I got a little used to it. Nothing can be more crude, inartificial, I might even say barbarous, than Raymund's style; but it compensates by perspicuity of thought and closeness of reasoning for its open disdain of all the graces of Latin prose composition. Some twenty years ago I should not have had the resolution to read through two pages of such Latin as Raymund's for fear of injuring the Ciceronian style of which I was then so vain. I have now attained an age when the more intellectual qualities of power, originality, cogency of reasoning, and clearness of expression have a superior attraction for me than mere linguistic adornment, which, like other kinds of beauty, is after all but skin-deep.

ARUNDEL. Raymund is, no doubt, a most interesting character, who seems to have lived two centuries before his time, but I am inclined to demur to our classification of him. A man who insisted so strenuously on all the dogmas of his Church, and made even his rationalism subserve the interests of those dogmas, was surely no Skeptic.

TREVOR. We have already seen in the case of Ockam and others that the formal recognition of ecclesiastical dogma is quite compatible with a very considerable latitude of speculation, and such cases, as we know, are frequent in the history of the Church. We have, moreover, touched upon a division of Skepticism which we shall often meet in our future investigations, and which has been termed 'ecclesiastical;' we may define it as the method of Sextos Empeirikos, adapted, like an old rusty weapon cleaned and furbished up, to fight the battle of ecclesiastical orthodoxy.

MRS. HARRINGTON. Rather a dangerous weapon in awkward hands, I should say. As to Raymund, my difficulty about him is this. The preface of his 'Natural Theology' seems so far in advance of, and thereby to differ so widely from, the rest of his book, that it is almost improbable that the two should be the work of the same man. The question

I would ask is, which of them best represents the genuine Raymund?

HARRINGTON. Of the two, I should say the preface. In that you have a simple directness of purpose, together with a freedom and spontaneity of utterance which generally characterize the expression of a man's own opinion, whereas nothing can be more forced than the purely dogmatical portions of his work. But in my opinion the discrepancy between the two is not greater than that which occurs in many a human enterprise of a similar kind. In laying down a plan whether of philosophy, religion, or anything else, a man is like the architect of some great building, evolving his own idea, and limited only by the wealth of his knowledge, taste, experience, and imagination: it is when he begins to carry it into effect that difficulties arise. The ground chosen turns out unsuitable, there is a dearth of fitting materials, continual struggles with trade-unions and strikes, or sufficient funds are not forthcoming—to all which exigencies his own elaborated conception is sacrificed, like Sir Christopher Wren's first idea of St. Paul's. The plan remains perfect but on paper; the actual building in stone and mortar is so modified, reconstructed, and curtailed as to be hardly more than a caricature of the original design. Raymund's conception, as laid down in his preface, is doubtless a noble one, but, as we said, it was thwarted and mutilated by dogma. . . . His proper task, I might say the proper task of every natural theologian, would, in my opinion, be to show the analogy of nature with the truths and precepts of Christianity as laid down by the Founder. What Raymund sought to prove was that such analogy existed with regard to the doctrinal development of the fifteenth century—a very different matter.

TREVOR. Raymund bears a strong resemblance to Descartes as regards the incongruity between the original design and the subsequent development of his philosophy. Descartes's scheme of evolving all knowledge from the principle 'Cogito ergo sum' is like Raymund's idea of developing all theology from a contemplation of nature. Both alike share a simple grandeur of idea and a wide reach of generalization,

but both deviate from their principles when they receive a constructive development. Nor is it only Raymund and Descartes that may be classified under Harrington's 'Architect's Failures.' Most systems of human thought labour under some defect, not of primary conception but of subsequent excogitation or practical application. Hence the history of philosophy seems to me like a museum of patents or inventions. We realize the truth, simplicity, utility, &c. of the primary conception, but in most cases we discover that practically the invention turned out a failure. Indeed, the universe does not seem framed to satisfy the exigencies of those who must needs have a thought-scheme at once simple, homogeneous, and of universal application.

MISS LEYCESTER. In that case a man's thought is like his existence. Every original mind maps and plans out his ideal of life, but it is fated practically to be cruelly maimed and mutilated by the iron forces of circumstances and destiny.

ARUNDEL. Returning to Raymund . . . I must confess to a difficulty in making out the theory of your paper as to the province of natural theology. You seemed to imply that inquiries into nature, its laws, and phenomena, together with their moral or religious bearings, should be independent of Christianity.

HARRINGTON. My full conviction is that nature, if interrogated impartially and comprehensively, gives all the evidence we could reasonably expect in favour of the fundamental positions of Christianity. Hence we cannot, I think, improve on the old theory of the two books, 'Creatura et Scriptura,' 'Nature and Revelation.' Only their evidence should, in my opinion, be taken apart. Each should, in fact, be put out of court when the other is undergoing cross-examination. Raymund's merit was that he saw and maintained this in theory, though, as we saw, he neglected it in practice.

ARUNDEL. Excuse me, but your notion does not seem borne out by our experience of the ordinary effect of an exclusive devotion, whether to science or theology.

HARRINGTON. What I mean is, that nature and theology

should be allowed to propound their methods and dicta independently, but, this done, the final decision of the issues between them should be left to the higher judicial intellect, which, with a full comprehension of the two, poises in impartial balances their merits, and decides accordingly. The truths of science and theology are in a mean equally removed from the extremes of both, and therefore the unqualified preponderance of either is to be deprecated. It was an ill day for the human intellect when theology dominated over it, but it will be a scarcely less evil day for the whole varied field of human thought, feeling, and aspiration when physical science is allowed to become its tyrant.

MISS LEYCESTER. I suppose the difficulty in establishing a *rapprochement* between natural science and theology consists in the assumed disparity of their methods, which, for my part, I am unable to concede. I am conscious of possessing only a single indivisible faculty of reason, which I must needs apply to science and to theology. I cannot discriminate the grounds of my belief in the existence of Deity from those on which I base my conviction of the general truth of some theory of physical science, say, *e.g.* evolution. In each case I am conscious of a primary need, in the first instance of some originating mind or reason to account for the laws and order of the universe, in the other of a demonstration that successions of natural phenomena are adequately accounted for by evolution: yet when I avouch my needs to a scientist, I am likely to be told—‘Your first need is arbitrary, self-evolved, sentimental, and superficial; your second is natural, intellectual, and reasonable.’ All I can plead in rejoinder is that I am unconscious of any such distinction, on which, perhaps, I get the customary reproach of ‘confusion of methods,’ ‘intellectual haziness,’ ‘predilection for half-truths,’ &c.

ARUNDEL. Most true, Miss Leycester. Nothing, I confess, angers me so much as the Pharisaic contempt of the mere science professor for every method of culture except his own. Without going so far as Raymund, who thought researches into the lower orders of the creatures mean, I venture to think, judging from some experience, that natural

science may have a far more narrowing influence than almost any other intellectual pursuit. A man, *e.g.* who devotes his existence to the collection of Coleoptera insensibly acquires the notion that the earth was originally designed for the advantage of his favourite insects, just as the average theologian believes it was destined solely for the habitat and development of man. Now it appears to me that the latter conviction, however imperfect, is infinitely nobler in its implications than the former. As to the denouncers of half-truths, if they mean not a wilful *suppressio veri* but an acquiescence in partial or proximate truth, I can only say that many of the generalizations we seem compelled to accept are precisely of this kind. If all their truths are 'whole truths' they must boast a good fortune, in which most men would be eager to share, and it would not be too much to demand their production, so that we might judge of the vaunted completeness, and see how far it can stand tests of analysis and disintegration.

TREVOR. While dealing with Raymund's emphasis on nature, we must not forget that this does not sum up his contributions to the cause of Free-thought. Hardly less important is his insistence on human reason and conscience as ultimate tribunals of truth. We are now so accustomed to arguments based on these principles that we can hardly realize the time when they were quite neologian and heterodox. I must look into Raymund's book more fully than I have yet done, if only for the queer anomalous kind of sensation which I should suppose it would produce. To read a Roman Catholic controversial work, consisting of some six hundred pages, without a single direct appeal to the *ipse dixit* of Pope or council, or even of Holy Scripture, would be as exhilarating as witnessing a representation of Hamlet with the part of the Prince of Denmark left out.

HARRINGTON. There is another point worth considering, and that is the influence of Raymund of Sabieude on Montaigne and Charron, and through these on the long line of French Free-thinkers and nature-worshippers which finally culminated in Rousseau and the principles of the Revolution. When we come to discuss Montaigne, we shall find to what

an extravagant extent he pushed his principles of obedience and submission to nature, even advocating a return on the part of civilized Europe to the primitive state of things—

When wild in woods the noble savage ran.

This nature-enthusiasm he probably derived from Raymund.

TREVOR. Perhaps so, but for my part I would deprecate the prevalent tendency to ascribe to special influences what seems owing to the *Zeitgeist*. Nature-worship is, in the philosophy of religion, the general and inevitable reaction against a too exclusive assertion of the supernatural. These two books of Raymund's are like, if I may be allowed the simile, two well-buckets, the ascent of the one involving the descent of the other. In the time of Raymund, the bucket of nature was slowly rising from the draw-well, overflowing with clear, fresh, cold water, for the lustration and refreshment of Europe, while the sister vessel of the supernatural was undoubtedly descending. This revivification of nature is what, in my opinion, is chiefly meant by that aggregate of volcanic forces to which we give the collective name of the Renaissance, and of which, as is now admitted, the religious reformation of Luther and Calvin only forms a part. The causes of this general convulsion were in reality as manifold and diverse as have been its effects. It is a puny and unworthy conception of such a many-sided movement to regard it as the confluence of two or three main streams. It is rather the meeting-point of a large number of tributaries of various sizes and degrees of strength, coming from different, often opposite, directions, and agreeing only in the common property of contributing each its own quota to the rapidly broadening river. The bare enumeration of the multiform causes, religious, political, literary, and social, which concurred in the Renaissance, to say nothing of meting out the due proportion in each case, has always appeared to me a hazardous and invidious, if not an impossible, task, albeit one which we must by-and-by attempt.

ARUNDEL. I entirely object to your well-bucket illustration, which makes nature and Scripture antagonistic instead of complementary to each other. It would be truer

to say that Raymund's two books 'Creatura et Scriptura' might be taken as the main principles, the first of the secular Renaissance, the second of the religious reformation. The former animated the wild and licentious Free-thought of France and Italy; the latter, the more sober and measured freedom of Germany and England. But both travelled in the same direction and had similar objects in view. Their real relation was mutually counteractive and supplementary, not destructive. As a matter of history, the nations that adopted 'Scriptura' have enjoyed a far greater amount of liberty, political and intellectual, than those that took 'Creatura' as their guiding principle.

MISS LEYCESTER. In the latter part of your paper, Charles, you speak of the dualism of Raymund. He was not an advocate of Twofold Truth, was he?

HARRINGTON. Not directly, certainly, though indirectly and occasionally he adduces arguments which are mutually conflicting. In point of fact, he could not openly have sanctioned the doctrine of Twofold Truth without cutting the ground from under his own favourite argument from analogy, of which it is the logical converse. Every analogist starts with the presumption that nature and Revelation being products of one Divine Mind, there can be no discrepancy in their utterances. The contrary supposition, as we have seen, constitutes the very basis and definition of Twofold Truth. Raymund, therefore, as is natural, dwells occasionally on the oneness of truth, and the impossibility of contradictories being true at the same time.¹

ARUNDEL. Though Raymund is, like Butler, an analogist, he seems to carry the demonstrative cogency of his analogy much further than the wary bishop.

HARRINGTON. No doubt Raymund, like most writers on the subject, has overstated the logical force of his ratiocination. But if he is inferior to Bishop Butler in that respect, he is his superior in the clear assertion of the original coequality of nature with Revelation. Hence, in my opinion, evidence-writers of the future must do what those of the

¹ *E.g. Theol. Nat.* p. 93.

past have mostly neglected. If they wish to convince not only those who have been dieted on theological ratiocination, and have thus acquired a predilection for theological conclusions, but also those among scientists who have not sacrificed their spiritual instincts and intellectual ingenuousness at the shrine of Physical Science, they must base their arguments on such axioms and primary definitions as were laid down in the early part of the fifteenth century in the preface to Raymund's 'Theologia Naturalis.'

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EVENING XII.

CORNELIUS AGRIPPA.

'Agrippa kept a Stygian pug,
I' th' garb and habit of a dog,
That was his tutor, and the cur
Read to th' occult philosopher,
And taught him subtly to maintain
All other sciences are vain.'

BUTLER, *Hudibras*.

'Nihil scire, felicissima vita.'

AGRIPPA'S motto to his work *On the Uncertainty
and Vanity of Sciences and Arts*.

'And some are wilder comrades, sworn to seek
If any golden harbour be for men
In seas of death and sunless gulfs of doubt.'

TENNYSON.

'Je ne puis avoir que de la compassion pour ceux que gémissent sincèrement dans ce doute, qui le regardent comme le dernier des malheurs, et qui n'épargnant rien pour en sortir, font de cette recherche leur principale et leur plus sérieuse occupation.'—PASCAL, *Pensées*, Ed. Havet I. 137-8.

EVENING XII.

CORNELIUS AGRIPPA.¹

AGRIPPA being one of the subjects originally claimed by Mr. Harrington, the meeting was again held at his house.

When the company assembled in the study after dinner—
MRS. ARUNDEL (began). What is that very portly volume you are putting on the table, Mr. Harrington?

HARRINGTON. The 'Opera Omnia' of our subject this evening. Here you have the celebrated Cornelius Agrippa—the philosopher, the soldier, the divine, the physician, the astrologer, the Skeptic, the man and the Christian—depicted in 2,050 pages 18mo. of rather close type.

MISS LEYCESTER. Thank goodness we have not all been compelled to make the acquaintance of the great magician by means of such an unwieldy-looking medium. I have been contemplating his lineaments in the reduced likeness of Professor Morley's careful study; and a very agreeable occupation I found it. As it happened, I had just finished the 'Life of Casaubon' when Charles began to collect his

¹ In this chapter the following works are those chiefly referred to:—

1. *Henrici Cornelii Agrippæ Opera*. Lugdini 1531.

2. *Cornelius Agrippa*. By Morley. 2 vols. London 1856.

The 'De Vanitate' is quoted from one of the 12mo German editions (*Hagæ Comitum-Adriani*, Vlacq. 1662) and the English translation of James Sanford (London 1569). The 14th volume of the *Retrospective Review* contains an elaborate article on the last-named work, which, however, does not attempt to discuss Agrippa's character, or his relation to the times in which he lived.

Naudé, *Apologie pour les grands hommes*, &c.

De la Démonomanie des Sorciers, p. 240, &c. Par J. Bodin. Paris 1587.
See also Scheible's *Klöster*, vol. ii. p. 218, &c.

The best dictionary articles on Agrippa are Bayle, Moreri, Ersch and Grüber, *Biog. Universelle* (Michaud), *Nouvelle Biog.* (Hoefer).

On the relation of the Faust-legend to Agrippa's Life, comp. Scheible, *Klöster*, vols. ii. iii. and v.

materials for to-night's paper, and the next book I read was Morley's 'Life of Agrippa.' The two books might profitably be studied together. What a vivid representation they give us of the wanderings, trials, and disappointments of scholars in the sixteenth century! Contrasted with the prosaic existences of our own day, the 'Life of Agrippa' might be almost called a Romance.

TREVOR. I should rather call it a philosopher's tragedy. Poor Agrippa was, in my opinion, quite hunted to death by his ignorant and implacable enemies the monks, and is, if not a martyr like Bruno and Vanini, undoubtedly a confessor to the sacred cause of Free-inquiry. I am glad that it has been reserved for an Englishman, following in the steps of Naudé,¹ Moreri,² Bayle, and others, to disperse so completely the clouds of obloquy and misrepresentation which have so long darkened the fame of one of the noblest characters of which philosophy can boast. To the truth of Professor Morley's representation I can bear testimony, as I took the pains of going through his book with the works of Agrippa at my elbow. The only fault I have to find in him is that he does not seem to me to lay sufficient stress on the earnestness and profundity of Agrippa's Skepticism.

HARRINGTON. The popular prejudices you have spoken of are the result not only of the calumny of his enemies, but of a partial and one-sided knowledge of his works. Agrippa the Magician is the highly coloured representation of the picture in neutral tints afforded by his work on 'Occult Science.' Those who wish for a genuine portrait, all the more trustworthy because unintended, of the actual man—his secret thoughts, passions, and aspirations—must refer to his letters. Bayle's testimony of their effect in proving the sincerity of Agrippa's piety and Christianity is emphatic.³

¹ *Apologie pour tous les grands hommes qui ont été accusez de Magie*, par M. Naudé, pt. ii. chap. xv. p. 239.

² *Dictionnaire Historique*, art. 'Agrippa.'

³ 'Quant à la Magie dont on l'accuse, je consens que chacun en croie ce qu'il voudra. Une chose sais-je bien, c'est que les lettres qu'il écrivait à ses intimes amis, sans prétendre qu'elles fussent un jour imprimées, portent toutes les marques d'un homme stylé aux réflexions de religion et au langage du Christianisme.'—Bayle, *Dict.* art. 'Agrippa.'

They would be well worth translating into English, and, with explanations, notes, and extracts from his works, would give a better idea of Cornelius Agrippa and his times than could be derived from any other source.

MISS LEYCESTER. In reading the lives of Agrippa and Casaubon I have been reminded of our earlier friends the Greek philosophers. The continual wanderings of the former are not unlike the restless vagabond life which some of the latter appear to have lived, but in respect of happiness and the enjoyment of life I should rather have shared the lot of Pythagoras or Xenophanes 500 B.C. than that of Agrippa or Casaubon 1600 A.D.

ARUNDEL. No doubt the Greek peasant and olive-farmer or the town merchant and artizan afforded much better material for a Free-thinking philosopher to work upon than the untaught citizens or the fanatical monks of the sixteenth century. But what I dislike in the career of such men as Agrippa and Casaubon is what I should term 'literary mendicancy.' They go, so to speak, staff in hand and their wallets on their backs from one great house to another, from the court of this king or queen to that of the next king or queen, with a long face, a beggar's plaintive whine and extended hands, supplicating pensions, gifts, alms—whatever, in short, their haughty patrons may be graciously pleased to throw at them.

HARRINGTON. That, of course, was the dire necessity of their position. Unfortunately a student's life must in every age be one of many requirements. Leisure, books, and money are luxuries which, in the actual distribution of earthly blessings, do not fall to the lot of every man. Literature even in our own days is not of itself invariably certain to lift its professor to the summit of wealth and happiness, but in the time of Agrippa the lot of the scholar and book-writer was infinitely inferior. He had no reading public to appeal to, as his modern successors have. When he published, he had to do so at his own risk and expense, and one of the most affecting circumstances in the life of Agrippa is that he was compelled out of his scanty and precarious means to satisfy the claims of his publisher. Some dependence, therefore,

in 'royal and noble' patrons was then an unfortunate necessity. It must also be allowed that such a life was far from being, in every case, an unhappy one, or devoid of even the rarest blessings that can fall to the lot of ordinary humanity. Take the life of Erasmus, for example.

MISS LEYCESTER. At all events, Agrippa's 'literary mendicancy' was by no means of the humble, whining, supplicating order. He demanded not the alms, which he might fairly have deemed to be no more than the due of a scholar who was expending all his energies of soul and body to enlighten his fellow-men, but some one of the many court offices which would have combined half-literary duties with the means of preserving himself and family from starvation. But his applications are, as a rule, quite untainted by excessive humility; and when, as too frequently happened, the promised salary remained long overdue, he expressed himself with a distinctness, not to say bluntness, of speech that clearly proves nature never intended him for a courtier. His language to such potentates as Charles V., Queen Louise of Savoy, and Margaret of Navarre exonerates Agrippa from the charge of commonplace 'mendicancy.' Had he been more pliant and obsequious, his life would probably have been happier.

MRS. HARRINGTON. I have seen it stated that Agrippa was the real original of the Dr. Faustus of Marlowe and Goethe. Is this really so?

HARRINGTON. Dr. Faustus, whose historical existence is now generally conceded, was quite a different personage from our Agrippa, though they were contemporaries, and died—or, in the case of Faust, I ought to say disappeared—about one time. So far from Agrippa being the original of Faust, the paternity is all the other way—in this respect, at least, that the legendary form which the monks gave to the life of Agrippa was suggested by Faust-myths, which were already in existence. Faust is first mentioned in a letter bearing date 1507 (when Agrippa was only twenty-one years of age), but the legend does not assume an elaborate form until about 1562¹ (twenty-seven years after his death), when

¹ See the Faust-volumes in J. Scheible's *Klöster*, especially vols. ii. iii.

we first find the two magicians in company, and Faustus is duly attended by the—

Stygian pug
I' th' garb and habit of a dog

—just as, in the monkish representation of him, Agrippa himself was. The original Faust died about 1548 or 1550, and was then said to have been from sixty to seventy years of age. Wier, the great 'demonographer,' was a disciple of Agrippa's. He likewise mentions a Faustus, of whom he gives a brief history; though he does not appear to be aware that his master was regarded as the original Dr. Faust. This is the more noteworthy, because he knew the monkish legends concerning Agrippa, and denies that Agrippa's little black dog 'Mounseer' was a diabolical familiar.¹ So much I think is clear, that Faustus and Agrippa were contemporaries; that the legends concerning each, though in some points quite

and v., and the exhaustive article on 'Faust-Sage' in Ersch and Grüber. The connection of Faust's name and attributes with those of Agrippa occurs in a collection of commonplaces by Joannes Manlius (Basle 1562), where we are told that Faustus 'Vivens adhuc habebat secum canem, qui erat Diabolus sicut iste nebulo qui scripsit "De Vanitate Artium, etiam habebat canem secum currentem qui erat Diabolus"' (E. and G. section i. vol. xlii. p. 97). Another part of Manlius's story is thus quaintly 'Englished' by James Sanford, in the Introduction to his translation of Agrippa's *De Vanitate*: 'For as John Manlius, a Germaine writer, doth recorde, when he (Agrippa) was at the pointe of death, he called to him a dogge, which wente aboute with him, and spake to him with these wordes, *Abi a me, perditā bestia, quæ me perdidisti*, that is, Depart from me, thou wicked beast, which hast destroyed me. So forthwith the dogge departinge from him, caste himselfe headlonge into a river. This dogge was without doubt a Divel of Hell.'

¹ On the absurd stories current about Agrippa's dogs, comp. Wier, *De Præstigiis Dem.* ii. chap. v., and Naudé, *Apologie pour les grands hommes*, &c. p. 309. Agrippa had generally two dogs in his study, one called 'Mounseer,' the other 'Madamoiselle.' The reader need hardly be reminded that a great black dog is the orthodox and generally approved form of the diabolical coadjutor to all great magicians. *A propos* of Agrippa's fondness for dogs, Naudé mentions a considerable number of the various dumb pets of eminent men, who were not on that account suspected of magic, and the list might be indefinitely extended. Mrs. Grote tells us that a considerable part of her husband's works was written across the back of a Spitz-dog 'Dora.' Such an instance, two centuries ago, would have been regarded as a sufficing cause of the pernicious devotion to liberty political and philosophical, with which Grote's works are permeated.

different, are in others intermingled and confused; and that the rapid diffusion of Faust-legends during the latter half of the sixteenth century may, perhaps, be owing to this confusion, evidently originated and fostered by the monks, as well as to the fact that there were actually two historical notorieties on which to base them.

TREVOR. I don't dispute your accuracy, Harrington; still, names and dates are perilous things, where myths, which are embodiments of ideas and instincts deeply rooted in human nature, are concerned. There may or may not have been an historical Dr. Faustus, but I should be inclined to attribute the rapid growth of the legends respecting him to more general and deeply seated causes. They serve as the popular imaginative expression of the profound mental restlessness of the sixteenth century, when the incoming tide of the Renaissance may be said to be approaching its height. Older knowledge, systems of dogma, political institutions, social habits, were either giving way, or showing signs of coming dissolution. Human wisdom, it would seem, had reached the end of its tether, but without discovering the perfect truth of which it was in search, or quenching its own thirst for further progress. Of this feeling Faust and, in some respects, Agrippa are illustrations. To still his restlessness and allay his ardent thirst for better and fuller knowledge, the former, if the legends about him are true, betook himself to magic. For a similar reason the latter, following the example of the German Reformers, found refuge in the Bible.

MISS LEYCESTER. No doubt the number of these legends, and their widespread extension over Europe during the sixteenth and following centuries, indicate the existence of some feeling of that kind. But you would not limit these influences in their general effect to the sixteenth century, Dr. Trevor?

TREVOR. By no means. Our own investigations have shown clearly that intellectual unrest, in some degree of development, is peculiar to no one race or epoch. From the sixteenth century downwards, *e.g.* the most advanced thought of modern Europe seems permeated by a similar feeling,

and most of the names famous in literature have been exponents of it. Nor is it confined to the cultured classes: its existence as a general sentiment seems to me proved by the enduring popularity of such dramas as Goethe's 'Faust' and Shakespeare's 'Hamlet;' both of which express it though in a different manner, the first as intellectual, the second as moral, uncertainty.

HARRINGTON. The most popular poet of Germany at present is Heine—the very incarnation of mental disquietude.

ARUNDEL. You both seem to me guilty of exaggeration. Our modern history, with its multitudinously varied phases, cannot without violence be compressed into a continuous 'Sturm und Drang.' There must, of course, always be a certain amount of restlessness, otherwise all thought and speculation would become stagnant and lifeless. Such a state, when natural, is the analogue in the realm of mind of the storms and hurricanes in nature. But no one would infer from the fact of our equinoctial gales, *e.g.* that they represented even in our own fickle climate the normal state of the weather. You apply to the majority what is, in my opinion, true of only a small minority. Intellectual unrest is like every other extreme of refined idealism, whether in philosophy or religion—the luxury of the few. For my part, I should call it, in many cases, a disease more often self-induced than natural or spontaneous—the morbid excess of speculative activity, just as ritualistic devoteeism is the unhealthy development of religious activity, or mysticism the abnormal growth of religious introspection. Fortunately, common-sense, practical religion, the imperative nature of our ordinary human needs, must always confine these extravagances within a comparatively limited area.

MISS LEYCESTER. Please don't let us lose ourselves in generalities. . . . That Agrippa's inner life should be restless is hardly to be wondered at, considering that his outer life was little else than a succession of storms, with scarce a single intervening gleam of sunshine. Taking the cases of Agrippa, Bruno, and Vanini, it seems difficult to say whether the instability of their convictions was the cause or the effect of the restlessness of their lives. We may almost say they were

doubly Skeptics: voluntarily or involuntarily, they proved the mutability of fortune, as well as, in their own opinion, the unreality of ordinary beliefs.

MRS. HARRINGTON. As to the first, most people, I fancy, are Skeptics. But you assume, Florence, that a Skeptic's outer life will always be restless. But if so, what becomes of the Ataraxia which we some time ago agreed was at least a possible issue of Pyrrhonism? Besides, compare Agrippa with Montaigne--the only other nobleman on our list, by the way. What can be more placid than his life? In the most perturbed period of French history, the spot where peace and quietness reign supreme is the château of Montaigné.

HARRINGTON. Nevertheless, our ordinary experience does assure us that there is generally a close mutual interaction between a man's outward and inward life, though it is difficult to say in all cases which exercises the primary and predominating influence. Our modern psychologists would probably say the inner, and would attribute the physical and mental vagrancy alike to the unstable condition or distribution of nervous forces--perhaps transmitted from a restless ancestor.

TREVOR. In some instances no doubt they would: and their argument, if conclusively proved, would assert for a few of our Skeptical friends a physical *raison d'être*, which would effectually and finally dispose of the vituperation they have been subjected to for so many centuries. As a rule, I believe the determinating causes to be mainly from without, and to be independent of any abnormal condition of nervous force. Three to one of the Skeptics on our list fully prove this.

ARUNDEL. What a pity we know so little of the ancestors of Skeptics! If we only possessed full information as to their lives, proclivities, temperaments, &c. we might form some approximate conclusion as to how far Skepticism is transmissible, and so accumulate a few facts for, or possibly against, some future Darwin or Galton.

TREVOR. Some such hereditary influence must, I think, be conceded, and with the advance of psychology will probably be more insisted on. That the argument should ever

attain the dignity of scientific demonstration is too much to expect.

HARRINGTON. As at present advised, both history and our own experience seem to me opposed to a direct transmission, not merely of modes of acquiring knowledge common to every individual of the race, but of particular mental tendencies of a subtle, refined and recondite character. We shall no more learn the 'principium individuationis' of the intellect than the Schoolmen were able to determine that of physical forms. History certainly shows that a cycle of superstition is followed by a reactionary cycle of Skepticism. Moreover, as Mr. Galton has pointed out, the children of believing and pious parents frequently turn out libertines both in creed and in morals. And, as a matter of my own personal observation, I happen to know not a few cases, some of them very eminent ones, in which children of the same parent have taken not only different but quite opposite directions in respect of intellectual and religious belief. . . . But as our conversation is now becoming discursive, perhaps you will allow me to call your attention to the subject in hand by introducing to your notice the famous magician and Skeptic, Cornelius Agrippa.

Harrington then began to read :—

Henry Cornelius Agrippa was born at Cologne in the year 1486. Like Montaigne, he was the son of a noble and ancient house. His family took its title of 'Nettesheim' from a small village about twenty-five miles from Cologne. Like his ancestors, he was sent early in life to the court of Maximilian I., where he remained as secretary until he was sixteen years of age. At twenty we find him in Paris, where he joins one of those secret societies of Theosophists or Rosicrucians which were so frequent in the large cities of Europe during the Middle Ages and the succeeding epoch of the Renaissance. It is probably from this very early period that we have to date those studies in occult learning to which, though he abandoned them in after-years, he is indebted for the largest and least desirable portion of his notoriety. After some wild exploits of a half-military kind in Spain, we next find him as a professor in the university of Dole, in Burgundy, expounding Reuchlin's book 'On the Mirific Word,' which he did with such success as to be made doctor of divinity. About the same time,

wishing to secure the patronage of Margaret of Austria, he wrote his treatise 'On the Nobility and Pre-eminence of the Female Sex'—a book which some of our leading members of Woman's Rights Societies would do well to examine as the most remarkable contribution to their question during the sixteenth century. It bears the marks of youthful ingenuousness, not to say freshness, which the mingled experience of a lifetime could not but correct. Agrippa's marriage, which closely followed the composition of that work, may be regarded as a practical earnest of its author's sincerity, though cynics would suggest that this event should, in the nature of things, have preceded his enthusiastic panegyric. The marriage was nevertheless a very happy one, and, together with a second fortunate venture of the same kind, must have confirmed Agrippa's youthful opinions as to 'the Nobility and Pre-eminence of Women.'

His Parisian studies in magical lore bore fruit in 1510, when at the early age of twenty-four he composed his three books on occult science, to which I shall presently ask your attention. Happily for his own peace of mind, he was induced not to publish the work, though the MS. was soon repeatedly transcribed, and extracts and copies were first secretly, and afterwards openly, circulated.

The clouds which darkened the greater portion of his life had already begun to lower on the horizon. The Hebrew studies which his investigations into magical and cabalistic learning necessitated drew upon him the distrust of the ignorant monks, who, as Bayle remarks, suspected of heresy whatsoever they could not understand—a rather comprehensive category. These were days when the study of Greek was supposed to transform believers into heretics, and that of Hebrew to change Christians into Jews! Accordingly a fanatical Franciscan openly denounced Agrippa in the pulpit before the patroness to whom he had intended to dedicate his work 'On the Nobility and Pre-eminence'—as aforesaid. It would appear that the 'nobility' of Queen Margaret was not of that vigorous and hardy character as to withstand a plea for intolerance, in an age when it was the synonym of orthodoxy, and our youthful scholar experienced the first of those frequent disappointments to which fortune had destined him. Finding his prospects at the court of Margaret unpromising, he again returned to the service of Maximilian, by whom he was sent with an embassy to the English court of Henry VIII. While in London Agrippa lodged at the house of Dean Colet, and his intercourse with that liberal and half-Protestant dignitary was probably his earliest introduction

to the plans and aspirations of such men as Ockam, Gerson, and Erasmus, who would gladly have welcomed a reform within the Church, though they deprecated a hasty severance from the time-hallowed institution. Agrippa shows manifest traces of these influences in an expostulation which he addressed to his calumniator, the Franciscan monk of Margaret's court, and which consists of a practical and not uneloquent exhortation to charity founded on the Gospels and St. Paul's Epistles. 'Excellent preaching to a rock' is Professor Morley's appropriate comment. On his return to Germany, Agrippa spends some time at Cologne, whence he is summoned to join the war in Italy. This curious alternation of philosophy and war, of the lecture-room and the battle-field, of learned tomes and blood-stained weapons, common to Agrippa as well as to Ulrich von Hutten and other scholarly knights, is a characteristic and significant feature of the time, to which our own history affords a kind of parallelism in Cromwell's heroes, to whom preaching and fighting came with equal indifference. Agrippa would seem to have been an adept at either performance. He accordingly lectures on Plato in the University of Pisa, and soon afterwards is taken prisoner in battle by the Swiss. Of more importance, as influencing his future relation with the court of Rome, is his appointment to the anti-Papal council of Pisa, and sharing with his brother members in the excommunication launched against them by Julius II. Shortly after, we again hear of him in his twofold vocation. He is knighted on a battle-field, and is admitted by the University of Pavia to be doctor of law and medicine, thus attaining almost simultaneously high honours both in war and in learning. At the age of thirty-two he is patronized by the Duke of Savoy, through whose influence he becomes advocate and orator to the free town of Metz. Here he again comes into contact with the monks. For some inscrutable reason, the Dominicans had adopted the dogma that St. Anne (the mother of the Virgin) had three husbands. As there was no historical ground for the assertion, it was combated vigorously by Agrippa and others, but with the result of increasing still further the animosity of his foes. Agrippa's undaunted courage in the cause of truth and liberty, as well as his partial emancipation from the slavish superstitions of the age, are well shown at this period of his life by his rescue of a poor inoffensive country-girl, branded with the deadly imputation of witchcraft, from the very jaws of the Inquisition. The narrative, either in Morley's *Life* or Agrippa's *Letters*,¹ is an

¹ Morley, *Life*, ii. pp. 57-65; Agrippa's *Works*, ii. pp. 755, 756, &c. The VOL. II.

interesting exemplification of the nefarious and high-handed proceedings of the 'holy office.' Unluckily the victories of our hero in the cause of liberty are invariably preludes to embarrassment and defeat on the road to fortune. Having stirred up once more the fanatical bigotry of the monks, he is compelled to quit Metz. Treading on the heels of this disaster comes another and greater calamity. He loses his wife, to whom he was passionately attached, and is left to bemoan his uncertain prospects, without the companion who had hitherto shared his mutable fortunes. The needs of a small family induced him to marry again after an interval of about one year, and his second selection was as fortunate as his first. Though tempted by brilliant offers elsewhere, Agrippa accepted in 1524 office in France as physician to the queen-mother, but was unable to obtain his promised salary. He offended his patroness in 1526, by anticipating success for the arms of Bourbon, and probably still more by avowing his unwillingness to be employed in such a vain art as astrology; whence we perceive that the Skeptical period of his life had now set in. During the same year too, the work for which he is best known, and on which his character as a Skeptic is grounded, was written, though it remained for several years unpublished. A slight gleam of prosperity shines on his path in 1529, after his removal to Antwerp; but Nemesis is as usual on the watch, and prepared to exact severe retribution for the transient smile of Fortune. His wife dies suddenly of the plague, leaving him with the care of another family of small children. Agrippa remains at Antwerp for the next three years as imperial, though unpaid, historiographer, and, in consequence of the latter characteristic of his office, found himself imprisoned for debt. Being set free by the kind offices of friends, he removes in 1532 to Mechlin, and for the third time in his life marries. On this occasion his previous success—the sole good fortune of his life—deserted him. The woman proved unfaithful,¹ and three years after he procured a divorce from her. The climax of his misfortunes in other respects was reached by his publication in 1530 of his treatise 'De Vanitate.' The anger and fanaticism of the monks were thoroughly aroused by the plainness of speech with which Agrippa unveiled the corruptions of the Church; and the brief remainder of his life was an unavailing struggle against religious bigotry and persecution. The Emperor himself, whom

story is also told by Agrippa in his *De Vanitate*, cap. xcvi. 'De Arte Inquisitorum.'

¹ See note below, p. 499, and comp. Morley, ii. p. 285.

nature designed for a monk but destiny elevated to a throne, refused to pay the arrears of his historiographer's salary, and threatened Agrippa's life. He was therefore compelled to flee into France. But his asylum became a prison, for here again he was immured for a short time because he expressed himself too plainly with regard to the queen-mother's injustice to himself. When he was once more set free, he wandered, a heart-broken exile from his country and from his family of helpless children, to Grenoble, where he died at the early age of forty-nine years, and where, by a final and culminating stroke of his malicious fortune, he was buried in a convent of his old enemies, the Dominicans, A.D. 1535.

Such was Agrippa's storm-beaten and short-lived existence. There seems a cruel irony in attributing supernatural powers, even of a diabolical kind, to a man whose own lot was so wretched and joyless,¹ and whose career was nothing else but a succession of crosses and misfortunes. One legend of his magical powers tells how he was wont to pay his creditors with coin which appeared to be genuine, but which soon proved to be pieces of wood or leather. On which Bayle well remarks, that if he had such a power we should not have those frequent apprehensions of want which occur in his letters. There is more dramatic propriety in the myths relating to Faust, who, notwithstanding his tragical end, takes his fill for the time being of every earthly enjoyment which he covets. But Agrippa's existence was not moulded by the imagination of popular legend—it was a stern and bitter reality. Passing now to what more immediately concerns us, Agrippa's intellectual career, like that of several of his brother Sceptics, is roughly divisible into two sections. For nearly the first thirty-five to forty years of his life he was engaged in accumulating convictions. He read the writings of the ancients, especially those of a mystical tendency, pursued his inquiries into natural science, experimented in optics, made observations in astronomy, commented orally and in writing on the works of philosophers, and, in his character of knight, experimented in fireworks, and devised sundry machines for warlike purposes. During this period most of his works were written. It might be called the constructive or dogmatic portion of his life. The last ten years, on the other hand, are marked by disappointment, weariness, and unbelief. The older convictions of his life are passing away,² or rather they have in reality disappeared. He

¹ Moreri well remarks: 'Sa pauvreté, sa misère, et sa conduite font assez voir qu'il n'étoit pas grand sorcier.'—*Dict. Historique*, art. 'Agrippa.'

² Comp. the letter written in 1526, p. 327, vol. ii. of his collected works.

doubts and questions everything, including the most elementary and generally accredited truths. The magician has become a Skeptic, and the author, credulous enough, we might suppose, of the 'Three Books on Occult Philosophy,' has now the painful revelation dawning upon him that he has wasted his strength for nought, and leaves the world his intellectual will and testament in the form of his treatise 'On the Uncertainty and Vanity of Sciences and Arts.' By examining these periods as they are represented in his two best-known works, we shall be able, I think, to gain a fair idea of the nature and extent both of his dogmatism and of his unbelief, as well as to determine to which of his twofold characters of magician and Skeptic he has the stronger claim.

The most important of Agrippa's earlier writings are the three books on magic and occult philosophy. We have already seen that it was the product of his youthful studies, and, though written when he was only twenty-four years of age, was not published until the end of his life, when he accompanied the publication with a distinct disclaimer of belief in these crude speculations of his youth: quoting on this point the words, 'When I was a child I spake as a child, &c.; but when I became a man I put away childish things.' But the lisping of some children are worth more than the articulate utterances of some grown men. And Agrippa's treatise on magic, though representing only a transitory phase of his intellectual progress, is by no means devoid of interest in our day, when not a few children still continue to lisp with the imperfect accents of the boyish philosopher in the sixteenth century.

Under the term magic or occult philosophy was understood generally what we should now describe as natural science. It comprehended, as Agrippa says, 'the knowledge of the whole of nature.'¹ Our author commences his treatise by announcing its purport, which he does with equal modesty and piety. There is, he tells us, a threefold world—elementary, celestial, intellectual. He purposes to ascend through these stages to the highest stage of all, which is God—in the words of the poet, to ascend

From nature up to nature's God.

He deprecates harsh criticism on account of his youth, and, with the customary proviso of all secular investigators of the time, disclaims such sense and meaning to his various propositions as shall not be found on examination in harmony with the dogmas of the

¹ *De Occult. Philosoph.* p. 2.

Church. The commencement of the work carries us back through some 2,000 years of the world's history. We are listening to the Ionic philosophers of ancient Greece: again we have the division of nature into its four primary elements. Agrippa describes each of these, points out its secret virtues; e.g. earth, when purified by fire and reduced by requisite washing to extreme simplicity, is the 'first matter' of our creation, and the truest medicine that can restore or preserve us. Similarly water is the seminal virtue of all things, and air is a vital spirit passing through all things. Having thus laid down the properties of the simple elements, he proceeds to the consideration of the compounds which include the higher productions of nature. For example: in plants, the roots resemble the earth by reason of their thickness, and the leaves water because of their juice; flowers, the air, because of their subtle perfume; and seeds, the fires, on account of their multiplying spirit. The fourfold characteristics of the elements are in like manner traceable among animals, in whom the bones resemble the earth; the flesh, the air; the vital spirit, fire; the humours, water. Much of Agrippa's speculations on these subjects are derived from the Platonic and neo-Platonic philosophy, as they were understood in the sixteenth century, with illustrations taken from the Bible or classical authors; though there is a large admixture of the popular superstitions then current. Thus far Agrippa has only introduced his real subject, which is to investigate and determine the hidden virtues treasured up in the various products of nature. They are not produced, he tells us, by any element, but in every case are the resulting combinations of its species and form. The many marvels of nature supply him with forcible illustrations of latent virtue. As an instance, he adduces the hidden power in the stomach of the ostrich, which is said to be able to digest metals, and to which even red-hot iron is harmless! Were we to ask our magician the source whence these hidden virtues are derived, our answer would be a dissertation on Platonic ideas. Whatever exists on earth has its spiritual idea or counterpart in heaven. Thence it derives its secret virtue, which becomes operative by means of the soul of the world (*spiritus mundi*), that abstraction which exercised so great a fascination on the intellects of mediæval thinkers, and which we shall again meet in the speculations of Vanini and Hirnhaim. As the soul acts upon the human body, or as the soul of the universe produces all its varied movements and phenomena, so in every single object the concealed virtue or spirit makes it to be what it is, gives it its form and quality, and presents it before our human senses as the phenomenon

possessed of certain characteristics which those senses dimly inform us of.

These abstruse speculations, considering the age which gave them birth, do not appear to me either unnatural or extravagant. We may smile if we like at the conception of the soul of the world and the existence of some minute portion of that soul in all natural objects, inanimate as well as animate. But what other explanation at all likely to command assent could be given, *e.g.* to such phenomena as those presented by the loadstone? I have frequently asked myself, when reading this and similar works on mediæval science, what account I could have given of such phenomena had I lived some three centuries ago. The resemblance to some secret principle of life and volition is so great that in the imperfect knowledge then available the assertion of such a principle seems to me inevitable. We need not, therefore, be surprised to find it a stock instance in every mediæval investigation into occult qualities. This mundane spirit is diffused through all things, but in different proportions. It especially abounds in the heavenly bodies, and descends in the rays they pour down on the earth, assimilating the nature of the objects on which they fall to their own higher nature. By this spirit hidden properties are conveyed into herbs, stones, metals, and animals, so that here occult philosophy touches upon astrology and alchemy.

Were it possible to separate this spirit from the matter in which it lies concealed, or if we could use only those things in which spirit predominates, we might achieve important results. The object of alchemy is thus to extract and obtain the spirit of gold or silver, so that by its infusion into baser materials they also might be transmuted into those precious metals, just as, *e.g.* the nature of the loadstone can be imparted to iron. Of course such a notion seems now-a-days absurd enough, but we may well remember that in this and every other dim groping of humanity after truth it is still the human reason that is at work, though with crude methods and imperfect materials. Hence there is some small residuum of rationality even in these 'alchemical pranks.' There is 'method' in the apparent 'madness.' We have long since noticed the enormous influence on human thought and language which has been exercised by abstraction, and what a clear, well-defined, half-materializing conception philosophers of the Platonic school had assigned to abstract notions. The separability of such notions from the substances in which they were embedded and concealed was accepted as an axiomatic truth. Now alchemy and occult philosophy merely carried the method a step further; they

did nothing more than complete the materializing process. The spirit of gold, for example, that which gave it its distinctive quality—its *goldness*, so to speak—was supposed capable of being separated from its own matter and infused into other material substances, their ideas or spirits being similarly removed to make way for it.¹ To effect this was the climax of the alchemist's ambition, and, so far from there being anything in the science of the time to render it impossible, the highest knowledge then current pointed, as I have shown, to the practicability of such attempts. Moreover, all existing objects were then declared to be resolvable finally into a *materia prima*, mere abstract matter, or general potentiality of materialization; therefore there was no ultimate difference between the first matter of silver or gold and that of leather or wood. That Agrippa could pay his debts with pieces of the latter materials, to which he had magically imparted some portion of goldness or silverness, was, as we have seen, a popular legend concerning him, and this and similar stories of the magicians of the time were based, not upon the gross ignorance of the many, but upon the highest wisdom of the select few. But to resume: these infinitely varied ideas, which are the real causes of the variety of existing things, are taken charge of by ruling intelligences, who stamp everything with the mark of its own ideal virtue. By these spiritual agencies and intelligences it is that God works upon material objects; when He dispenses with these mediums, and acts directly upon matter, then we term the results miraculous.

We are next told how to discover the occult virtues of things: Firstly, like turns to like, and virtues come by way of similitude. Hence, if we want any particular property or virtue, we must look for it in those objects in which its presence is most marked. To promote love, for example, we must select animals that are most loving, as a dove or sparrow, and at a time when they have these affections most intensely.² 'To increase boldness, look for a lion or a cock, and take of these heart, eyes, forehead.

¹ Much information on this recondite matter may be found in an article on 'Alchemy' in vol. xiv. of the *Retrospective Review*. Compare, also, Ben Jonson's 'Alchymist,' which, to English readers, has become almost a classic on the subject. We may remember that such men as Gassendi, Kepler, Boyle, and Bacon (Lord) were believers in the possibility of transmuting other metals into gold.

² These quotations are taken from Prof. Morley's work, who himself quotes from an old English translation of the *Three Books of the Occult Philosophy*. By J. F. London 1651.

After the same manner doth a frog make one talkative, and the heart of a screech owl that is talkative of nights if laid over the heart of a woman when she is asleep will make her utter all her secrets. So animals that are long-lived conduce to life, as is manifest of the viper and snake. Moreover, the power of one thing may be transferred to another, as the power of loadstone to the iron. And the looking-glass used by a woman who is impudent will deprive of modesty another woman who looks often into it.' Thereupon follow examples equally conclusive of sympathies and antipathies among the different parts of creation, from the planets down to vegetables. Some of these occult powers operate only during life, others are equally effective after death. 'It is only when alive that the Echinus can arrest the course of ships.¹ They say also that in the colic if a live duck be applied to the stomach it takes away the pain and the duck dies. Generally parts of animals that are used should be taken from the animal while it still lives, and is in fullest vigour. The right eye of a serpent being applied relieves watering of the eyes, if the serpent be let go alive.' And the tooth of a mole will be a cure for toothache, if it was taken from a living mole, who was allowed to run away after the operation. Some properties remain after death attached to things in which some part of the idea remains. So it is that herbs when dried retain their virtue, and the skin of a wolf corrodes the skin of a lamb, and acts upon it not only by contact of substance, for the drum made of a skin of a wolf will cause that a drum made of a lamb's skin shall not sound.

Next follow thirteen chapters on the influences of the heavenly bodies. By the planets under which men have been born are determined their characters. Their trades are also to be classed under celestial signs, as old men and monks under Saturn ; barbers, surgeons, executioners, and butchers, under Mars. Moreover, all terrestrial beings, animate or inanimate, possess each its own particular planet, the inferior in every instance being ruled by its

¹ This superstition dates from classical times. Cf. Lucan, *Phars.* vi. 673 :—

'Non puppim retinens, Euro tendente rudentes
In mediis echineis aquis.'

In old English plays the name of the fish is 'Remora.' So, in 'the City Match' (1639), we have these lines :—

'We show no monstrous crocodile,
Nor any prodigy of Nile,
No Remora that stops your fleet.'

Hazlitt's *Dodsley*, vol. xiii.

own superior. Nor is it only planets that exercise influence. The signs of the zodiac and the fixed stars are also potent agencies. We know by experience, says Agrippa—unluckily he does not tell the kind of *experience*—that asparagus is under Aries, and garden basil under Scorpio, for of the shavings of rams' horns sown comes forth asparagus, and garden basil rubbed between two stones produceth scorpions.

Skipping a number of chapters on the influence of the heavenly bodies—for my object is to give you a general notion only of this remarkable book—we come to auguries, and are told that a flying bird alighting on the right-hand side is a good sign, but on the left-hand side it is an evil sign. The cry or song of a bird as well as its flight is to be regarded as a prognostic. Swallows, because when dying they provide a place of safety for their young, portend a great legacy from the death of friends. A sparrow is a bad omen to one that runs away, for she flies from the hawk and hastes to the owl where she is in as great danger. Meeting of monks is an ill omen, especially in the morning, because this sort of people live mostly by the sudden death of men, as vultures do by slaughter.

The influence of the mind over the body is a branch of science—occult now as it was then—which affords Agrippa room for expatiating. Some of the marvels adduced under this head are still to be found as actual facts in contemporary works on mental physiology—Dr. Carpenter's, for instance. A singularly startling illustration of this class of prodigies is mentioned by Agrippa. 'Cyppus, after he was chosen king of Italy, dwelt for a whole night upon the vivid recollection and enjoyment of a bull-fight, and in the morning was found horned, no otherwise than by the vegetative power being stirred up by a vehement imagination, elevating corniferous humours into his head'¹—a description which might stand as a typical illustration of M. Comte's metaphysical stage of human science. It will help us to understand why these marvels of occult philosophy were received in that age with such implicit faith, and at the same time serve to account for the success which in some cases doubtless attended the magician's advice and prescriptions, when we learn that hidden virtues can act strongly only by help of a strong faith. This faith is needful for the magician as well as for his patient, for whoever works in magic must always have strong belief, he must be credulous, and nothing doubting. Distrust and doubt dissipate and break the power of the worker's mind,

¹ This example of the power of imagination is also adduced by Vanini, *Dialogues*, p. 439, quoting, apparently, from Agrippa.

whence it comes that he is frustrated of the desired influence of the superiors.¹

Agrippa dwells at some length on the hidden wisdom contained in the Hebrew language, the letters of which are most sacred in substance, form, and spirit. The great teachers of the Jews divide their alphabet into twelve simple letters, seven double, and three mothers, which they say signify as characters of things the twelve signs, seven planets, and three elements, for they account air no element but as the glue and spirit of the rest. If you care to see how systematically the rudiments of this cabalistic lore were arranged by Agrippa and his brother magicians, you may glance at those abstruse-looking tables at the end of the first volume of his collected works.

That the Hebrew letters with their supposed sacred origin and associations should be regarded by Christians of that age with superstitious veneration is not very wonderful. But our magician, treading in the steps of Pythagoras, finds just as many wonders and marvels in the sciences of number and measurement, arithmetic and geometry. Every number in the former, and almost every figure in the latter, is represented as replete with significance and mystery. If, says Agrippa, there are so many occult virtues in natural things, what marvel if in numbers, which are pure and commixed only with ideas in the Divine mind, there should be found virtues greater and more occult? Time contains number. So does motion or action; so, therefore, must all things that move, act, or are subjected to time. The power of numbers has not only been asserted by the best philosophers, but it is also asserted in nature. For the herb cinquefoil resists poison and bans devils by the virtue of its number five. And the seventh son of parents who have not had daughters is able to cure king's-evil by word or by touch. The mystery of numbers is also declared by St. John in the Apocalypse: 'He that hath understanding let him compute the number and name of the beast.' Of his chapters on numbers we may select one as an example of Agrippa's teaching. Let us take, *e.g.* the number three. This, we are told, is a holy, powerful, uncompounded number of perfection. It is the number of the Trinity. Three comprehends all time, past, present, and future; all space, length, breadth, and thickness. There are three states of existence for a man—under nature, law, and grace; three heavenly virtues—faith, hope, and charity; three worlds—intellectual, celestial, and elemental, and in man, the lesser world,

¹ Morley, i. p. 158.

three parts which correspond to them—brain to the intellectual, heart to the celestial, and the viler parts to the elemental. Further on, of the number eleven it is said among other things, eleven is not sacred, but twelve is divine. Eleven exceeds the number of the commandments, and falls short of twelve, which is of grace or perfection. Yet sometimes it hath from God a gratuitous favour, as in the case of him who was called to the vineyard at the eleventh hour. At first sight these and similar speculations which Agrippa pursues through nearly half of his second book appear fantastic and capricious enough, but here as elsewhere there is a dim recognition of law, order, and immutability underlying these wild extravagances. So he says : ‘ The Most High created all things by number, measure, and weight ; and nothing that was done was accidental, but all was by a certain Divine law. Hence let no one marvel at these mysteries.’

Geometry as well as arithmetic has its secret lore. Thus a pentangle hath great command over evil spirits through the power of the number five, and through the mystery of its double set of angles, inner and outer. The figure of the cross also hath great correspondence with the most potent numbers five, seven, and nine. It is also the rightest figure of all, having four right angles. Passing over theories of a similar kind in relation to music, the harmony of the spheres, the signs of the zodiac, divination by lot, &c. we arrive at one root-thought, not only of Agrippa’s, but of all systems of theosophy and occult science. This is the doctrine of the *spiritus mundi*¹ or soul of the world, which we have already incidentally touched upon. Agrippa tells us that the doctrine has been held by poets and philosophers, and is confirmed by reason. The world has a soul and also a spirit ; for it would be absurd to assume life in parts of the world, as flies and worms, and to deny life and soul to the entire world as a most perfect and noble body ; or to say that heavens, stars, elements, give life and soul to things below, yet themselves have not that which they give. The soul of the world and the celestial souls partake of the Divine reason ; the soul of the world is therefore a certain single vitality, filling all things, bestowing all things, binding and joining together all things, that it might make one frame of the world, and that it might be as it were one instrument, making of many strings one music, sounding

¹ The doctrine of the soul of the world is first found in a well-developed form in Plato’s *Timaios*, but it probably formed part of the mystic lore of the ancient mysteries. Cf. Jowett’s *Introd. to Timaios, Plato*, ii. p. 511, Edition 1, and Martin, *Études sur le Timée*, i. p. 346, &c.

from three kinds of creatures, intellectual, celestial, and elementary, with one only breath and life.¹

This brief sketch will suffice, I think, to give you a fair notion of what we must regard as the systematic convictions of the earlier part of Agrippa's life. For us they possess a twofold importance. They not only represent the nature of that curious mental conglomerate, on which the solvent power of Skepticism was subsequently brought to bear, but they show us the character and methods of the natural science of that period. As we have seen, it was a miscellaneous collection of materials which we should call heterogeneous, but which in an age so deficient in philosophical and scientific discrimination were no doubt homogeneous enough. These were derived from sources and authorities of the most diverse kind. The main ideas were drawn from Plato and his ultra-Platonic successors, but intermingled with their mysticism we find the fantastic dreams of alchemists and astrologers, the reveries of Jewish cabalists, the doctrines of the Church, the secret teachings of theosophists and Rosicrucians, the grotesque imagination of popular ignorance and religious superstition—the whole massed together in a wild and reckless fashion, with little regard to uniformity of design, coherence of materials, or stability of construction. Agrippa's occult philosophy represents indeed in some respects not only the dogmatic system of himself and other natural inquirers in the sixteenth century, but the intellectual processes and conclusions of uncivilized and partly civilized races in every period of the world's history. Echoes of it, gradually growing fainter, but still distinct enough for identification, may even be found in remote villages of our England of to-day, where the ideas, charms, and specifics of Agrippa's occult science still exist. So that the philosopher's abstruse and esoteric teaching of three centuries ago has become the 'folk-lore' of the present day, just as the feudal baron's luxuries, and much more than his

¹ This passage in the collected works (i. p. 241) is as follows: 'Est itaque anima mundi vita quædam unica, omnia replens, omnia perfundens, omnia colligans et connectens, ut unam reddat totius mundi machinam, sitque velut unum monochordum ex tribus generibus creaturarum, intellectuali, cælesti et corruptibili reboans, unico statu tantummodo et unica vita.' In the text, however, Prof. Morley's version has been adhered to, as rendered from earlier editions of *O. P.*, except that 'elementary' has been adopted as a translation of 'corruptibili' (instead of Prof. Morley's obvious mistake of 'incorruptible'). Agrippa clearly refers to the threefold division of beings with which he begins his work. On the other hand, the word 'statu,' in the last clause, ought to be 'flatu,' which is the reading of the earlier copies, and adopted by Prof. Morley.

cultivation, are now the property of the poorest artizan or daily labourer.

There are many works which might be called, with reference to their authors, 'The Philosopher or Thinker in Motley.' Their first aspect impresses us with the strangeness or quaintness of the disguise, the difficulty of penetrating it so as to discover the living features hidden beneath. Agrippa's 'Occult Philosophy' is a work of this kind; literally, it is philosophy which is occult, truth-seeking in masquerade. Read it cursorily, and your perpetual comment will be, How very silly! but examine it a little more closely, regard it especially by the light, not of any one particular school of thought, but of the general effort of mankind to attain truth and wisdom—take for a moment the standpoint of philosophical catholicity, and you begin to detect the prince in beggar's attire; in other words, you discern beneath these rags and tatters culled indifferently from the sacred vestments of priests, the cloaks of philosophers, and the refuse heaps of popular superstition, the genuine inquirer, the restless searcher after truth, the veritable philosopher or lover of wisdom.

This indeed forms the connecting link between the first and second period of Agrippa's life, the common characteristic of the magician and the Skeptic. Both alike inquire; both have recourse to all human oracles past or present; both gather indefatigably every fact and every datum which seems likely, like the oyster the pearl, to contain that of which they are in search: the main difference being that one amasses with the indiscriminating haste and eagerness of youth every object which attracts his notice; the other, grown wiser and more cautious by sad experience, examines for the most part only to reject. Whereupon ultimately his hoarded treasure disappears; for, like the man in the Gospel, his final resolution, as we shall find, is to sell all that he hath in order to possess one 'pearl of great price.'

But before passing to Agrippa's Skepticism, there is a point of his 'Occult Philosophy' which deserves our notice, as it throws a considerable light on his character, and that is, the secret he intended it to conceal. For his work is not, as a careless reader might suppose, a haphazard collection of all the views and opinions then current upon magic and other cognate subjects. There is a special and well-defined object at which the author aims. In fact, the weird and quaint contents of the treatise serve to disguise not only the writer but the doctrine. There is a Holy of Holies beyond the outer court into which only the high-priest and a few chosen illuminati dare penetrate. Agrippa's early studies of the

theosophies of his time made him acquainted with the characteristic they possessed in common with the old Greek mysteries—a final, dread, unutterable secret, which external ceremonies and formal expositions were intended to protect from vulgar gaze and profanation. Agrippa's secret, it is true, is not unutterable; he reveals it, but with the conviction that it will be comprehended only by the initiated. Those who know our magician only by his popular fame as a dealer in diabolical arts, the possessor of a 'Stygian pug,' will, I think, be surprised to learn what his profound secret is. Their thoughts will perhaps revert to the blood-signed compact with infernal powers which forms such a conspicuous feature of the Faust-myths. This is the secret most appropriate to a magician and sorcerer, but it is not Agrippa's. The object of his occult teaching and of the fervent yearning of his soul¹ is the treasured aspiration of all mystics—union with God. This is the penetralia of the grotesque and multiform temple he erected with so much labour. Recognising the essentially Divine nature of the human reason, and its similarity in kind to the highest reason of the universe, Agrippa purposes to rise by contemplation of the works of nature, and appropriation of their hidden qualities, to a mystical junction and identity with their great author. Hence, if he was a magician, it was the white² or mystic magic which he professed, and he might have taken to himself the verse of Molière—

Tout ce que je sais, n'est que blanche magie.³

This is the league which he would fain have made, the compact to which he was an eager party, and to seal which he might be said to have given his life's blood. His aspiration is heavenward

¹ 'Hæc est illa vera et summa mirabilium operum occultissima Philosophia. Clavis ejus Intellectus est quanto enim altiora intelligimus, tanto sublimiores induimus virtutes, tantoque majora et facilius et efficacius operamur. . . .' Speaking further of the means by which this intellectual exaltation is to be attained, Agrippa continues in the genuinely mystical vein: 'Mori enim oportet, mori inquam, mundo et carni, ac sensibus omnibus, ac toti homini animali qui velit ad hæc secretorum penetralia ingredi, non quod corpus separetur ab anima, sed quod anima relinquat corpus, de qua morte Paulus scribit Colossensibus,' &c. (*Opera omnia*, ii. p. 908). The whole letter is well worth reading. Comp. vol. i. pp. 248, 249. See, also, Prof. Morley's work, i. 186, 187, ii. 232.

² On white magic see Naudé, *Apologie pour des grands hommes*, &c., pp. 22, 23, who thus defines it: 'Laquelle sous couleur de religion commande les jeusnes et abstinences, la piété, pureté, candeur et intégrité de vie, afin que l'âme qui veut avoir communication avec les Deitez supérieures ne soit en rien empêchée par son corps polu et contaminé.'

³ Molière, *L'Étourdi*.

not hellward, and the covenant he would make is not with Satan but with God.

But it is time to turn to the later aspect of Agrippa's character, *i.e.* his thoroughgoing Skepticism. Though contrasting greatly with his former position, there is no such complete opposition between them that the first might not by a gradation of phases shade off into the second. In the mystical portion of his life there is no doubt an unquestioning reliance on human sciences, while in the Skeptical portion all these means are expressly distrusted. Still, in both cases the highest Divine knowledge was regarded as in some measure the result of immediate intuition; the main difference between the two being that the teachings of Christ supply in his Skepticism the place which human sciences occupied in his mysticism.

The first clear intimation of a change in Agrippa's views is contained in his letters to his friends, in which he complains bitterly of being compelled by the ignorance of his patrons to employ the vain arts of astrology and divination. His book 'De Vanitate' was not written until 1526, when he was forty years of age, but it can hardly be doubted that its contents had been revolved in his mind for some years previously. Reading his past life by the reflected light of his latest work, the change represented by it is absolutely unavoidable. Whatever satisfaction he found in accumulating the multifarious data of the 'Occult Philosophy,' or feeding the flame of his devout aspiration by their subtle influences, it is quite impossible that either the satisfaction or the mystic glow could have been of long duration. There must under any circumstances have come a time when the intellect would revolt against the crude fantasies of the imagination, and when the hearsay evidence derived from the ignorant and superstitious would be replaced by decisive experiments of his own. But whatever the mental process, the result is undoubted. In his fortieth year he wrote, and four years after published, his 'De Vanitate,' in which he assails every part of human wisdom, and proclaims to the world his mature conviction that 'to know nothing is the happiest life.'

This work commences with an address to the reader, in which Agrippa with mingled humour and sarcasm anticipates the tumult he is about to create by running a-tilt against all human sciences, interests, and occupations. 'I well perceive,' he says (I quote from Sanford's very quaint though not always accurate translation), 'what a blouddy battaile I have to fighte and how daungerous this fighte will bee, seeinge that I am beset on every side with an armie of so mightie enemies. O with how many ingins will they

assaile me, and with howe many shames and vilanies will they lode mee. First of all, the loowsie grammarians will make a stirre, and with their etymologies uppon Agrippa,¹ will geve mee a goutie name.' Together with the *pediculose* grammarians will be joined, he thinks, 'peevishe poets, trifle-selling historiographers, blustering oratours, obstinate logitioners, longe-tongued sophisters. The barbarous Lullist,' continues the quondam admirer of and commentator on 'Raymund Lull, 'with unfittinge woordes and solesismes will bringe my head in a maze; the fatal astrologers wil threaten me to be hanged, and with the unstable turninge of the heavens wil forbidde me Paradise. . . . The monstrous magitiens wil transforme mee as it were another Apuleius or Lucian into an asse; the contentious philosophers wil teare mee in peeces with most repugnant opinions; the morall philosophers, correcters of manners, wil write mee in a hundred fables; the brainlesse people wil exclaime on mee in the streates;' and so on through several pages of ill-omened anticipations. For once in his life our magician was undoubtedly correct in his predictions. Had he only been able to cast the horoscope of his own general fortunes or those of his patrons so accurately as he divined the prospects of his latest work, much of the evil of his life might have been averted. Coming to his introduction, he adduces authorities for his general argument that all knowledge is mischievous: 'Adam had never been banished out of the Paradise of blessednesse, if he had not learned of his maister the serpent to knowe good and ill. Socrates after that he had found out wel neare al learnings, was then judged by the oracle of all men the wisest, when openly he confessed to knowe nothinge.' Whence he concludes, 'Nothinge can chaunce into man more pestilente than knowledge. This is the very pestilence that putteth all mankinde to ruine, the whiche chaseth away al innocencie, &c.; moreover, al sciences are nothinge els but the ordinances and opinions of men, so noysome as profitable, so pestilent as holsome, so ill as good, in no parte perfecte, but doubtful, and full of errorr and contention; and that this is true we will nowe declare it.'

Whereupon Agrippa takes the sciences one by one. He begins with the letters of the alphabet, which, though 'onely doores to sciences, oftentimes they bringe with them no lesse pestilence then pleasure, in the whiche there is no other rule of the trueth than the decrees and will of some that did first teache.' Of these 'beginnings so unconstant, and at everie season so mutable, did grammar

¹ Agrippa is generally derived from *Ægris pedibus*.

firste proceede. . . . This grammer dothe boaste herselfe to be the arte of speakeinge but falsly, sithe that we learne it much better of oure mothers and of nourises than of the Grammarians.' The divisions prevailing among the latter are pointed out, of whom there are as many grammars as grammarians. Agrippa is very severe on poets and poetry, against which he quotes the strictures of antiquity: 'Worthely, therefore, Democritus termeth this no Arte but a madnesse, and the opinion of Plato is that he that is wel in his wittes knocketh in vaine at the doore of Poetrie. Then Poetes write marvellous things when they are mad or droncke. For this cause Augustine calleth Poetrie the wine of errour, ministred by drunken Doctours.' History consists largely of 'trimme trifles and monstrous lyes. Rhetorick dothe allure the mindes of the simple and leadeth them into the Poyson of Errour, seeking to subverte the sense of the truthe.' The aim of sophistry is 'either to make the Truthe obscure or utterly to loose it.' The puritanical element in Agrippa's character is shown, *inter alia*, by his virulent invective against Church music. 'The Divine Service is sung not for the understandinge of the hearers, but for the stirring up of the minde with beastely squeaking, while the children bray the discante, some bellow the tenoure, some bark the counterpoynte, some howle the treble,' &c.—an anathema as coarsely vigorous as any ever hurled by John Knox against a 'kist o' whistles.' The sciences of arithmetic and geometry are included with all the rest as labouring under the common diseases of 'uncertaintie and vanitie.' As an illustration of Agrippa's somewhat grim humour and his feeling towards the monks, I must cull an extract from his chapter 'Of the Arte of Graving and Moulding.' He has been speaking as usual of the 'vanitie of the Arte,' and continues: 'Notwithstandinge I learned in time paste in Italie that there was in Pictures and Images an authoritie greatly to be esteemed; for whereas, there was an obstinate strife betweene the Augustine Freeres, and the vulgar Chanons before the Pope, concerning the habite or apparel of St. Augustine; that is to saie, whether he did weare a blacke weede upon a white coate, or a white weede upon a blacke coate. And findinge nothinge in the Scriptures, whiche made to the ending of this strife, the Romaine Judges thought good to preferre the whole matter to Painters and Image Makers, and that which they coude avouche out of Auncient Pictures and Images, should be holden for a Definitive sentence. I beyng grounded upon this example, when sometime with exceedinge great diligence I searched for the originall of the Freers Coule, and could finde nothinge for that matter in the Scriptures, at

length I wente me to the painters, and for this thinge I sought in the cloisters and in the celles of the Freers where for the moste parte the histories of bothe Testamentes are painted. . . . I saw in no place a Freer's coule, and again diligently examininge every thinge from the beginninge, immediately in the foreparte of the Historie, the Diuel was painted with a Cowle, to wite, he whiche wente to tempte Christe in the Deserte. I rejoiced exceedingly, that I had founde that in the pictures, whiche untill that time I coule not see in writinge: that is to saie, that the Diuel was the first authuor of the Cowle, of whom afterwarde I suppose that other monkes and Freers tooke up the facion under divers colours, or perhaps have retained it, as a thinge lefte to them by inheritance.' But the extent of Agrippa's Skepticism may perhaps be best apprehended by considering his treatment of astrology, alchemy, magic, and kindred sciences; for these are subjects on which he had expended a large amount of study, and on which he had lectured before learned audiences. Here, therefore, we might have anticipated a little more leniency. But no! of all human sciences these are the most false, or, as he has put it, of all human nesciences these are the most pronounced and conspicuous. Bitterly and repeatedly does he bewail the time he has wasted on them. No abjuration or retractation was ever more unreserved. Indeed, his extreme candour in reviewing his past studies borders on cynicism. Thus he tells us of his work on geomancy: 'I have written also a certaine booke of geomancie, farre differinge from others, but no lesse superstitious, false, or if you liste I will saie lieinge.' Still more explicitly he recounts his experience of astrology: 'I also beinge a boye learned this arte of my Father, afterward I loste muche time and laboure therein: At length I learned that wholly and altogeather it was builte upon no other foundation but upon meere trifles and fayninges of imaginations: and I am not onely sorie, but also doo repente me of my bestowed laboure, and I desired to rase out the remembraunce and use thereof, and it is longe since that I did renounce it, and woulde never have taken the same in hande againe, had not the importunate prayers of noble parsonages (whiche are wonte oftentimes to abuse passinge good wittes in doinge many unwoorthie actes) oftentimes enforced me eftsoones to take it in hand. And my peculiare profite persuaded me sometimes to availe myselfe by their folie, and please them in their trifles that so muche desired trifles, and I call them trifles because that astrologie hath nothinge els but meere trifles, poetes fables, and monstrous fayninges, with which they have imagined that the Heaven is abundantly replenished.' In reading

this very ingenuous confession it is only fair to Agrippa to remember that he openly dissuaded his patrons from endeavouring by this means to pry into the secrets of the future, and was met by the request to declare what the voices of the stars said, and not to pronounce on their truth or falsehood. Of judicial astrology he remarks: 'This Arte is nothing els but a false conjecture of superstitious parsons, which thorow long practise, have made a science of things uncertaine.' In estimating the occasional success of astrological predictions Agrippa manifests a degree of common-sense which was then probably unusual. 'If perchaunce fortune doo agree with their prognostications, that emonge so many doubtfull matters there shall some truthe or other fall out, it is a marvaile to see how they lifte up their combes and how proudly they avaunte thereof.'¹ With regard to magic there seems a slight hesitation in Agrippa's tone, and his condemnation of it is not so absolute. He cannot deny that it has authority, both in the Bible and in natural phenomena which are clearly occult. Still he conceives that its range should be greatly narrowed, and sums up with the verdict that 'Natural Magicke sometimes enclineth to Geocie, and Theurgy,' and 'oftentimes it is entangled in the craftes and errours of the Devils of hell.' The Jewish Cabala was, as we have seen, another subject, which had in former years engaged Agrippa's attention, and on which he had lectured, taking as his text-book Reuchlin's 'Mirific word.' Now, however, he is persuaded that it is 'nothinge els but a certaine moste pestilent superstition, wherewith at their wil they doo gather, devide, and transpose the woordes, names, and letters, dispersed in the Scripture, and makeinge one of another doo unbinde the members of the truth.' If Agrippa's criticism is thus unsparing in the case of his own once-cherished convictions, we cannot expect much deference for the opinions and systems of other thinkers. He inveighs against the conflicting views of philosophers in the Skeptical vein of Sextos Empeirikos himself. For 'although philosophie disputeth and

¹ Among other examples of the inability of the stars to reveal the personal lot of the star-gazer, Agrippa quotes an epigram of Sir Thomas More, on the untrustworthiness of such stellar deities as Jove, Mars, Venus, in cases where their own sympathies might be supposed to be involved, *e.g.* when the astrologer's wife was unfaithful. Little did Agrippa suppose, in quoting the epigram, he was describing his own destined lot, for Rabelais ridicules him, in his character of Herr Trippa, as too intent on the stars to see patent proofs of his own dishonour, but with obvious unfairness, inasmuch as Agrippa had totally renounced astrology, and all cognate sciences, long before he married his third and only unfaithful wife. *Comp. De Vanitate*, chap. xxxi., and Rabelais, *Œuv.* iii. ch. xxv.

judgeth of all things yet shée is certaine of nothings.' He doubts whether philosophers are to be classed 'emonge beastes, or emonge menne;' for 'how shall they be accompted menne, whose reason cannot persuade them no constant and certaine thinge, but doth alwayes waver in mutable opinions, whose understandinge, doubtful at every matter, knoweth not what it shoulde hold or folowe, and that this is true we will nowe at large declare.' Whereupon he discusses at some length the variety of opinions which have prevailed among philosophers with regard to the number and duration of worlds, the nature and origin of the soul, the different parts of the 'metaphisickes or thinges supernaturall.' Moral philosophy has, according to Agrippa, principles as wavering and unstable as any other kind, . . . morality being dependent on 'divers use, custome, observation, and practise of common life, and is mutable according to the opinions of times, places, and menne. . . . whereof it cometh to pass, that, the whiche at one time was vice, another time is accompted vertue; and that whiche in one place is vertue, in another is vice.' Apropos of this argument, Agrippa remarks on the different manners and customs of races and nations as thus: 'The Italians have alwaies bene glorious in princely nobilitie; the Frenchmen fooles; the Sicilians sharpe witted; the Asians luxurious; the Spaniards bee preferred before others. in prowde boldnesse of bragginge. Every nation hath a particular difference of his manners given him from above, by the which the one is easily knowen from the other.' This fertile topic Agrippa elaborates at some length in a series of contrasts between Italians, Spaniards, French, and Germans; *e.g.* 'Wee knowe, moreover, that the Italians doo bleate in their singing, the Spaniardes doo waile, the Germanes doo howle, and the Frenchmenne singe with pleasaunte tune and accente. The Italians be grave in their talke, but craftie; the Spaniardes fine but glorious (*i.e.* boastful); the Frenchmen ready but proude; the Germans unpleasaunt but simple.' He lastly compares the various dicta of philosophers on the subject of ethics with the teaching of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount, and concludes a remarkable chapter thus: 'All morall philosophie is false and vaine, not instructinge to the offices of justice, neither confirming the dutie and counsailes of man. Finally it is altogether repugnant to Goddes lawe, and to Christe Himselfe, that the glory thereof is due to none other than to Sathan.'

But if all departments of human science are thus incurably afflicted with uncertainty, the arts and occupations of men are similarly vitiated by vanity and falsehood. From the Court downward all sections of society, according to Agrippa, are honey-

combed by vice and insincerity. 'A Court, for example, is nothing else but a college of giants, an assembly of noble men and famous knaves; a theatre of most wicked waiters, a school of very corrupt customs, and a refuge of detestable wickedness. Trade, is nothing else but lies, dissimulation, clouds of words, deceits, and open treason. *Treasurership*, i.e. Financial ministers, agents, and brokers, are a certain thevish kind of men—rich through the fingers only, which they have so clammy like bird-lime, and beset with infinite crooked hooks, that all money how light soever it be fleeting, and sliding, and slippery like adders and eels touched of these doth stick fast, nor can easily be taken away. Hunting and fowling are detestable arts, and unhappy strifes with many labours and watches to fight and exercise tyranny against beasts. The art of war is nothing else but a common slaughter and sport of many—soldiers being nothing else than hired thieves.' Nobility, admits our nobleman, has in every case 'had a naughty beginning,' and its qualifications, as then understood, he summarises in these caustic terms. 'Finally, the sufficiency of all gentlemen is herein declared: if they can hunt, if they have been damnably taught in disingenuity, if they shew the strength of their body with great quaffing, if they spend frankly and lustily, if they given to pride, to excess, and to all intemperance, and enemies of virtues, do forget that they were borne and that they shall dye. But they be much more noble if this wickedness shall descende from the Fathers to the children, and enter into them with greater authority.' Moreover, the ill qualities of 'nobility' are further shown by the analogy of nature, 'for among birds and fourfooted beasts, none else have the Prerogative of Nobility but such as are not so envious (i.e. enviable or desirable), as hurtful unto other living creatures and to men themselves: as Eagles, Vultures, Falcons, Hawkes, Ravens, Kites, Ostriches,' &c. So 'of trees there have been few or none accounted noble and dedicated to the heathen gods, but they which have been either barren or bring forth no fruit for men to eat.' Physic, of which Agrippa is also able to speak from experience, he describes as 'a certain Arte of Manslaughter, altogether servile . . . for that oftentimes and well near alwaies there is more danger in the Physician and the Medicine than in the sickness itself.' His own medical practice consisted mainly in recommending simples, and he is severe on those who administer compound medicines, 'which with their monstrous confections make melancholy of our infirmities, and cast lots for our life.' Our Sceptic is not a whit more lenient to law and lawyers than to other professions and callings. Law is

'altogether made of nothinge els but of fraile and very weak inventions and opinions of men, which things be of all others the weakest, and is altered at everye chaunge of time of the State and of the Prince, whiche tooke firste beginninge of the sinne of our firste parent ;' and he concludes with the opinion that 'Law and Justice dothe not so much depend upon the Lawes as upon the honestie and equitie of the Judge.'

You will now, I think, be able to judge of the spirit of the 'De Vanitate,' and the extent of its author's Skepticism. Some writers seem to regard it as the hasty utterance of a disappointed man, whose spirit was soured by the misfortunes and calamities of life. Agrippa was the Koheleth, they think, of the sixteenth century, and his treatise a long sermon on the text 'Vanity of vanities.' No doubt there is much of this feeling in his work. It is partly shown by the sweeping nature of his attacks, for it is not only human science but humanity itself that comes under his lash. He seems to regard all possible sources of human happiness with a cold, austere, half-puritanical glance. He takes umbrage not merely at the undoubted immorality and insincerity of his own time, but at the occupations and pleasures of men of every time. Like Timon of Athens, his final resolve would seem to be—

Henceforth hated be
Of Timon, man, and all humanity !

The same truth is also borne witness to by his style, which is characterized by moroseness and biting acerbity, such as only the bitter misfortunes of a life like his could possibly justify. But while I fully concede the existence of this misanthropic feeling, as well as its influence on the tone and language of his work, it seems to me to betray a feeling of even greater intensity, *i.e.* intellectual discontent arising from intellectual causes. The misanthrope is also the profound Skeptic. Not merely is every knowledge vanity because it is unsatisfying, and leaves those who have panted for it with lips more parched and yearning more passionate than before, but because it is *incapable of demonstrative proof*. Here, therefore, we no longer have the disappointed man, but the thwarted and frustrated scholar, the impetuous and eager searcher after truth who has loaded his wallet with what he thought were precious stones, but discovers after his weary labour that they are nothing but common pebbles. Underneath the feeling of a Koheleth or Indian Buddhist dissatisfied with existence we have the method of the Greek Skeptic, ruthlessly dissecting the different kinds of human knowledge, and unveiling the pretentious hollow-

ness underlying each. In point of fact, the 'De Vanitate' may be summarily described by calling it a compound of the Book of Ecclesiastes and the works of Sextos Empeirikos.

Not that Agrippa was an openly avowed Pyrrhonist, or that his Skepticism was in origin or application purely philosophical; it was rather the weapon by which he sought to destroy all human beliefs in favour of genuine Christianity—the bridge by which he crossed from occult philosophy and Scholasticism to an unavowed but distinct Protestantism. The single reservation he made of all human arts and sciences—the sole exception to the vanity of the one and uncertainty of the other, was the Word of God. Here, therefore, we enter upon a peculiar phase in the history of Skepticism, or rather upon a particular application of Academic Skepticism, or the *Skepticism of Method*. This we shall find to be the prevailing form of scientific unbelief with the Skeptics still left on our list. They employ it as a general does heavy artillery on a battle-field, to clear the ground for the advance of their own forces. We shall have occasion by-and-by to consider this aspect of modern Skepticism when we come to Descartes, its most celebrated exponent. Meanwhile, I may point out that in the time of Agrippa it was the ordinary dialectical weapon of the age. Henry Stephen, the translator of the 'Hypotyposes' of Sextos, had employed it in the interests of humanism and culture, and to show his preference for Skeptical indolence as compared with dogmatic arrogance. Picus Mirandula had used it to overthrow Peripateticism, and so to make room for his own Plato-worship. Pomponazzi adopted it to dethrone Aristotle and Scholasticism in the interests of free-inquiry. But the weapon was not confined to philosophers: theologians also seized it, and, like a degenerate Southron brandishing a Highland claymore, their unskilful handling sometimes endangered their lives. Perhaps its use in the service and interests of religious dogmatism was not in itself quite legitimate, for in the mutual rivalries of religious as well as philosophical systems one must be overthrown before another can occupy its place. Skepticism was merely the destructive agency employed, and was in itself quite indifferent both to the old system which it swept away and to the new for which it made room. Hence we find it used for similar purposes by Protestants on the one hand and Catholics on the other. Agrippa, as we have seen, employed it to establish the paramount authority of the Bible, while Charron, Huet, Le Vayer, used it to defend the dogmas of the Romish Church. For a precisely similar purpose, Hervetus translated the 'Adversus Mathematicos' of Sextos—a policy as short sighted as that of the

Britons in the old mythical story when they asked the Saxons to help them against their enemies, not foreseeing that the arms wielded on their own behalf might any day be turned against themselves.

How far Agrippa had advanced in the path of Luther and Erasmus is a question not difficult to answer. In his approach to the Reformers he was actuated by motives and principles which give him a place between these two leaders of the movement. His own spiritual needs and his stress on the Bible assimilate him to Luther, while his culture and love of freedom attest his intellectual kinship to the great Humanist. It is true he calls Luther a heretic in more than one place, but the opprobrious epithet is more than deprived of its sting by the accompanying reference to St. Paul's confession: 'After the way which men call heresy,' &c. His interest in the Reformation was doubtless quickened by the fact that it reflected the struggle going on in his own mind. We have seen that his intercourse with Dean Colet probably started him on the track of the Reformers, though he traversed it with a somewhat halting gait up to the time of his publication of 'De Vanitate.' This treatise is, however, in most important respects a Protestant work. Some of its chapters might almost have been written by Luther, Wicliff, or Calvin. The noteworthy chapter on the Canon Law (xcii.) *e.g.* not only denies the temporal supremacy of the Pope, but even his spiritual authority so far as it is not exercised in harmony with the spirit and precepts of Christ. Speaking 'on the Inquisitorial art,' he inveighs bitterly against the usurped tyranny of the holy office, and the practice of persuading men not with arguments of reason and Scripture, but with 'Fire and Faggottes.' His chapter on temples is an indignant protest, quite in the spirit of our own Wicliff and Bishop Latimer, against the unchristian practice of lavishing on costly buildings what should be employed to clothe and feed the poor—the true living temples of Jesus Christ. His remarks on ceremonies, holy days, and images go to the root of the common-sense, Christian view of those subjects. In short, Agrippa's Protestantism is a marked and genuine feature of his intellectual and spiritual progress. That it was scarcely acknowledged during his lifetime is easily accounted for by the unhappy preponderance of his twofold notoriety as a magician and Skeptic.

But while recognising Agrippa as a Protestant and Reformer, I must avow my own conviction that in some respects he was in advance of most of his compeers. His was not a narrow Protestantism. He did not wish to pull down the fabric of Romish

dogma in order to erect a fanatical bibliolatry in its room. Christ, *e.g.* is with him the true Word of God, and he treats His utterances as if he conceived them to possess a sacredness and authority which he could not ascribe to other writers and portions of the Bible. Indeed, he expressly insists upon the human liability to error both of the Old and New Testament writers, *e.g.* 'that then whiche I saie that the holy writers have in some places after a certaine sorte been lyers, I will that it be understood not that they have willingly erred, but that either like men they have been deceived, or chaunging the will of God have revolted.' And further on, after enumerating some of the errors and ethical demerits of biblical characters, he continues: 'Hereof it commeth to passe that all the prophetes and writers in some thinges appear lyers according to the Scripture that saithe, every man is a liar.¹ But Christe alone, God and man, was never founde, nor shal be founde a liar, neither shall his wordes be chaunged or faile, who onely is without lie and error, as he hath said, "Heaven and earth shal perish, but my woordes shal not perishe."' Moreover, he alludes in other places to the doubts respecting certain of the books of the Bible which have always existed in the Church.

On the whole, then, it would seem that the final bent of Agrippa's convictions was in the direction of the simple teaching of Jesus Christ, and the importance of faith and morality as opposed to ritual. Against the interminable controversies of the Schoolmen he uses the argument of St. Paul, 'The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life;' and he treats the niceties and abstruse refinements of ecclesiastical dogmas with a mixture of good sense and a genuine appreciation of the essentials of Christianity which is not too common, even in our own day. Speaking of the misapplication of words he says: 'What greate contention have these two little woordes, *ex* and *per*, raised betweene the Greeke and the Latin Churches. The Latins affirminge that the Holy Ghoste proceeded of the Father and the Sonne, and the Greekes saying that not of the Sonne but of the Father by the Sonne. . . . There are besides other damnable heresies among the Grammarians, but so obscure and subtile, that except the very wilie divines of Oxforde, and the Sorbonists of Paris had perceyved them with their percing eyes, and condemned

¹ 'Hinc contingit omnes Prophetas et Scriptores in aliquibus fieri mendaces juxta Scripturam dicentem "omnis homo mendax.'" This is one of those inculcated extracts from Agrippa's book condemned by the Sorbonne in 1530. They are not to be found in later editions of the *De Vanitate*. Comp. D'Argentré, *Coll. Jud.* vol. ii. p. 88.

them with their profounde judgments, scarcely any could be ware.'¹

But besides his relation to the great religious movement of his time, Agrippa has a connection almost as intimate with the accompanying secular movement of pure humanism, of which we shall by-and-by see something in our review of the Italian Renaissance, and which will also come before us as a French movement when we discuss Peter Ramus and Montaigne. Of this, Rabelais is the most conspicuous representative in the earlier half of the sixteenth century. The comparison between Agrippa and the great French humourist offers striking points both of similarity and contrast. They might be called the Demokritos and Herakleitos of the age: one, the licensed buffoon, laughing boisterously over the follies, controversies, the pretended knowledge of the time; the other, the grave and moody philosopher, equally convinced of the uncertainty and vanity of all things human, but deeming the fact more worthy of plaintive wailing than obstreperous mirth: both alike in love of letters, hatred of monks and monkery; similar, too, in their patronage and protection by cardinals and bishops, in their vagrant and irregular habits, and incidentally in the fact of their having both found refuge in the same asylum—the house of François Vachon, President of the Parliament of Dauphiné, where Agrippa died, and where Rabelais finished his 'Pantagruel.' Indeed, of the two, Rabelais was probably the greater Skeptic, though, in harmony with his intellectual character, his unbelief was of that vague, indeterminate kind which always closely approximates to when it is not identical with complete suspense;² whereas Agrippa's was a profoundly earnest

¹ 'Sunt adhuc aliæ Grammaticorum perniciosæ hæreses, verum tam occultæ tamque subtiles, ut nisi Oxonienses acutissimi Anglorum Theologi, atque Parisiensium Sorbonistæ, lynceis oculis has perspexissent, magnisque sigillis condemnassent, vix aliquis posset præcavere.'—*De Vanitate, &c., 'De Grammatica,'* cap. iii.

² 'Ce n'est pas que Rabelais rie; mais il flotte,' is the judgment of Martin (*Histoire de France*, viii. p. 206), after a critical and exhaustive estimate of his various tendencies. The philosophic historian seems to think that the well-known last words of Rabelais ('Je vais chercher un Grand Peut-être') may possibly be founded on fact. At least they represent that mixture of *insouciance* and unbelief which were main features of his character. At the same time the words do not absolutely exclude another and opposite rendering; for a man whose dying declaration is that he is in search of 'a mighty perhaps' may be assumed to have found certainty in this life. Most of his critics, however, agree in ranging him among Skeptics. Rabelais's ridicule of Pyrrhonism, as represented by

conviction, though a negative one. Rabelais under his priestly garb concealed tastes and aptitudes which were essentially secular ; while Agrippa, the knight, philosopher, and physician, manifested qualities which indicate a natural bent for theology and cognate studies. Both cautiously desired a reformation, and like Erasmus hoped it might come from within. Finally, both by their works exercised no small influence on the thought of their own and the next succeeding age. Both recognised the dangerous, half-wrecked state of the Church, though, with a curious inversion of their ordinary characters, the priest does hardly more than laugh at the perplexities and superstitions of his fellow-sailors, while the layman and Skeptic points to a secure anchorage.

Summing up our subject, Agrippa's life, with its strange diverse and conflicting elements, affords a faithful picture of the sixteenth century. It is a reduced likeness or *carte-de-visite* of the state of Europe at the birth of the Reformation. The pursuits and interests of every class, from emperor and pope downwards, are there found reflected. Their occupations of peace and war ; their studies and controversies ; their beliefs and unbeliefs, their errors and superstitions, their hopes and aspirations, all the various seething elements, burning questions in religion and philosophy, convulsive movements in Church and State, are depicted on the small canvas of Agrippa's eventful career. Emerging with especial distinctness from the multitudinous incidents of the picture, occupying so to speak the centre of its foreground, is the fact of the period being a time of transition. The human mind is advancing from the darkness of the Middle Ages. The dawn of the Renaissance has attained its culmination, and the sun of the Reformation is already above the horizon. The century is bidding a final farewell to the past, and elate with hope is saluting the future. This Janus-aspect of the period is well marked by Agrippa's main works. The 'Occult Philosophy' carries us back to the preceding centuries ; the 'De Vanitate,' both in its negation and affirmation, bids us look forward to a newer and brighter period : so that in his single life are included two epochs, each with its own distinctive characteristic. From this point of view Agrippa's Skepticism, even if it had been much more Pyrrhonian and suspensory

Trouillagan, proves nothing on the point, for it is well known that thinkers, both ancient and modern, who have favoured Pyrrhonism are by no means blind to the self-contradictions and absurdities to which it is liable, or may easily be made to appear so. A very useful work on Rabelais and his relation to the Free-thought of the sixteenth century is E. Gebhart's *Rabelais—La Renaissance et la Réforme*, Paris 1877.

than it really was, would have been amply justified. It is the fitting expression of contemporary disintegration, and so far not merely a philosophical speculation but a historical fact. Rabelais mentions the prevalence of Pyrrhonism during this period. It would have been strange had it been otherwise. It was the only appropriate creed of an age of suspense, when old principles were relaxed, old standpoints were giving way, and the human mind, freed from the yoke of the past, was eagerly asking, What is to come next ?

Of Agrippa's Skepticism in itself I need not say anything more. The evidence I have put before you will enable you to appreciate both its nature and extent. You will have seen that while in form it is both extensive and profound, it has a 'saving clause,' which ostensibly and to Christians robs it of many of the mischievous tendencies which might otherwise have been ascribed to it. On the other hand, I am convinced of its genuineness as well as of its primary origin in the intellect rather than in a momentary pique created by disappointed hopes and embittered feelings. What it may have had in the shape of literary prompting, except the Book of Ecclesiastes, I confess I cannot quite determine. The form of the 'De Vanitate' undoubtedly suggests the treatise of Sextos 'Against the Mathematicians.' They possess at least the common features of taking one by one the several branches of human knowledge and weighing them in the balances of acute and subtle reasoning. But there is no evidence that this portion of Sextos was known to scholars in the earlier half of the sixteenth century, though the 'Hypotyposes' are found in an old Latin MS. of the thirteenth century.

But if the literary parentage of the book is thus doubtful, its descendants, direct and indirect, are numerous and well known. Montaigne borrowed portions of it for his Essays, without scruple or acknowledgment ; Sanchez probably knew it ; while it was the mine from which Hirnhaim professedly drew both the inspiration and materials of his work 'De Typho.'

Agrippa's character is so clearly marked in his life and writings that a separate summary of it seems superfluous. That he was a warm-hearted, lovable man is attested by the affection of his friends and disciples, as well as indirectly by the testimony of his letters. At the same time he was hasty and passionate, though the bitter experiences of his life finally taught him the virtues of patience and self-restraint. In harmony with his moral character was that of his intellect, which was eager and impetuous. With men of this restless type death seems occasionally to bring their intellectual career to an abrupt and premature close. It sets the

final seal on a man's speculations, no matter how rapid their transitions have hitherto been. It catches, like a photographic lens, the latest phase of the intellect, and fixes it in a permanent form. Agrippa died at the early age of forty-nine, after restlessly shifting his intellectual position from one extreme to another. Had he died twenty-five years before, the final 'set' of his opinions would have been altogether different. Had he lived twenty-five years longer, would his intellectual restlessness have taken a still further stride? Would he, *e.g.* have separated himself from the Church? Would he have shared the Socinianism of Ochino and other Italian Free-thinkers of the Renaissance? Would he have advanced to the complete Pyrrhonism of Montaigne? Such questions perhaps are idle. Let us be content to know that our Skeptic, after his intellectual wanderings, succeeds in finding an anchorage; that his negation ends, so far as religion is concerned, in positive certainty: and though no Pyrrhonist, he attains Ataraxia, for he has obeyed the Divine injunction, 'Come unto Me, ye that travail and are heavy laden, and *I will give you rest.*'

TREVOR. I am glad to find, Harrington, that we quite agree as to the origin of Agrippa's Skepticism, viz. that it was mainly intellectual, and not that momentary ebullition of impatience, petulance, and discontent for which some writers have mistaken it. No act of Agrippa's life was more deliberate than his publication of the 'De Vanitate.' He kept, as you have told us, the MS. by him four years before he published it, which is to me a conclusive proof of leisurely and well-matured consideration. I am aware of what he says in his 'Apology against the Louvain Theologians' as to the licence generally accorded to a declamation, but much of that appears to me an after-thought. Besides, as a fact of psychology, I doubt very much whether, in the case of a vigorous, robust mind like that of Agrippa's, intellectual conclusions are either formed, or can be greatly modified, by the accidents and fortunes of a man's life. No doubt feelings of disappointment and disgust may impart additional bitterness to the conviction that 'all is vanity,' but the persuasion of intellectual uncertainty must be grounded on the reason.

ARUNDEL. As a general rule, I dare say you are right. Still, the dominating principle in Agrippa's career is not

reason but faith. If I have rightly understood Harrington's paper, I should say that the landmarks in his course are—(1) mediæval superstition and devout Catholicism; (2) a transitory stage of rationalism and doubt; (3) Protestantism and faith in Christ. Hence Agrippa is another instance of the 'victory of faith,' and his Skepticism is hardly more than that of St. Paul's when he said, 'I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.'

HARRINGTON. No doubt that is Agrippa's conclusion, though he arrives at it by a somewhat hasty, not to say violent, process. I mean that an unscrupulous adversary, a modern rationalist for instance, might have applied to his ultimate dogma the Skeptical method by which he seeks to overthrow so many merely human certainties. Suppose, *e.g.* the question had been put to him, 'How do you know that Jesus Christ and his Gospel is the "word of God"?'

TREVOR. Agrippa would have replied, 'I feel that it is so;' in other words, he would have taken the high intuitional ground from which all evidential defects and discrepancies (like distant valleys hid in mist) are absolutely invisible. So that although his conclusion is different, his method is like that of Ockam, Pomponazzi, and many more of our Skeptics who assert absolute truth and morality. The unconditional affirmation either of the intellect or the feeling in such a case outweighs any amount of evidence. Besides, Agrippa shows a leaning, both in his occult philosophy and his Skepticism, to mysticism, which would make his adoption of *à priori* methods as a final resource all the more natural.

MISS LEYCESTER. I admire and pity Agrippa heartily. But I cannot agree with you in thinking his mental constitution so vigorous. I share Professor Morley's regret, that he did not openly break off from a Church with whose doctrine and practice he had so little real sympathy. The latter part of his life seems to me a melancholy conflict between interest and conscience—a 'house divided against itself.'

TREVOR. I think you exaggerate the extent of Agrippa's Protestant affinities. There are infinite gradations of disaffection and craving for more liberty both political and

religious before the point of open rebellion is reached. No doubt Agrippa's sympathies were largely in favour of the Reformers, nor does he at all wish to deny the fact. At the same time there were grave and preponderating considerations of another kind which he could not resist—(1) there was his education and all the religious associations of his life; (2) his continual connection with and obligation to dignitaries of the Church, some of whom were distinguished by a breadth of culture which might well be called latitudinarian; (3) the fact that Protestantism, at starting, appealed rather to the popular religious instinct than to humanistic culture and learning. Besides which, the Romish Church did not present to Agrippa and his contemporaries that semblance of narrow uniformity sometimes attributed to it in contradistinction from Protestantism. Our studies have shown us the considerable diversity of opinion which might be found within her fold. Agrippa was perfectly aware of this fact, and in his 'Apology against the Louvain Theologians' (his most important work next to the 'De Vanitate') he dwells upon it at some length. He enumerates the theological eccentricities, to give them no worse name, which well-known doctors of the Church had once maintained, but which had been overlooked by subsequent generations of Churchmen.¹ His position was that of a liberal clergyman in the Church of England, and the apology for his 'De Vanitate' is, in point of fact, of precisely the same character as such a clergyman would naturally make in answer to a charge of heterodoxy. Lastly, he was only one of a considerable number of advanced thinkers within the Church, and did not perhaps realize how far beyond the rest his publication of 'De Vanitate' had in reality landed him.

MRS. HARRINGTON. But surely the storm of obloquy and indignation which he found excited by the book might have opened his eyes to his real position.

TREVOR. Not necessarily. Agrippa's whole life was spent more or less in encountering such storms. The fanatical monks raised a furious outcry over all his writings. The earlier were magical, the later heretical, so that Agrippa,

¹ *Opera*, ii. pp. 276-77.

like sailors who have long been exposed to heavy gales, had probably lost the power of discriminating the measure of excess of one storm above another. He probably also shared the true scholar's regal disdain of the clamour of popular ignorance.

MISS LEYCESTER. I should have been glad if Charles had brought out in his paper more fully the curious correspondence between Agrippa's occult philosophy and the folklore of some of the countries of Western Europe. I remember, when in Germany, hearing of popular recipes and remedies, in vogue among the peasantry, which I should suppose had been actually taken from Agrippa's book.

ARUNDEL. You need not go so far as Germany, Miss Leicester. We have some of the superstitions described by Agrippa flourishing, I regret to say, at our very doors. I have in my own parish a man who was cured of a severe attack of rheumatism in the leg by wearing, suspended from his neck, the dismembered leg of a toad, the unfortunate owner of which had been left to go free; and in a neighbouring village I know a rascally impostor who, enjoying the rare accident of being born a seventh son, has made his fortune by 'touching for the evil.' It seems to me that the persistent vitality of these superstitions is due solely to the fact of their being popular. When I have attempted to expostulate with the believers in witchcraft, ghosts, &c. in my own parish, I am always met by the argument of the old ballad:—

Awa, ye wrangling Sceptic tribe,
 Wi' your pros and your cons. Wad ye decide
 'Gainst the 'sponsible voice of a hale countryside?

HARRINGTON. Well, we must not be too hard on these relics of the past, from which, after all, we ourselves are not very far removed. It takes two or three centuries for the ideas and beliefs of cultivated classes to percolate through the lower strata of society, and your 'rascally impostor' is not removed by much more than a century and a half from the time when our kings and queens touched for the evil, and when the ceremony was honoured by the presence of

archbishops and grave statesmen taking part in a solemn religious service. I had a great-grandfather of Jacobite proclivities who was as fully persuaded of the efficacy of the 'royal touch' as he was of the truth of any miracle recorded in the Bible.

MISS LEYCESTER. For my part, I am ready to give up entirely every part of Agrippa's occult philosophy, excepting only the name, which I think should be applied to all our science and philosophy. Our science of the present day seems to me in its titles and claims too obtrusively transparent and positive. The only thing about it which is 'occult' is the modesty of its professors, or the admission of its inherent occultness, which is generally left in the background. Whereas Agrippa, in putting what is after all the essence of our knowledge—its partial nature and uncertainty—in the foreground of his treatise, seems to me much more manly and honest.

HARRINGTON. In other words, you would have our modern scientists call themselves Agnostics rather than Positivists. But the distinction is merely verbal; for the Agnostics confine their profession of ignorance to real or final causes, and the Positivists limit their certainty to ascertained facts and processes: so there is, in reality, a perfect agreement between them. Both claim knowledge where sensible phenomena and its manifest relations are concerned, both disclaim it when ulterior causes are in question.

TREVOR. I am not sure that your reading, Miss Leicester, of Agrippa's title is quite correct. He does not, I think, mean to say that all human learning is occult, but that the philosophy which he treats is hidden from the vulgar gaze, and he claims the merit of divulging it. Agrippa is, in fact, the Hierophant or high-priest of the sacred mysteries, and his title, therefore, is not an indication of humility, but a mark of the spiritual conceit which we generally find to be the characteristic of the genuine theosophist. . . . As to modern science, I do not in the least wish to defend any bumptiousness with which it can truly be chargeable, but surely the method of scientific inquiry from Bacon to Comte, which quietly puts on one side final

causes as matters beyond our ken, is not only justified by the patent facts of the case, but is indispensable for any real advance in scientific knowledge. Agrippa's 'Occult Philosophy' teems with proofs of this. I need only remind you of that striking example which Harrington rightly called a typical instance of the metaphysical stage of science. Besides, if we only remember how much human energy has been expended in fruitless search after final causes, we can never again wish them back from the limbo of natural inscrutables to which modern science has justly consigned them.

MISS LEYCESTER. I do not at all want them back as objects of human investigation which are clearly beyond our reach. What I complain of is the tacit assumption of our scientists that they do not exist, or else their open plea of ignorance as a proof of such non-existence, and all I would ask is that both the real existence and undoubted power of such causes should be in every case duly and formally acknowledged.

TREVOR. But you see, Miss Leycester, if the existence of such causes were continually obtruded on our attention in matters of science, they might again come to be regarded as the immediate agencies of phenomena which we have now learned to ascribe to what are called secondary causes.

ARUNDEL. To return to our subject for a concluding observation: There is one point in Agrippa's career with which I, at least, heartily sympathize, and that is the nature of his final conviction. The termination of every intellectual career should be marked, I think, by the inscription, *Requiescat in pace*; and though I do not presume to find fault with any *bonâ fide* harbour in which the tempest-driven and doubting intellect of man finds refuge, it is only natural to value most highly the harbour whose merits we ourselves have tested. After all, the ship which has oftenest found shelter in the calm water of some land-locked haven, and has tried most frequently the quality of its anchorage, is best able to bear evidence to its security.

TREVOR. Very true. Yet we must not lose sight of the fact that there are minds so constituted as to be impatient of rest, and who would prefer an eternal battle with winds

and waves to the seductive embrace of a land-locked harbour: such men, *e.g.*, as most of our Skeptics, or again, Lessing, with his repudiation of definitive attainment, or Arnauld, with his well-known reply to one who advocated rest: 'What, rest here? Is there not eternity to rest in?'
 (After a short pause, Dr. Trevor continued.)

Here then we bring to a conclusion our first series of 'Evenings with the Skeptics.' Our philosophical enterprise, though undertaken somewhat hastily, has not been unproductive of a considerable amount of intellectual interest and profit. Of course it has also involved some labour, not that I can claim merit for my own share of the work, for the materials of all my papers had long lain by me, and all I had to do was to sift and arrange. But we are fully agreed that the task was worth the labour entailed, and that one effect of it has been to shorten considerably for us the dull season of winter. We may also be said to have conformed to fashion by this method of spending winter, and that in one of two ways: 1, we can allege with some expenditure of metaphor that we have spent our winter abroad, in Greece, India, Palestine, Italy, and Southern France—all of these being well known 'winter resorts,' adapted, moreover, as we have employed them, for intellectual, no less than in the usual manner for physical, valetudinarians. Or, 2, winter being the time consecrated in English country houses to the duties of hospitality, we may boast of having entertained, cross-examined, and conversed largely and familiarly with some of the noblest among the truth-seekers of antiquity. Parmenides and Athenagoras have been with us. We have sat at the feet of Sokrates, and have experienced the torpedo-shock of his 'Elenchus.' The later thinkers of Greek philosophy have been in and out among us as if our lonely Wiltshire valley had been suddenly transformed into the famous Academe with its olive plantations. We have also heard the teachings of Job and Koheleth, of Kapila and Sakya Muni. We have had the hallowed presence of Jesus Christ, and by personal communication with some of the most distinguished among His followers have learned their appreciation of Christian freedom as opposed to ecclesias-

ticism. From Ockam, Raymund of Sabieude, and Agrippa we have acquired other lessons and incentives to Free-thought. . . . When the shortening days of next autumn come upon us, when our ripened corn-fields are divested of their golden robes, when our chalky lanes are besprinkled with fallen leaves, and when the shadows of the downs stretch far across our valleys as if they would measure their extreme width,—we will again take up our Skeptics or Truth-seekers at the Renaissance and try to ascertain what quota of thought and inspiration thinkers like Giordano Bruno, Campanella, and Montaigne have contributed to the intellectual freedom and enlightenment of Modern Europe.