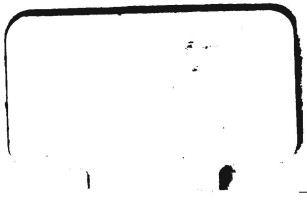

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF HERBERT SPENCER

WITH
A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

BY

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TO

MY WIFE.

PREFACE.

THE writing of this little book, which is largely an outgrowth of lectures delivered from time to time on various aspects of the subject with which it deals, has been undertaken to meet what seems to me to be a very healthy popular demand. During a three years' residence in the United States, partly in the East, partly on the Pacific coast, I have been surprised to find how widespread is the interest in the subject of evolution. Expository lectures on the evolutionary philosophy, as my experience has proved to me, attract attentive and appreciative audiences; explanatory and illustrative articles appeal to an eager public; and everywhere in the more cultivated ranks, and among the younger men and women especially, there is manifested a strong desire to learn something of the bearing of the new thought upon the practical problems and living issues of the day.

A special development of this wholesome spirit of inquiry is to be found in the interest that is so widely shown in the personality and writings of Herbert Spencer. To him, as the philosopher of evolution—as the

systematic exponent of the new thought in its wider relations—attention is turned from almost every side; and countless readers, whose own studies have taken them but small way below the surface of the questions to the consideration of which he has devoted the energies of his life, are none the less imbibing from the very atmosphere around them a vague but strong impression that his teachings and speculations have been, of all men's, the most influential in directing the intellectual movements of the nineteenth century. Hence the desire, often of late expressed to me by thoughtful and inquiring persons of broad outlook but limited leisure, to know more of Mr. Spencer and his work, of the relative and historic relations of his philosophy, and especially of its significance in connection with those questions with which we are all of us directly concerned—the questions of conduct, society, and religion.

But here arises a difficulty. Mr. Spencer's writings are and must be repellent to many would-be readers on account of their vast range and encyclopedic character. The comparatively unpractised and totally unguided student, set face to face with a whole shelf full of ponderous volumes, covering with great minuteness of detail an immense area of speculation and research, and couched in a singularly condensed and not very attractive style, is apt to pause before committing himself to a long and perilous journey over untried country—a journey probably fraught with unforeseen dangers, and for which he may well feel himself imperfectly prepared. Did he but

possess some outline-map, however scanty, of the region to be traversed; did he but know something, to begin with, of the principal natural features likely to be encountered on the way, the whole undertaking would appear to him in a far more favourable light. He would then at least realize to some extent the direction he was to take, and feel the better equipped to grapple with whatever adventures might await him in his long and arduous course.

In the hope of furnishing some such outline-map or hand-guide the following pages are written. My object is, therefore, a very unambitious one. I do not propose to trace over the arguments or summarize the conclusions of the Spencerian philosophy. Still less do I feel called upon to enter into any discussion of its more debatable aspects. Nor, beyond all things, is it my intention to offer a substitute for the Synthetic System itself. Those who would really understand Mr. Spencer's ideas must themselves go to his writings; no short cut can be pointed out that can be other than unsatisfactory; no patent method can be devised that will relieve the student of the need for a first-hand study of Mr. Spencer's own arguments, or even render such first-hand study a very light and easy task. But experience on the platform and in private conversations has shown me that something may be done to smooth the way for the untrained and unwary feet. The sympathetic inquirer may be put into direct contact with the vital germ, or essential principle, of Mr. Spencer's thought; he may be

led to realize how that thought took shape; he may be introduced to its genetic history; he may be placed in the position to understand its relation to modern tendencies in science and philosophy, and to appreciate the direction of its influence upon the practical problems of the every-day world. Guidance may thus be furnished of a helpful character, and the approach to the Synthetic Philosophy made much less thorny and toilsome than it would otherwise be.

If the present introduction succeeds to any extent in this humble labour of usefulness—if it serves to bring others under the more immediate influence of a teacher to whom my own personal debt is so great—its existence will be amply justified.

To avoid any chance of misapprehension, it should perhaps be stated categorically that for the interpretations given in the following pages I alone am responsible—in other words, the teacher is nowhere to be taken to task for the possible misconceptions and aberrations of the expositor. I have done my best to understand Mr. Spencer's actual thought and its implications; but in such a work as this it is difficult to make due allowance for the personal equation, and I may occasionally have taken a doctrine or an argument to mean something more or less than it would mean to Mr. Spencer himself—may occasionally have coloured the discussion by a suggestion or inference which he would decline to endorse. Mr. Spencer did indeed express satisfaction with the article on which the second chapter is based;

but though this fact encourages me to hope that my interpretations have in general been successful, I think it nevertheless important that the warning of this paragraph should be given.

It remains but to add that the substance of the first chapter has already appeared, in a much condensed form, in The Arena; and I have to thank Mr. B. O. Flower for the readiness and courtesy with which he granted me permission to reproduce it here. The second chapter is also a practical reprint of an article in The Popular Science Monthly for May, 1892. The remaining chapters are now for the first time put into print.

W. H. H.

LELAND STANFORD JUNIOR UNIVERSITY, *April, 1894.*

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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF HERBERT SPENCER.

CHAPTER I.

HERBERT SPENCER: A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

THERE is no writer of modern times who has left any profound impress upon the thought of his generation about whom personally so little is known as Mr. Herbert Spencer. For this fact, obvious as it is, the reasons are not far to seek. Ill-health, consequent upon a serious nervous breakdown about the time when his name first began to come at all prominently before the public, has for nearly forty years past confined him to the comparative seclusion of a chosen circle of immediate friends; while the absorbing nature of the great task to which he has devoted the energies of his life has left him but little opportunity, even when strength permitted it, to seek the noisier highways of the world. Beyond all this, it must be added that from first to last Mr. Spencer has shown himself singularly indifferent to the fascinations and allurements of fame. So far from seeking notoriety, he re-

sents, as something akin to outrage, any attempt to thrust notoriety upon him. He began his vast work paying but scant heed to the fierce and fiery criticisms by which it was assailed; and now that, after so many years of hard struggle and patient effort, his place as a thinker is acknowledged on every hand, he concerns himself as little with the praise which is showered upon him as he formerly did with the blame. The reward of a thing well done is to have done it, says Emerson; and it is easy enough to understand that the ability to look back upon such a magnificent though still unfinished life-work as his has been, should prove a greater reward to a man like Spencer than all the meretricious prizes that it is in the power of the world to bestow.

Here, then, seeing the large place that is everywhere given in criticism and discussion to Spencer the philosopher, and the little that is anywhere to be found written about Spencer the man, we will preface our study of the various aspects of his thought by a brief outline of his life. Not that, indeed, the record of that life contains much that is striking or sensational. It is the story of a man working against difficulties almost insuperable towards the carrying out of a great plan and the realization of a noble ambition; and it yields little of a more eventful character than the gradual development of ideas and the slow progress of a chosen work towards its consummation. Yet, since that work stands to-day, and will, we believe, continue for many genera-

tions to stand, as one of the most Samson-like efforts of human genius and power, its supreme value and import may give to commonplace details a significance that they would not otherwise possess.

HERBERT SPENCER was born at Derby, England, on the 27th of April, 1820. His father, by profession a teacher, was a man of strong character, more than usual breadth of culture, and very original views. On all questions connected with his own walk in life he was far in advance of his time, and in many ways, I fear it must be added, a good deal in advance of ours as well. One of his most deeply-rooted convictions was that little good and much evil was likely to result from the common methods of dealing with the childish mind—methods which for the most part consist in the mere burdening of the memory with large numbers of unconnected facts. His view was, that education should aim not so much at loading the mind with information which must of necessity remain almost wholly unabsorbed and undigested, as at training the faculties of observation and reason, in such manner that the intellect should learn not only to acquire, but also to organize knowledge for itself. Hence he regarded it as of more importance to foster originality and independence of thought, to excite interest, and nurture the reflective powers, than to store the memories of his pupils with any quantity of merely bookish learning. His ambition was to produce a well-balanced and self-reliant human

being, and not a walking encyclopædia of more or less useless information.

It is needful to notice these peculiarities of the father's methods—peculiarities which marked him out so strongly from the average pedagogues of his day—because it was under his immediate influence that the mind of the youthful Herbert first began to assert itself. How much of the son's own fearless freedom of thought and judgment we have to credit to the unusual advantages by which he was surrounded during his earliest and most ductile years it is, of course, impossible to decide; for doubtless many of his own most pronounced characteristics are due rather to inheritance than to education. But that he owes much to his early environment is beyond all possibility of question. In his own remarkable and widely-read little book on education the traces of his father's influences are very perceptible.

The boy's health was at first so precarious that for some time his parents had but little hope of rearing him; but as he grew into a lad he yearly improved in strength and vigour. Probably it was largely owing to this early constitutional weakness, and to his father's not unnatural dread lest anything like pressure should prove seriously and perhaps permanently detrimental, that he was (measured by the standard of mere acquisition) a very backward boy. He was seven years old before he could read; and after that he does not appear to have exhibited much of that inherent fondness for

books which so often distinguishes the embryo man of letters. It is not unamusing to find that the first volume which seems to have attracted his attention was good, moral, prosy old Sandford and Merton—a work which, in some most unaccountable way, has succeeded in endearing itself to the affections of large portions of the English-speaking youth.

When, by-and-bye, for a variety of reasons, some change in the plan hitherto followed appeared to become desirable, Herbert was sent from home and his immediate training intrusted to other hands. In his new circumstances he proved himself anything but an apt student. He was restless, inattentive, and idle; impatient under restraint, and with a constitutional love of having his own way which has never left him from that day to this. Moreover, he thus early exhibited a marked repugnance to the ordinary routine of the school curriculum. To get a lesson by heart was from the first almost intolerable; and he evinced a profound dislike to accepting statements merely because they happened to be set down in books. It is said that he rarely recited correctly anything that he had learned by rote. But, on the other hand, he soon showed himself markedly superior to all the other boys of his age in matters demanding observation, thought, and reasoning power.

As is usual in all such cases, his real education was meanwhile going on outside the school-house walls. He had already given evidence of a fondness for the

study of Nature and life in all their varied manifestations. For a good many years one of his favourite occupations was the catching and preserving of insects, and the rearing of moths and butterflies from egg through larva and chrysalis to their most developed forms. He also gave his attention to botany, and began the formation and classification of an extensive herbarium. In drawing, too, he acquired considerable proficiency, and I have myself seen some of his youthful productions in this line which were certainly of more than average ability.

At home the conditions were in many ways exceedingly favourable for the growth and expansion of his highest faculties, both intellectual and moral. Into the house came regularly, week by week and month by month, the more advanced of the medical, scientific, and literary periodicals; and into these the boy was permitted to delve at his will. More important than his varied and somewhat heterogeneous reading, however, were the table conversations to which he was from the first an attentive listener, and in which he early began to bear his part. The elder Spencer and his brothers—all men of strong intellect, wide culture, and pronounced views, and all radicals in religion as well as in politics—were accustomed during their family gatherings to canvass together, with a freedom and acuteness alike rare, all the important issues of the day, social and scientific, ethical and theological; and young Spencer was thus habituated from his earliest boyhood to the treatment,

as open questions, of all matters connected with the varied problems of the church and the world. At a time when most children are being taught before all things to rely upon tradition, Spencer was already habituated to the freest and keenest atmosphere of discussion, and to the bold and direct criticism of even the most time-honoured beliefs. There was thus naturally strengthened his already unmistakable tendency towards original investigation, and his correspondingly pronounced hatred of accepting any statement upon mere authority, no matter how good in itself that authority might be.

During this period his religious environment was a somewhat curious one. Both his father and his mother had been brought up Methodists; but the former, urged by a growing dislike for much in the Methodist system and teaching, had by-and-bye forsaken that body, to become a regular attendant at the Quakers' meeting. Mrs. Spencer meanwhile remained unshaken in her old faith; and the consequence was, that the boy's Sundays were divided up in a rather remarkable way. In the morning he went to the meeting with his father, while in the evening he accompanied his mother to the Wesleyan chapel. Such a weekly ringing of the changes as this could hardly fail to deepen his growing sense of the worthlessness of all theological dogmatism whatsoever.

It would be interesting, did space permit, to pause here to consider the striking contrast presented by the

early trainings of the two most acute and original thinkers in the domain of pure philosophy that England has produced during the present century—I mean the subject of this sketch and the late John Stuart Mill. Mill, it will be remembered, was also educated at home, under his father's immediate supervision; was also surrounded in childhood by men of strong characters and independent thought; and early learned to disregard tradition and to turn the keen lens of criticism and analysis upon the world's most cherished creeds. But here the analogy practically ends. Mill's mind was forced as in a hot-house; Spencer's was allowed to develop in the open air and with the least possible pressure from without. Mill, precocious in all the learning of the schools, read Greek and Latin at an age when Spencer could scarcely spell his own language; Mill was brought up to regard the whole vast system of popular theology as a mere congeries of idle and ridiculous fables; while Spencer, as we have seen, grew up in sympathetic contact with Christianity in two of its most diverse forms; and, finally, Mill was taught to look upon all the problems of social and political science as capable of rapid and entire resettlement, while Spencer early learned to consider every possible question on every possible subject as open to fresh examination and a totally new answer. A comparison of the childhoods, early environments, and intellectual growths of these two remarkable men would be more than interesting—it would be of the utmost

value; but it would take us far too much out of our present way to enter upon it here.*

We pass on, therefore, to the next stage in Spencer's life. Mr. Spencer, the elder, had a brother named Thomas, a clergyman of the established Church, but withal a rather eccentric specimen of his order. A radical at the time when nearly the whole English Church was in bondage to the High Tory party; a tee-totaler when the temperance movement was held by the general religious world to be a subtle form of atheism; a Chartist, and the first clergyman of the English Church to take an active and prominent part in the anti-corn-law movement; a vigorous and unwearied lecturer and writer upon all matters touching the physical, moral, and social welfare of the people — the Rev. Thomas Spencer was assuredly a man marked out from the rank and file of the clergy of his day. The present writer's father, who knew him well in the early forties, has often borne testimony to his great earnestness and activity; qualities which indeed led him into such excesses of labour for the causes which he loved so well that, never of robust constitution, he broke down prematurely and died at the comparatively early age of fifty-seven.

* Attention may nevertheless be drawn to the important fact that Mill's early training, unlike Spencer's, was a training exclusively in books. Mill himself, in his autobiography, expresses regret that he had never known the discipline of any practical scientific work—a declaration of deep significance, coming from such a source.

It was to the care of this uncle that Herbert was entrusted while in his thirteenth year. Thomas Spencer was at that time perpetual curate of the parish of Hinton Charterhouse, near Bath; and there the boy spent three quiet but not uneventful years.

The course of study now pursued was somewhat more regular and definite than had been the case at home; and the discipline was of a more rigorous character. But, save for this, the uncle's methods and system did not materially differ from those to which young Spencer had been accustomed while still under his father's roof. Once again his successes and his failures in the various studies which he now took up were alike significant. In the classic languages, to which a portion of his time was daily given, very little progress was made. The boy showed neither taste nor aptitude in this direction; rules and vocabularies proved perpetual stumbling-blocks to him; and what little was with infinite difficulty committed to memory was almost as soon forgotten. The study of French was productive of but little better results, the same repugnance to the merely arbitrary principles of language being just as consistently exhibited. But while for studies of this class there was thus shown an inaptitude almost astounding, a counterbalancing aptitude was exhibited for studies demanding a different kind of ability—constructive and co-ordinating power rather than a memory for unconnected details. In mathematics and mechanics such rapid advancement was

made that he soon placed himself in these departments ahead of fellow-students much older than himself. What was noticeable, too, was his early habit of laying hold of essential principles, and his ever-growing tendency towards independent analysis and exploration. This latter characteristic found vent in his devotion to the amusement of striking out new mathematical problems and elaborating original solutions for old ones.

It was during this stay at Hinton that a determination was arrived at which in all probability largely decided the after-course of his life. The Rev. Thomas Spencer, himself a graduate of Cambridge, where he had taken honours as ninth wrangler, was desirous from the first that his nephew should be coached with a view to his subsequent admission to that university. To this Herbert perseveringly objected; and for a considerable time the question furnished matter for dispute between them. Young Spencer, given to holding to his opinions with unusual tenacity, showed no signs of yielding in this particular case; and in the end his wishes carried the day, all idea of an academic career being presently abandoned.

One is tempted to pause here to discuss, in the light of subsequent achievement, the wisdom or unwisdom of such a determination. Much might be said for both views of the subject. That by foregoing a university curriculum he sacrificed something, more especially perhaps upon the social side, must be generally conceded; but it may fairly be urged that what he lost was, on the

whole, trifling and unimportant in comparison with what he gained. We must be careful not to lose sight of the fact that the university training that Spencer declined to submit to was not by any means the training that would have awaited him to-day in any one of the best of our American colleges. The Cambridge of fifty years ago was an antique, aristocratic, exclusive, and highly-conservative seat of humanistic learning; saturated by the traditions of the early renaissance; governed by ancient methods and ideals; and altogether and at every point out of touch with the movements and aspirations of the modern world.* A few years spent in such a place in enforced attention to such studies as would have been prescribed to him—studies which, as there and then followed, must have proved wholly deficient in vitalizing influence, and to which, for his part, he would have brought no creative or informing enthusiasm—would have proved absolutely and entirely un-

* That the words above written could, without much exaggeration, be employed to describe the great English universities at the present day, is made strikingly clear by the closing paragraph in a volume entitled Aspects of Modern Oxford, published while these pages are passing through the press. The writer, who disguises himself under the pseudonym of "A mere Don," ruefully contemplates "those happy days when the university is to be turned into an industrial school, and a place for the education no longer of the English gentleman but the British citizen." He asks, "Will that day ever come?" and answers, "The spirit of the age is determined that it shall. But perhaps the spirit of the place may be too much for it yet." The struggle, therefore, is still going on between mediæval methods and the needs of modern life.

fruitful as far as concerned the building up of his character and the moulding of his mind—would have been, from any practical point of view, so many years wasted and frittered away. And the evil might not have been negative only: the influence of those years might in many ways have made it all the harder for the future apostle of the newest gospel in philosophy to grasp the great work to which his life was to be devoted. Whatever may have been the advantage to him of the possession in fuller degree of what the academic world calls culture—and it is unquestionable that lack of such possession has in certain directions narrowed his view—it cannot be denied that it would have been disastrous had he, on entering manhood, been hampered, to how slight an extent soever, by hereditary leading-strings, theological or pedantic; and we can hardly be too thankful, therefore, that Spencer remained a free lance. Thus much at least must be added. Not only has Mr. Spencer himself never seen reason to regret the course so early decided on, and so consistently adhered to,* but even his uncle, the strongest advocate of the benefits

* Mr. Spencer's pronounced and undeviating opposition to the ordinary classical curriculum is one of the most widely-known characteristics of his general work. Systematically expressed in his treatise on education, it will be found cropping up in unexpected forms in almost all his other writings. A good instance of what we may almost call his pride in the lack of those attainments by which the world at large sets so much store, will be found in his trenchant criticism of Matthew Arnold and Addison, in the Introduction to the Study of Sociology, note to chapter ix.

of a Cambridge training, lived to acknowledge, and frankly did acknowledge, that, upon the whole, that course was probably the right one.

Be this as it may, however, the fact remains, to Cambridge he did not go; but instead presently returned to his father's house, where he spent what was to all outward appearance an idle and unproductive year. A good deal of miscellaneous work was gone through; but little was accomplished in the direction of regular or persistent study. During this time, however, his mind was not by any means lying fallow. The old pastime of independent research in the fields of mathematics and mechanics was resumed, one result of which was the striking out of a curious original theorem in descriptive geometry, which was afterwards published, along with his own demonstration, in the Civil Engineer and Architect's Journal. Then came his first experiment in practical work—an experiment made as assistant in a school in which he had spent some little time as a boy. Mr. Spencer senior, as we have already intimated, had a very high idea of the duties, responsibilities, and inherent dignity of his own chosen calling. At a time when there was still truth in the popular saying that a man who had failed in everything else could buy a birch and turn schoolmaster, he realized to the full the teacher's vast importance in moulding the destinies of the coming race; and in face of a public opinion which persisted in regarding the educator as belonging as naturally to the lower grades as the warrior to the up-

per grades of society, he felt strongly, as Carlyle afterwards phrased it, that there was a deeper and truer glory in training men's minds than in blowing their bodies to pieces with gunpowder. Holding these views, he was not unnaturally desirous that his son should embrace the teacher's profession; and the signal success which attended this early and brief trial strengthened his belief that Herbert possessed in unusual degree all the required qualifications. With a rare faculty for luminous exposition, he combined a talent the vital importance of which every practical teacher will at once recognize—a talent for arousing interest in the subjects with which he dealt. Beyond this, his moral qualities showed to no less advantage. As a boy it had been remarked of him that, though he strongly resented any act of tyranny on the part of a master, and rose impatiently against anything in the shape of bullying from his older schoolmates, he was throughout a favourite with the younger children, because his behaviour towards them was marked by the same respect as he himself demanded from those above him. And in the same way, in his new position, he now before all things recognized and appreciated the individualities of the pupils committed to his charge, realizing in this direction the lofty ideal of the relations between teacher and taught which he afterwards so strenuously insisted upon in his book on education.

But all this notwithstanding, the experiment ended in nothing practical—not apparently from any well-

defined hesitation on young Spencer's part to follow his father's wishes in the matter, but simply because at the moment his attention was taken off in another direction. Spencer was just at the time in that state of absolute uncertainty in regard to his future movements and prospects which is so common with youths of his age—and more especially, perhaps, with those who, conscious of an undefined sense of power, have as yet no clearly ascertained idea of the special direction which their talents might most remuneratively take. For the time being he had no settled plan or purpose, and, what is perhaps a little remarkable, no ambition appears to have impelled him towards making a decisive move. In this state of inertia and indecision he was naturally ready enough to swerve off, on this side or that, upon the smallest instigation or pressure from without; and as a result we find him before long abandoning his experiment in teaching for an experiment in civil engineering. In the autumn of 1837 an offer came from the chief engineer of the London and Birmingham Railway, then in process of construction; and, accepting this, Spencer now passed nearly a year in the ordinary routine of engineering work—partly in carrying on surveys, partly in making drawings. Towards the close of the year he transferred himself to the Birmingham and Gloucester Railway; and here a further period of eighteen months was spent in a fairly satisfactory way. During the latter engagement his progress in practical railroad work was marked by various papers on

purely technical subjects which from time to time appeared from his pen in the Civil Engineer's Journal. Furthermore, the invention of a little instrument which he called the velocimeter, for testing the speed of locomotive engines, bore witness to the continued activity of his mind, more especially, as usual, in the line of original work.

It now, indeed, seemed as if his career in life had been at length marked out for him—as if the practical problem which faces almost every young man on the confines of life had in his case received a satisfactory solution. From that time onward, for the space of some eight or ten years, he continued to be intermittently engaged in engineering pursuits—periods of considerable activity alternating, however, with lengthy intervals during which professional work remained at an almost entire standstill. But by-and-bye, after several premonitory recessions in the tide of commercial prosperity, the railway mania ebbed suddenly away, leaving Spencer, along with countless other young men, stranded high and dry upon the shore. The crisis was a serious one; for those—and their name was legion—who had been attracted to the work during the season of temporary boom, now found themselves committed to a profession which offered but little outlook as a career, and which was indeed seriously and almost fatally overstocked. Thus, at the age of twenty-six, Mr. Spencer found himself but little advanced towards anything like a practical settlement in life. From any merely

worldly point of view, indeed, the past few years had been consumed in labours that had left nothing tangible behind them as their result. In no very hopeful frame of mind, therefore, as may be well imagined, he had now once more to beat a retreat to his family home in Derby, and to cast about him with a view to deciding upon his next step.

Regarded in the light of the man's later work, however, these years had not been altogether fruitless. In the not infrequent intervals of leisure which his professional avocations had allowed him, or, more properly speaking, perhaps, had forced upon him, he had found an opportunity of persevering with a good deal of miscellaneous study, and even of making a modest start with his own work as a thinker and writer. The studies continued to be varied and irregular enough, it is true; but Spencer's was, it would seem, precisely one of those minds whose development is best secured by that very heterogeneity of reading and interests which would prove disastrous to men of less strong, independent, and organizing genius. Science of all kinds still occupied the largest share of his attention; and it is especially interesting to find him, during this period, busily engaged in the perusal of Sir Charles Lyell's Principles of Geology—a work then still in its earlier editions. The point which is perhaps particularly worthy of remark in regard to this incident is, that it was in these volumes that Mr. Spencer in all probability first came face to face with that doctrine of the gradual

branching and rebranching of species which in those pre-Darwinian days went somewhat vaguely by the name of the development hypothesis. It is matter of common knowledge that, with a candour and courage rare even among scientific men, Lyell in after-years yielded to the arguments of the evolutionists, or, as he sometimes phrased it, "read his recantation"; so that, after standing out against the Lamarckian doctrine of "innate progressive development," he finally incorporated the law of natural selection in the later editions of his classic works. But in the volumes which were then in Mr. Spencer's hands, Lyell made common cause with the uniformitarians against the metaphysically conceived progressionism of Lamarck and his disciples; and the result was that Spencer's first acquaintance with the theory of development was in the form of a hypothesis to be analyzed and thrown aside. This is not the only case in which a new doctrine has been set forth with a great array of adverse arguments, and the arguments themselves have proved less strong than the conception against which they were directed; in other words, this is not the first instance in which a convert has been made by the attacks of an enemy. Spencer rose from the perusal of Lyell's book with a distinct bias in favour of Lamarck's views, and shortly afterwards became an ardent believer in the general idea of organic development. There is no doubt that the ready acceptance on his part of an opinion which was then held to be so

radical and startling—an opinion which, beyond question, as we now see clearly enough, rested in those days upon foundations altogether too vague and uncertain to appeal with much force to the rigidly scientific intellect, demanding hard and tangible facts—was due in no small measure to the singularly well-prepared condition of his own mind. His pronounced tendency had already asserted itself to regard the interrelations of all phenomena as illustrations of the processes of natural causation; and the developmental view presented itself to him in so favourable a light, because it helped him materially in the task of grouping all the phenomena of creation within the limits of the action of uniform and undeviating law. No one needs to be reminded that the force of any given argument is wholly dependent upon its relation to the condition of the particular mind before which it is laid; a pressure sufficient to dislodge a mass already on the verge of toppling over a precipice, would be useless to restrain that mass were the impetus downward once given. There is nothing so very astonishing, therefore, in the fact that Spencer was rapidly convinced by a course of reasoning and a selection of illustrations which would mean comparatively little to us now, and which, indeed, had no effect whatever upon the vast majority of the scientific students of his generation.

There can be little doubt, too, that it was owing to this clearly marked trend of his mental organization, that with the maturing and consolidation of his thought

about this time there went the gradual dropping of the current creed. The whole case on this head has probably been summed up when we say that the miraculous element upon which that creed then laid the principal emphasis, was fatally out of keeping with the entire character of his mind. There are many men (and, owing to what Mr. Lecky has called the "declining sense of the miraculous," their number is daily growing greater) for whom the so-called supernatural elements in all popular theologies are just as immediately repugnant as they were immediately attractive to even the most acute and thoughtful minds during the ages of faith. Where they instinctively sought a metaphysical interpretation for all phenomena, we just as instinctively recoil from any such interpretation. By the operation, generation after generation, of a thousand subtle influences, the whole atmosphere of life has been altered; the measures of judgment and the standards of probability have alike been changed. Without going so far as to attempt to settle the whole question of miracles on purely *a priori* grounds—than which, let it be said, and said distinctly, no course could be more unscientific or more unsatisfactory—many a man born and nurtured in the secular and skeptical environment of the present day finds that question often and necessarily resolve itself into one of relative antecedent probability, as between two possible explanations—a temporary aberration from that which verified experience has revealed to us as the undeviating course of Nature,

and an error in human testimony or interpretation; and since, first, as a matter of fact, we do not personally know anything of that disturbance in the normal order of things which is called miracle; and, secondly, the constant tendency of historic and scientific investigation is to bring every such supposed disturbance into the category of law; while, on the other hand, every passing day yields abundant examples of the absolutely untrustworthy character of even the best-intentioned and most carefully-sifted evidence; it is clear that to the philosophical—that is, the common-sense view of things—the balance of probability must in every case be as infinity to one against the alleged miracle.

I am not, let me insist, undertaking for a moment to defend the popular thesis that a miracle—in the sense of an occurrence unusual to, or not to be accounted for, by our limited knowledge of natural processes—could not conceivably happen, and therefore never has happened. As Prof. Huxley has well pointed out, such a proposition, however attractive it might have looked in the days of Hume, would not now commend itself to any mind trained in scientific methods of investigation. What I do maintain is, that under any circumstances the occurrence of a miracle, and still more, therefore, of a long series of miracles, must be held as antecedently so improbable that the fullest, clearest, and most unmistakable detailed evidence must be required in its favour to counterbalance the evidence furnished against it by the generalized experiences of

mankind. The question, therefore, assumes the form as to whether, from the very nature of the case, any such evidence is or can be forthcoming in regard to any miracle alleged to have been performed under such conditions as those existing, for instance, in the early days of Christianity. Hence, the principle of relative probability, whatever may otherwise be its value, should here be allowed its fullest weight; and the greater the antecedent improbability, the stronger must be the argument advanced to overthrow it.*

Here, doubtless, we possess the explanation of Spencer's own attitude, taken up, it would seem, about this time, towards the orthodox creed. That he ever formally rejected the current theology seems extremely unlikely; for this would imply that he passed it under some kind of systematic examination or review, analyzing and weighing the evidence for and against it, and dealing with the whole question as one pressing for solution. This he does not appear to have done. The fact seems rather to be that it never became absorbed into his thought, because there was nothing in his intellectual make-up which would attract it, or with which it could cohere; no place into which it would fit without upsetting and destroying the whole system of his belief.

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* See particularly on the general question of miracles, regarded on its philosophical side, the chapter on Miracles in relation to the order of nature, in that masterly and learned work, Supernatural Religion.

But Spencer, during the period now referred to, had done more than by thought and study to lay up a store of materials for future use. He had delivered himself of his first message to the world. It was in the summer of 1842, or soon after he had completed his twenty-second year, that he began the publication, in a paper called The Nonconformist, of a series of letters on The Proper Sphere of Government. These were subsequently revised, and made their appearance in pamphlet form during the course of the following year. Any discussion of the relation of this little work to the general order of Mr. Spencer's thought must be postponed till another chapter; here, dealing only with the general incidents of his career, we are called upon simply to notice that whatever value his philosophizing might possibly have had as a contribution towards the solution of the problems of the world at large, it went but small way indeed towards helping him to a satisfactory solution of the practical problem of his own life. Teaching had been abandoned for civil engineering, which in its turn had abandoned him, and the outlook seemed gloomy indeed. One thing only his adventure into the field of literature had done for him. It had shown him the possibility, now that other things had failed, of falling back upon his pen. In pursuance of some kind of vague idea of turning his talent in this way to account, he now drifted up to London—to the great city which Mrs. Browning so aptly described as "the gathering-place of souls." Here, after not a little

of beating about and disappointment, he secured a position upon the Economist newspaper, of which in 1848 he became sub-editor. This latter appointment, whatever may have been its drawbacks—and from these it was not by any means free—at least possessed the double advantage of yielding him a fair foundation of income (sufficient, at all events, for his pretty modest bachelor needs), and of allowing him a rather unusual margin of time for the pursuit of his own study and work. The acceptance of this post, which he held till 1852, established him in London, and with it may therefore be fairly said to open a new and entirely different chapter in his life.

I have been led to dwell at some considerable length on the events and circumstances of these earlier years—trivial though some of them may seem to be—for more than one reason. In the first place, it always appears to me that the experimental period of boyhood and youth—the period when so much is attempted in a more or less serious way, and so little actually done—forms by far the most fascinating portion of the biography of any man who has left his mark upon the world. The early struggles, the repeated failures, the uncertainties, disappointments, doubts, the ofttimes long and wearisome searching for the life-work which is dimly felt to lie somewhere in readiness for the ready but as yet unguided hand—these things are full of the picturesqueness of romance, and, while they arouse the interest of all, possess for the young, the ardent, and

the ambitious, a world of inspiration also. And, in the second place, just as this period is the most attractive for all readers, so, too, it is beyond question the most important for those who desire to study a great mind in the process of its development, to surprise something of the secret of its power, and to realize and measure the subtle forces and influences which played their part in its education and consolidation. Beyond this, also, we have to remember that, in order to do justice to the record of any life, we must beware of being misled by the desire to secure an artificial balance among the different divisions of our sketch. It is often well worth while to linger over the earlier years, even at the expense of thrusting into a few paragraphs the actual accomplishments of after-life. For the period of achievement, no matter how brilliant that achievement may be, is after all only the period of translation into present fact of the impulses and powers which, even from the cradle, have been gathering in silence against the time when the moment for manifestation should arrive. Hence, for this period a brief outline is often enough; while the long years of preparation, during which the nature is plastic and every detail tells, require and should properly receive a fuller treatment at the biographer's hands. It is thus that I have thought fit to linger a little over those portions of Spencer's life which to those about him, no less than to himself, might well have seemed productive of nothing but the most unsatisfactory and disheartening results, but which

gain significance and interest from the knowledge that we now possess that they were aiding to prepare him, though by singular and circuitous ways, for the real work of his life, which he had not yet begun.

We pass on, then, to sketch out very briefly Mr. Spencer's career after his settlement in the metropolis. We have seen that one of the advantages of his position upon the Economist was that there was left him, after the official duties of the day had been performed, a balance of time sufficient for the regular, if not very rapid, prosecution of other work. It was during these leisure hours that, in the course of the next two years or thereabouts, he wrote his first important work, Social Statics. This volume contained an extremely fresh and original treatment of social problems; was startling in many of its ideas, and extremely radical in its whole tone and tendencies; but, as is sufficiently well known, Mr. Spencer afterwards grew dissatisfied with its metaphysical implications, and at one time made an effort to withdraw it from circulation. At the date of its publication, however, it made no small stir in the thinking world, though, of course, it never appealed to a very wide body of readers. That which it did for him personally was to bring him rather prominently into public notice, and to introduce him to a select circle of advanced thinkers, who were not slow to realize the exceptional strength and independence of his mind. His long intimacy with Prof. Huxley dates from this time; and it was then, too, that he formed his ever-

valued friendship with the Brays and the Hennells, of Coventry; with the versatile George Henry Lewes, then currently known as the ugliest man and the best talker in London; and with that extraordinary woman who was then sub-editing the Westminster Review, but who was afterwards to take the whole literary world by storm with the Scenes of Clerical Life and Adam Bede. When, in September, 1851, George Eliot wrote to Mr. Bray that she had recently met "a Mr. Herbert Spencer, who has just brought out a large work on Social Statics, which Lewes pronounces the best he has ever seen on the subject," she described the commencement of an association full of mutual reverence and esteem, which was to last till death ended it by the removal of the great novelist herself. More than this, however; Social Statics gave Mr. Spencer a practical and unmistakable revelation of his own powers, and pointed out to him more clearly than had been done before the lines which his subsequent reading and thinking were destined to pursue. Shortly after its appearance he began his connection with the Westminster Review—a magazine which had then recently been purchased, and established on a new basis for the promulgation of advanced views of social, scientific, and religious questions, by an enterprising though somewhat erratic publisher named John Chapman. It was in the pages of this review that he began the publication of those elaborate essays which, though now mainly interesting, perhaps, as auxiliary to his great work, and as marking out the

lines of his approach to and preparation for it, were enough at the time to call attention to the rise of a new force in the philosophic world. Here, as we have to deal with these essays from the outside—as events in the man's life—it is sufficient if we say of them that their success enabled him after a while to drift out of the semi-journalistic and routine work in which he had been engaged upon the Economist, and to devote his whole time and energy to what was now beginning to assume the character of a chosen undertaking.

For some eight years after this, with an interval of eighteen months of enforced idleness—of which more anon—he continued to be pretty regularly engaged with magazine work of this kind, and in addition produced in 1855 a bulky volume on psychology, afterwards incorporated as a portion of his larger work on the same subject in the Synthetic system. All this kept him busy till 1860. But in the meantime a change, destined to be fraught with results of a permanently disastrous character, had come over the spirit of his life. Overwork had brought on a nervous breakdown of so serious a kind that for fully a year and a half he was forced to lay the pen aside and suspend his labours altogether. Partial restoration followed this prolonged rest, but it was partial restoration only. From that time to this his condition has been one of intermittent invalidism, dyspepsia and insomnia being the two arch-enemies which it has been a hard struggle for him to keep at bay. His constant insistence upon the need of moder-

ation in work, and his eloquent preaching of the gospel of attention to health, gain an added significance from his own bitter experiences during these five-and-thirty years.

The year 1860, to the verge of which we have now followed him, marks the great crisis of Spencer's life, and beyond this is forever memorable in the history of modern thought, for it was this year which witnessed the publication of the prospectus of his philosophic system. In the light of this new and tremendous undertaking, upon the threshold of which he now stood, all his previous work, remarkable as that taken by itself had been, assumes the proportions of mere experiment and preparation. The time had now come for achievement. The outline plan of the whole system of Synthetic Philosophy was given to the public, and Mr. Spencer laid his hand to a task which he knew would mean the production of ten stout volumes of no very saleable character, and which he calculated would occupy at least twenty years of regular and persistent work.

Let us turn for a moment to his circumstances and general outlook at the time, that we may be in a position the more fully to appreciate all that was implied by self-committal to such an undertaking. Marvellous in itself, that undertaking grows still more marvellous when we come to realize the conditions of its inception and execution. In the first place, Spencer's financial prospects were not in any way satisfactory. Possessed at the outset of but small personal resources, he had

frittered away the greater part of these in devotion to studies which had brought him but small practical recompense. He had indeed derived something of an income from his pen; but his articles had demanded too much careful thought and too much conscientious labour to make their production remunerative from the point of view of pounds, shillings, and pence. A small sum of money which had been left him by his uncle, the clergyman, now dead, had been wholly or largely swallowed up by the publication of two volumes which had so little to commend them in the popular market that their value as an investment had been worse than nothing at all; while a further drain of no inconsiderable kind had been made upon his purse by eighteen months of idleness, and all the added expenses consequent upon deranged health. Beyond, and worse than all this, there was the fact that his breakdown had left him in so impaired a condition that three hours a day was all that he could safely rely upon for the carrying forward of his work. Finally, as a commercial enterprise, the proposed undertaking offered nothing of an encouraging character. Few enough could, in the very nature of things, be induced to lend their support to such a labour; for the public to which appeal was to be made was necessarily of a very limited character; while, among those who looked on with partial interest or half-aroused sympathy, there were many who deprecated the self-imposed task as too vast, comprehensive, and ambitious for adequate accomplishment within the

lim ts of a single life, and as even foolhardy in the uncertain state of his health. Surely such obstacles as these might well have proved enough to frighten a less courageous and less determined ". But Spencer believed that he had a gospel to preach to a world which, if indifferent at the moment, might presently be induced to listen and to learn; and in the preaching of that gospel he recognized his own contribution to the forces which were to make for the welfare and advancement of the race. Hence, with a nobleness of heroic purpose, a fixity of determination, and a self-consecration, to which the towering merits of the performance upon its purely intellectual side must not be allowed altogether to blind us, Mr. Spencer entered upon the prosecution of his task. One thing only is more impressive than his calm and unfaltering confidence in the adequacy of his own powers to the carrying out of his gigantic plan; and that is, his firm faith in the ultimate triumph of those great principles which it was his high privilege to enunciate to the world.

From that time onward there is little to report beyond the gradual progress of his life-work towards completion. All else in his biography henceforth assumes a purely episodical character. Difficulties, in addition to those of which his calculations had already taken account, have thrown unlooked-for impediments in his way. At one time, for instance, the small and grudging support yielded him by an enlightened reading public drove him to the very brink of discontinuing his

labours altogether—at which critical juncture an incident occurred which I cannot forbear adverting to here. A number of American admirers, made aware of this half-formed determination of abandonment, sent to him by the hands of his dear and constant friend, the late E. L. Youmans—who did so much to spread the light of evolutionary doctrine on this side of the Atlantic—a purse of money and a gold watch, as some expression of their own sympathy and esteem. The money Mr. Spencer accepted as a public trust to be employed for public purposes; while the watch he prizes to-day as one of his most valued possessions. Other interruptions were from time to time occasioned by his having to turn aside from the work itself to deal with matters only indirectly connected with it—such as replies to criticism, and the correction of misconceptions and misinterpretations (in which distracting exercise some of us feel that he has spent somewhat too large a share of his time); the supervision of the preparation and arrangement of that vast storehouse of facts and data, the Descriptive Sociology, and the writing of his delightful little introduction to the same subject. Moreover, in calculating upon a regular working capacity of even three hours a day, the event proved that Mr. Spencer had gone beyond his limitations. During many a lengthened period of more than usually bad health, he has been forced to seek renewal of strength in absolute repose; while through many a weary month together the work has grown beneath his

hands at hardly more than a paragraph or two each day. In face of all this, the real wonder is that in the thirty-three years that have elapsed since the prospectus was published so much of the scheme there mapped out in detail should have been translated into accomplished fact. The Synthetic Philosophy, as thus far published, sums up a grand total of upwards of 5,500 closely-printed pages; and this would constitute no mean literary baggage for a man in robust health and the full command of his working powers. A few years ago it seemed impossible that this monumental work would ever reach completion; and the pathetic personal statements prefixed to the Data of Ethics and Justice showed how fully Mr. Spencer himself realized the gradual ebbing away of strength and opportunity. But with rare courage and perseverance he has struggled on, and the recent publication of the last instalment of the Principles of Ethics brings with it the hope that his life-labours may yet be rounded off to a completed whole.

CHAPTER II.

SPENCER'S EARLIER WORK—PREPARATION FOR THE SYNTHETIC PHILOSOPHY.

THERE is no safer or more satisfactory approach to the study of any system of philosophy than by the way of its evolution. If we want to put ourselves into a position to understand the attitude taken up by any great thinker towards the world and its varied problems —if we want to catch the personal note in his utterances, and to appreciate the relation of his own ideas to the intellectual movements of his time, we cannot do better than to make ourselves acquainted with the history of the development and consolidation of the great foundation principles of his thought. The general question, What was the nature of his teaching? may thus properly be preceded by one still more general, How came it to be what it was? To consider this latter question in relation to the system of Synthetic Philosophy is the purpose of the present chapter; in fulfilling which we shall not only lead up, by a kind of easy grade, to that system itself, but shall also be able to reach some definite conclusions respecting the historic

connection of Mr. Spencer with the modern doctrine of evolution at large—a matter, as we shall see, of no small interest and importance.

In the first place, then, we have to review the growth and solidification of Mr. Spencer's thought—in other words, the elaboration, as exhibited in his earlier writings, of that conception of evolution which was to find its definite expression in the majestic series of works of which the Synthetic Philosophy is composed. Let us begin by making ourselves acquainted with the starting-point of his mental development—that is, with the general theory of things which was current during his early years, and under the influence of which, in common with all his contemporaries, he grew to man's estate.

The period of Spencer's youth and ripening manhood was a period of transition in scientific and philosophic thought. On the ushering in of the present century the old cosmology still held sway with unabated vigour, along with all those time-worn dogmas concerning human life and destiny which had grown up with it during ages of ignorance and superstition, and with which its own existence was now inextricably bound up. What that cosmology and what those dogmas meant is a matter of such common history that we need not linger over them here. Suffice it to say that the unquestioned doctrines of special creation, fixed types, and a recent origin of the universe, lay at the bottom of them all, and that it was in the light of those doctrines

that the world and life and man were one and all interpreted.

But before the century had got far upon its way, signs began to manifest themselves of an approaching change in the higher regions of thought. The special-creation hypothesis and the postulate of the world's recent origin and rapid manufacture had served well enough so long as their field had remained uninvaded by the results of investigation—so long as they had not been confronted with definite facts. In perfect keeping with the little that had been known of the universe in the darkness of the middle ages, they required that no jot or tittle should be added to that knowledge, to hold their place secure. But this could no longer be. The time came when investigation grew active, and definite facts—angular, awkward, unpleasant facts, which (after their reprehensible manner) were irreverent enough to refuse to fit into the most sacred and deeply-cherished theory—began to accumulate with startling rapidity. The result was that the old conception of things began, little by little, to fall into disrepute, and the theological edifice of ages was shaken at its very foundations. Science showed, with a conclusiveness which remained untouched by all the special pleading with which her arguments and revelations were assailed, that the popular assumptions about the age of the world were absolutely untenable; that the commencement of life, and even of human life upon our globe, so far from taking us back only a few paltry thousands of years, lay count-

less millions of ages behind us; and that such vague vestiges of our race as have been handed down to us in sacred book and popular legend are as nothing compared with that tremendous mass of human experiences which will never find their historian. Worse than all, turning full upon the doctrine of special manufacture, she opened up the grand geologic record, and read thence, as from the pages of a mighty volume, the long, stupendous story of those vast cosmic changes which, through æons of unreckoned time, have slowly moulded and fashioned the world into the condition in which we find it to-day.

That these revelations were of the most vital interest to all thinking men need hardly be said; nor is it necessary here to dwell on the feverish panic of the theologians, who hurried into the field with all their heavy artillery, prominent amid which was the great-gun argument, which had already done yeoman service on many another such occasion, that the very existence of Christianity was bound up with the story of the creation as narrated in the first chapters of the Hebrew Scriptures.* What is here of moment is to notice the general

* How fierce and obstinate was the opposition offered to the doctrine of evolution from this standpoint we of the present day find it no easy matter to imagine. Even such a man as Hugh Miller imported theological considerations into his scientific discussions, and fell back upon the declaration that acceptance of evolution meant nullification of the central truths of Christianity. It has been reserved for a later generation, passing into a fresh phase in the history of evolutionary thought, to discover that

effect of the new discoveries upon the scientific mind. That effect was at the outset almost entirely a negative one. The old theories had been destroyed, but as yet there was nothing to take their place; the theological interpretation of the world's history was seen to be absurdly insufficient and unreasonable, but for the time being no scientific interpretation in lieu thereof appeared to be forthcoming. Hence followed a kind of intellectual interregnum, during which everything was vague, shifting, tentative. Meanwhile, however, things were not by any means standing still. The unceasing activity of investigators in the special sciences resulted in vast accumulations of well-established facts, and thus yielded the materials in the absence of which nothing of real or permanent value could have been accomplished. And at the same time (largely, indeed, as a consequence of this extension upon all sides of the scientific domain) there was ever growing and deepening a conception of unbroken causation in cosmic changes, of the universality of law, and the unity of Nature and of natural processes—a conception in no small degree led up to by such discoveries as those of the undulatory theory of light and heat, and of the correlation of all the forces known to exact science.*

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there is, after all, no conflict between the old ideas and the new—a convenient discovery now that the new ideas can no longer be gainsaid.

* This tendency toward unification was indeed an outgrowth from the philosophy of the eighteenth century, and was at bottom

Thus, in spite of the temporary suspense and hesitation, no time was being lost. As we can now see, the way was being slowly prepared for a great scientific generalization—a generalization which, overthrowing all the old positions once and for all, was in the sequel to alter absolutely and fundamentally the whole trend and current of thought, not only as regards the outer organic world and the phenomena presented by it, but as regards also the countless practical problems in life and society, in morality and religion, which are forever pressing on us for solution.

Such, in the briefest possible summary, was the general intellectual character of the period at which Mr. Spencer began the labours of his life. Even the sketch just given, crude and imperfect as it necessarily is, will help us to understand the growth of his own ideas, and their relation to the changing thought of the day.

We have to go back to the year 1842, and to the series of letters on The Proper Sphere of Government, with which Spencer, then hardly more than a boy, entered, as we have seen, upon his literary career.

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merely one expression of that general simplification of life and thought which, as Mr. John Morley has pointed out, "was the keynote of the revolutionary time." (See his Rousseau, vol. i, pp. 4, 5; and Introduction to the Poetical Works of Wordsworth, p. lxi.) It is interesting in this connection to notice what Goldsmith, voicing the average conservative opinion of his day, has to say about Montesquieu, one of the early leaders of this particular movement in speculation (Inquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning, chapter vi).

With the political tendencies of this production we have here no special concern, though it may be worth while to mention that the key-note is there struck of that famous doctrine of governmental non-interference, since so fully worked out and so frequently insisted on by the author. The pamphlet is significant for us from quite another point of view. In the attempt which is made in it to establish the nature, scope, and limits—that is, the fundamental principles—of civil government, there is everywhere implied a belief in the ultimate dependence of social organization upon natural causes and natural laws. In other words, society is from first to last regarded not as a manufacture, but as a growth—a view which, it may be remarked incidentally, though familiar enough in our own day, at all events in its theoretic aspects, was then little known, even as a matter of mere speculation. Throughout the entire argument there run the conceptions of gradual changes naturally necessitated, and of the possibility of a better and better adjustment of man, physically, intellectually, and morally, to the needs imposed by the conditions of social life. As Mr. Spencer himself wrote, many years later, "In these letters will be found, along with many crude ideas," a "belief in the conformity of social phenomena to invariable laws," and "in human progression as determined by such laws." * All this

* Reasons for Dissenting from the Philosophy of M. Comte. (Essays, vol. ii, p. 187, note.)

revealed, even at so early a stage of mental growth, a marked tendency to regard the complicated and entangled phenomena of society from a strictly scientific point of view as phenomena exhibiting relations of cause and effect, and thus to be included in the realm of natural law. But it meant something more than this. The distinct and conscious acceptance of the doctrine that society is a thing not artificially pieced together, but of slow and natural growth, implied dissatisfaction with the current ideas of progress as an irregular and fortuitous process, and bore testimony to at least a vague germinal belief in a social development or evolution.

The momentous questions thus raised and briefly dealt with by Mr. Spencer in this youthful production came in for more thorough and extended treatment a few years later in his first considerable work, Social Statics, which was published in 1850, when the author was just thirty years of age. The conception of this work had entered his mind not long after the appearance of the just-mentioned pamphlet; for, owing to the rapid growth and expansion of his ideas at the time, Spencer soon became aware of the inadequacy of his handling of the various problems there opened up. "The writing of Social Statics," he has since said, "arose from a dissatisfaction with the basis on which the doctrines set forth in those letters were placed." *

* Reasons for Dissenting from the Philosophy of M. Comte.

Even the briefest comparison of the earlier and later books is sufficient to show the enormous strides which his mind had taken during the seven critical years which divide them one from the other. In Social Statics almost everything is made to turn upon the doctrine —previously hardly more than hinted at—that from the very beginning of social life down to the present time there has been going on, and that there still is going on, a process of slow but none the less certain adjustment of the natures of men to society, and of the social organization to the natures of its constituent units: this adjustment being the result of a perpetual interaction between units and aggregate which ever tends to bring them into more perfect adaptation the one to the other. Such adaptation, it is further shown, is produced by the direct action of circumstances upon the natures of men, and by the preservation and accumulation by inheritance from generation to generation of the modifications thus initiated; though another process comes in for passing recognition—the process of the dying out of those individuals who fail to adapt themselves to the changing conditions of their environment: which process may be conversely stated as the survival of those only who so far change as to fit themselves to the necessities imposed upon them by the totality of their surroundings. Here, it will be seen, is a faint and partial adumbration of the doctrine of the survival of the fittest in the struggle for existence. Moreover, another important point is emphasized—the point that

all our social evils and imperfections are due to want of complete adjustment between men and the conditions of social life—are, indeed, nothing more than the temporary jarring and wrenching of a machine the parts of which are not yet brought into thorough working order. Yet, as the process of adaptation is still continuing, and is in the nature of things tending ever to produce between units and aggregate a state of more perfect equilibrium, the inevitable if optimistic corollary is, that the evil which we deplore will in the end work itself out altogether, and that eventually all friction will entirely disappear: a prophecy which seems to point to a realization of the gorgeous dreams of speculators like Godwin and Condorcet, far as the arguments upon which it is based are seen to differ from their own. Finally, all these special changes in man and in society are regarded as phases only of a process of universal development or unfolding, which is everywhere conducing, in obedience to an inherent metaphysical tendency, to the production in man, as throughout the whole of the animate creation, of more complete individuation and higher and higher types.

We thus see that, unlike Darwin and Wallace, Mr. Spencer approached the question of general evolution not from the organic but from the super-organic point of view—by the way of ethical and sociological investigations. His first conception of development was in the limited shape of progress—of development, that is, of man individually and in society. But Mr. Spencer's

was not the mind to rest content with these vague and partial glimpses of a stupendous truth. Before long he began to work his way round through researches of quite a different character, towards the affiliation of these special and disjointed facts and inferences upon other facts and inferences of wider sweep and meaning.

His labours upon Social Statics had led him up to a realization of the important truth that beneath all the much-debated questions of morality and society lie the fundamental doctrines of biology and psychology; and that any really scientific or efficient treatment of man as a moral being or social unit must depend upon a thorough study of the problems of life and mind. Full of these ideas, he turned with increased enthusiasm to biological and psychological studies; and to the prosecution of various lines of research in connection with these two subjects, a large part, though by no means the whole, of his energies was for some time devoted.

The ten years which followed—the years between 1850 and 1860 (it is well to notice the dates, because, as we shall presently see, they have their own importance)—were years of great activity—an activity to be measured not so much by their productiveness, though that was sufficiently remarkable, as by the amazing growth and organization of ideas which took place in them. During this period some twenty-five exhaustive articles from Spencer's pen were published in the leading organs of liberal thought; and in these articles, if we take them in the order of their appearance, we can

trace a gradual closing in from all sides, as it were, upon the great generalizations which were by-and-bye to fall into their places as integral parts of a coherent system of thought. As a matter of fact, these years may be regarded, from the point of view of the Synthetic Philosophy itself, as years of special and methodical training; and these essays, diverse as they are in form and matter, as separate and tentative contributions towards the treatment of various isolated phenomena which were ultimately to be taken up in their interrelations and dealt with in the mass. It would be impossible here to subject these essays one by one to anything like close analysis, even if it would materially further our present purpose to do so. But a few words must be devoted to their general drift and character; and, should one or two of them be made the subjects of special mention, it will not be because these are to be considered the most important in themselves, but simply because they are the most important for the object which at the moment I have in view.

Probably the points which would most strike any one reading these essays casually and for the first time would be their strong grasp upon deep-lying principles, and their extraordinary originality. On every page they reveal, be the subject what it may, an astonishing independence of thought, and an absolute freedom from all trace of traditional methods and ideas. It was this freshness of treatment and firmness of touch which perhaps most attracted the attention of thoughtful readers

when they were first published—for the most part anonymously—in the pages of the various English magazines and reviews. But, turning back to them to-day and regarding them in their mutual relations (as we are able to do now that they have long since been available in a collected and permanent form), we are impressed by something beyond the depth, clearness, and vigour of mind to which they everywhere bear witness: and that something is the essential unity of their thought, the oneness of idea which is throughout seen to underlie and inform the extraordinary diversity of materials with which they deal. It matters not whether the author is concerned with the moot questions of physiology and psychology; or with the intrinsic principles of a correct literary style; or with the changes of the sidereal system; or with ill-timed and hasty political panaceas; or with curiosities of social manners and behaviour: all these subjects are systematically approached from one point of view; all are made to cluster about and find interpretation in one dominant hypothesis. And what is this hypothesis? What is this great cardinal doctrine which is thus made to weld together subjects so diverse and even so incongruous that on any merely superficial examination they would never be supposed to possess anything in common? It need hardly be said that it is the doctrine of development or evolution—a doctrine which manifests itself in every essay with continually increasing distinctness, and which is thus shown to be taking year

after year a stronger and stronger hold upon the author's mind and a deeper and deeper place in all his speculations.

As early as the year 1852 he had published in a periodical entitled The Leader a short but pithy paper on The Development Hypothesis, which was afterwards referred to by Darwin, in the historical sketch prefixed to The Origin of Species, as presenting the general argument for the developmental as against the special-creation interpretation of the universe with remarkable cogency and skill. But, while reasons were here briefly but clearly stated for a belief in the gradual development of all organisms, not excluding man, it must be remembered that the essay does not contain any indication of factors adequate to the production of the alleged effects. One process only is recognized—the process of direct modification by the conditions of life; and as with this process alone it is obviously impossible to account for all the facts of organic creation, the way was left open to the uniformitarians to make good a temporary escape.

But this noteworthy little paper, though it contained a kind of systematized confession of faith, was only, after all, a starting-point for a long and thorough investigation of various aspects of the subject with which it was concerned. Its leading ideas, as I have said, came little by little to suffuse all his work, and in the years that followed they underwent consolidation and reached an expression at once more definite and more

complete. Was it a question of deducing a theory of population from the general law of animal fertility? Then we find distinct recognition of an advance from lower to higher brought about by excessive reproduction and the continual pressure of rapidly-multiplying organisms upon the slowly-increasing means of support (a statement in regard to which we shall have a word to say further on). Did the discussion turn upon the elaboration on a scientific basis of a true philosophy of style? Then, along with the application to the special phenomena of expression of the general law of "the line of least resistance," there is further reached the generalization—set down as applying to all products both of man and of Nature—of those two fundamental processes of evolution—the process of differentiation and the process of integration; since it is shown that a highly-developed style "will be, not a series of like parts simply placed in juxtaposition, but one whole made up of unlike parts that are mutually dependent." * Are the right and wrong objects and methods of education brought up for consideration? Then the answer given is firmly established upon the doctrine of a gradual unfolding of the mental faculties in obedience to natural law, the unfolding taking the form of a double-sided change from the simple to the complex, and from the indefinite to the definite. So is it with all other subjects whatso-

* The Philosophy of Style. First published in the Westminster Review, October, 1852.

ever. In the essay on Manners and Fashion, for example, emphasis is laid upon the truths that the various forms of restraint exercised by society as an aggregate over its individual members—such restraints being now clearly differentiated into ecclesiastical, political, and ceremonial—are all natural developments from one primordial form, and that the divergence of each from the others and of all from such primordial form takes place "in conformity with the laws of evolution of all organized bodies." And once again a similar line of argument is followed out in the extremely attractive articles on the Genesis of Science and the Origin and function of Music. Finally, in the elaborate essay on Progress: Its Law and Cause, evolutionary principles are enunciated with the utmost distinctness. The law of progress is shown to consist in the transformation of the homogeneous into the heterogeneous (a partial statement afterwards completed by the addition of a factor for the time being overlooked*); and this process is illustrated by examples taken from all orders of phenomena, while the cause of the transformation is found in the law of the multiplication of effects, afterwards brought out more fully in First Principles. In this essay, too, as in that on the Development Hypothesis, the general law of evolution is presented as holding

* This additional factor being, as we shall presently see, increase in coherence. A change must consist in increasing heterogeneity *and* increasing coherence, to constitute evolution.

good in the production of species and varieties, though here again direct adaptation to the conditions of existence is the only factor recognized as playing a part in the stupendous drama of unfolding life.

I have said enough, I think, to show how active was the period with which we have just been dealing—active alike in original production and in the absorption of fresh material and the organization of new ideas. But the enumeration of these five-and-twenty essays does not exhaust the record of Spencer's labours during this time. His studies in psychology, of which the essays on The Universal Postulate (1853) and The Art of Education (1854) were the immediate results, took more systematic form about the date of the publication of the latter paper; and in 1855 the first edition of his Principles of Psychology made its appearance. As this work was subsequently included as a portion of the two volumes on the Principles of Psychology in the Synthetic system, any analysis of its contents does not fall within the scope of the present chapter. Two remarks may, however, be appropriately made in the present connection ere we pass on. In the first place, it is well we should remind ourselves how enormously this book was in advance of the whole thought of the time —not the common thought only, but the cultivated thought as well.* It was in the fullest sense of the

* How true this was, may be strikingly shown by a consideration of the attitude taken up towards the evolutionary psychology by John Stuart Mill. The bias of this distinguished thinker

term an epoch-making book—epoch-making because it placed the study of mind, theretofore in the hands of the metaphysicians as sterile a subject as it had proved in the days of mediæval scholasticism, upon an entirely new and promisingly fertile basis. Hitherto, mental philosophy had concerned itself only with the facts of adult human consciousness. Spencer, realizing as we are now all able to realize how little could ever be accomplished by this time-worn and superficial method, broke away from all the traditions of the schools, and started out on an original investigation of the phenomena of mind, in the wide sweep of which he took in not only the mental growth of children and savages, but also the phenomena of intelligence as displayed by the whole range of the animate world down to the lowest creatures. To quote his own words, "Life in its multitudi-

in favour of the experiential philosophy was so strong that he hesitated to accept the compromise which the developmental view offered to effect between the special doctrines of his own school of pure empiricism and those of the intuitionists. Yet he came at length to recognize how large a step in advance the evolutionists had really made. Dr. Carpenter, referring to Mill's gradual change of front, quotes a portion of a letter addressed to him on the subject by Mill himself, part of which runs as follows: "There is also considerable evidence that such acquired facilities of passing into certain modes of cerebral action can in many cases be transmitted more or less completely by inheritance. The limits of this transmission and the conditions on which it depends are a subject now fairly before the scientific world; and we shall doubtless in time know much more about them than we do now. But so far as my imperfect knowledge of the subject extends, I take much the same view of it that you do, at least in principle." —See Carpenter's Principles of Mental Physiology.

nous and infinitely varied embodiments has arisen out of the lowest and simplest beginnings by steps as gradual as those which evolved an homogenous germ into a complete organism." Starting from this conception, the author proceeds to treat of the whole subject of intelligence and its forms of manifestation from an evolutionary point of view; the Principles having "for their object the establishment, by a double process of analysis and of synthesis, the unity of composition of the phenomena of mind, and the continuity of their development." * My second remark is purely a personal one, yet one which has its interest and importance—though these are of a somewhat melancholy character—in any account of Mr. Spencer's earlier writings. It was in consequence of overwork, while producing the volume now referred to, that Mr. Spencer suffered the nervous breakdown of which we have already spoken, and under the burden of which all his subsequent great work has been done.

It is not, I think, needful to pause, after even such a rapid summary of the activities of these ten momentous years, to say anything about the extraordinary perversion of judgment which has led critics from whom, having regard to their position and general culture, something better was to have been expected, to treat these writings as "stock-writings," and to refer to their author as having "the weakness of omniscience" and a

* Th. Ribot, English Psychology, p, 148, London, 1873.

desire to discourse on a great diversity of subjects, from the nebular hypothesis to music and dancing. We are now, I believe, in a fair position to realize how much, or rather how little, these curiosities of oracular criticism are really worth. So far from Mr. Spencer's various essays during this epoch being merely examples of flippant journalistic versatility (as such estimates as we have spoken of would imply), we have seen how they are united and held together by that thread of common principle and common purpose which runs through them all. Random and unrelated as they may appear to superficial or careless readers, they may, broadly speaking, be regarded as separate and methodical studies in preparation for a complete working out in general and in detail of the doctrine of universal evolution.

And now, why have I devoted so large a portion of the present chapter to the consideration and analysis of these earlier, more miscellaneous, and, as it might seem, less important of Mr. Spencer's writings? Passing over the fact that in the merest sketch of the growth and development of such a mind as his we are presented with a study of which it would not be easy to overrate either the interest or the value, I may say that I had hopes of achieving two objects by following the present course. In the first place, by thus making ourselves to some extent acquainted with the progression and consolidation of Spencer's thought, we have, I believe, very materially aided in fitting ourselves for the

study of those ideas in the full and highly developed forms in which they appear in the pages of the Synthetic Philosophy; and, in the second place, it is by travelling together over this preparatory ground, as we have done, that we have been enabled to reach a vantage-point from which I trust it will now be easy for us to take such a survey of the general field as will help us to appreciate with some degree of accuracy the real relation of Herbert Spencer to the great modern doctrine of evolution.

And this is a question upon which I would fain make myself particularly clear, because it is one in reference to which there has long been and is still current an enormous amount of misconception, not only among the mass of men and women (which under the circumstances would be only natural), but also, and as it seems a little strangely, among even the thoughtful and generally well informed. A vagueness and instability in the meaning of certain words in common use has been in this case, as in so many others, a main cause of confusion in ideas; another instance being thus furnished of the truth of Lord Bacon's dictum that, while we fondly suppose that we govern our vocabulary, it not infrequently happens that, as a matter of fact, our vocabulary governs us. In the common speech of the day the word Darwinism is almost invariably employed as if it were absolutely synonymous with the word evolution; the one is treated as being at all points not only coextensive but also cointensive with the other. Two note-

worthy results of this indiscrimination are: first, that Darwin is habitually regarded as the author of the modern doctrine of evolution at large; and, secondly, that this doctrine has, ever since the publication of his great work on the Origin of Species, become so intimately bound up with the special views therein contained, that by the correctness or incorrectness of those special views the whole theory of evolution is supposed to stand or fall.

That this confusion, like all such confusions, has been fraught with many and varied philosophic drawbacks and dangers is a point which we need not here pause to emphasize; such drawbacks and dangers must be sufficiently patent to all. Here we are principally concerned with the entirely unjust and erroneous estimate of the historical significance of Mr. Spencer's work, and consequently of the relations of Mr. Spencer himself to the greatest of modern generalizations, which originated from or which at least has been largely kept alive by the misconception of which I speak.

To what extent this unjust and erroneous estimate has taken root, even in more cultivated thought, may be shown briefly and conclusively by one or two quotations. For example, we find the London Saturday Review remarking, in the course of an article on the late Prof. Tyndall's famous Belfast address, now some twenty years ago, that "what Darwin has done for physiology [!] Spencer would do for psychology, by applying to the nervous system particularly the principles which his teacher had

already enunciated for the physical system generally." In much the same strain, and obviously under the same impression that Mr. Spencer's ideas were all obtained at second hand,* a gentleman whom we are sorry to detect in such carelessness—Colonel Higginson—writes, "It seems rather absurd to attribute to him [Mr. Spencer] as a scientific achievement any vast enlargement or further generalization of the modern scientific doctrine of evolution." Once more, sketching out the college life of his friend, the late lamented Prof. Clifford, with whose untimely death so many brilliant promises came to naught, Mr. Frederick Pollock says, "Meanwhile, he [Mr. Clifford] was eagerly assimilating the ideas which had become established as an assured possession of science by Mr. Darwin, and were being applied to the systematic grouping and gathering together of human knowledge by Mr. Herbert Spencer." And, finally (not to weary by needlessly multiplying quotations), a man whose name is of infinitely greater weight in the world of philosophy and of letters than that of the pert critic

* There has perhaps never been so original a thinker as Mr. Spencer who has had such a hard struggle to get or keep possession of the credit due to his own ideas. Not only is he thus reduced to the position of a mere aide-de-camp of Darwin, but many of his critics are never weary in insisting, spite of all disproof of their assertions, upon his vital indebtedness to Auguste Comte. The singularly distorted current ideas of his general relation to evolution, above animadverted upon, may be partly the results of the anonymity of his earlier publications; and all wrongheadedness is marvellously tenacious of life.

of the Saturday Review, or the gallant American colonel, or the well-known English lawyer—a man from whom, on account of his own contributions to the study of psychology and of his wide and deep knowledge of England and English thought, a more correct judgment might have been looked for—I mean the late M. Taine—has thus summed up his view of Mr. Spencer's work: "Mr. Spencer possesses the rare merit of having extended to the sum of phenomena—to the whole history of Nature and of mind—the two master-thoughts which for the past thirty years have been giving new form to the positive sciences; the one being Mayer and Joule's Conservation of Energy, the other Darwin's Natural Selection."

Now, all this, to the extent to which expressly or by implication it relegates to Mr. Spencer merely the labours of an adapter, enlarger, or popularizer of other men's thoughts, is entirely false and unfounded—ludicrously false and unfounded, as the general survey of Mr. Spencer's writings which we have just taken shows beyond the faintest shadow of a doubt. So far from its seeming "rather absurd" to credit to Mr. Spencer any great personal contribution to the formulation of the doctrine of evolution; so far from his being in any sense of the term a pupil or unattached follower of Darwin, we have seen that he had worked his own way independently, from a different starting-point and through an entirely dissimilar course of investigation, to a conception of evolution as a universal process un-

derlying all phenomena whatsoever, before Darwin himself had made public his special study of the operation of one of the factors of evolution in the limited sphere of the organic world. A simple comparison of dates will serve to make this point sufficiently clear. The first edition of the Origin of Species was published in the latter part of 1859. The essay on the Development Hypothesis appeared in 1852; in 1855—or four years before the advent of Darwin's book—there came the first edition of the Principles of Psychology, in which the laws of evolution (already conceived as universal) were traced out in their operations in the domain of mind; and this was followed in 1857 by the essay on Progress: Its Law and Cause, which contains a statement of the doctrine of evolution in its chief outlines, and an inductive and deductive development of that doctrine in its application to all classes of phenomena. Spencer's independence of Darwin is thus placed beyond possibility of question.

Let it not for a moment be imagined that I am endeavouring in the slightest degree to underestimate the special value or importance of Darwin's magnificent work. Yielding him the fullest meed of praise for the great part which he undoubtedly played in the development of scientific thought, I am aiming only to show, as can so easily be shown, and as simple justice requires to be shown, that it is altogether an exaggeration to speak of him as the father of the modern doctrine of evolution. What Darwin did was to amass an enor-

mous number of facts from almost every department of biological science, and by the devoted labour, patient examination, and long-searching thought of many studious years, to establish, once and for all, not the reality of evolution, nor even the laws and conditions of evolution, but the operation of one of the main factors of evolution—a factor which, though it had till his time entirely eluded the scientific mind, was yet required to render comprehensible a vast array of phenomena otherwise without interpretation. How near Mr. Spencer's own investigations had led him to a realization of the process of natural selection, or, as he afterwards called it, the survival of the fittest in the struggle for existence, we have already been able to remark; and he himself took occasion to point this out, when in the course of his later work he came to deal more systematically with the whole problem of animal fertility and its practical implications.* But the factors mainly relied

* See Principles of Biology, vol. ii, p. 500. The whole of this very interesting note should be studied carefully, not only because it makes clear the scientific relations of Spencer and Darwin, but also for the foreshadowing which it contains of a reaction against that exclusive recognition of natural selection which soon became typical of biological students at large. The fundamental fact of evolution being now universally accepted, scientists of the present day are divided into two hostile camps upon the question of the processes of evolution: one party, often described as the neo-Darwinian, holding to natural selection and to that alone; the other, antithetically called the neo-Lamarckian, maintaining that other factors have to be taken into account. The controversy, which mainly turns upon the problem as to whether or not ac-

upon by him, in common with all pre-Darwinian developmentalists, were the direct action of the environment and the inheritance, with increase, of functionally-produced modifications; and as these processes, whatever might be their individual importance, were obviously incapable of throwing light upon a large part—perhaps the larger part—of the facts which pressed for explanation, the theory of evolution could not for the time being hope for inductive establishment. Darwin's book put the whole question upon a new foundation, by exhibiting a process which *did* account for the hitherto unmanageable facts; and undoubtedly it was thus to a large extent effectual in bringing the general theory into open court as an entertainable hypothesis. But while all this is freely conceded—while the greatness of Darwin's work in itself, and its importance as a contribution to scientific thought, are acknowledged with-

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quired characteristics are inheritable, is now for the most part immediately connected with the writings of Prof. Weismann, in which an elaborate attempt is made to prove that, of all alleged evolutionary factors, natural selection is alone demanded by facts and supported by evidence. Mr. Spencer has himself remained firm to the position adopted in the note above referred to, his contributions to the discussion being the essays on The Factors of Organic Evolution (1886); A Counter-Criticism (1888); The Inadequacy of Natural Selection (1893); and A Rejoinder to Professor Weismann (1893). The whole biological and philosophical world realizes that it is now indeed passing through a crisis unparalleled since that brought about by the publication of Darwin's book itself; for in view of its many-sided importance the question is one which, as Mr. Spencer has said, beyond all others demands the attention of scientific men.

out hesitation, it has still to be remembered that that work was special and limited in character, and that with the general doctrine of evolution at large it had itself nothing whatever to do. The laws of evolution as a universal process—a matter which the aims and objects of Darwin's work did not lead him to touch—were worked out by Mr. Spencer quite irrespectively of the special process of natural selection; and when Darwin's book appeared, that process fell into its place in Spencer's general system, quite naturally, as a supplementary and not in any way as a disturbing element. Thus it appears that if any one man is to be looked upon as the immediate progenitor of a doctrine which, in common phraseology, may be said to have been to some extent in the air—a "truth of science, waiting to be caught"—that man is not he who first elucidated one factor of its process in one domain of phenomena—the biological; but rather he who first seized upon it as a universal law, underlying all the phenomena of creation. In a word, it is not Charles Darwin, but Herbert Spencer.

We have thus followed the general course of Mr. Spencer's thought through what, in the light of his subsequent work, must be regarded as the period of experiment and preparation. We now turn from these earlier writings to that colossal undertaking to which the greater part of the energies of his after-life was to be devoted—the System of Synthetic Philosophy.

CHAPTER III.

THE SYNTHETIC PHILOSOPHY—THE PRINCIPLES OF BIOLOGY AND OF PSYCHOLOGY.

I.

EARLY in the course of the composition of the Principles of Psychology in their original form—that is, in 1854—Mr. Spencer had reached that conception of evolution as a universal process which he subsequently worked out in detail in the essay on Progress: Its Laws and Cause. The writing of this article, which first saw the light in the pages of the Westminster Review, in April, 1857, doubtless helped in large measure to systematize and co-ordinate the various ideas that were then fermenting in his mind. It was in the following year, while he was engaged in preparing a long essay in defence of the Nebular Hypothesis, that there dawned upon him the possibility of dealing in a more methodical and connected manner than he had hitherto found practicable with those foundation-principles of evolution to which he had been led by the miscellaneous studies of the past eight or nine years. Instead of

treating the diverse phenomena of life and society in disjointed fragments, why should he not consider them after some orderly plan and in their mutual relationships? The germ of thought, thus implanted, forthwith began to develop with extraordinary rapidity, and before long assumed the proportions of an elaborate scheme, in which all orders of concrete phenomena were to fall into their places as illustrations of the fundamental process of evolution. Thus the conception of evolution now presented itself to him as the basis of a system of thought under which was to be generalized the complete history of the knowable universe, and by virtue of which all branches of scientific knowledge were to be unified by affiliation upon the primal laws underlying them all. Such was the origin of the Synthetic Philosophy.

Though a rough sketch of the main outlines of the system as they occurred to him at the time, was mapped out almost immediately, it was not till the following year, 1859—a year otherwise made memorable by the publication of Darwin's book—that a detailed plan of the various connected works in which these conceptions were to be developed was finally drawn up; and not till March, 1860, that it was given to the small handful of readers interested in such matters in the form of a prospectus. Mr. Spencer's original intention was to issue the proposed work to subscribers, in periodical parts. This course was persevered in till the publication of the forty-fourth division, in 1876, completing the

first volume of the Principles of Sociology. It was then discontinued, and since that date, the publication has been made in volume form only.

The following is a reprint, slightly condensed by the omission of some explanatory matter not now of any special interest, of the programme as originally given to the world.

First Principles.

Part I. The Unknowable. Carrying a step further the doctrine put into shape by Hamilton and Mansel; pointing out the various directions in which science leads to the same conclusions; and showing that in this united belief in an Absolute that transcends not only human knowledge but human conception, lies the only possible reconciliation of Science and Religion.

II. Laws of the Knowable. A statement of the ultimate principles discernible throughout all manifestations of the Absolute—those highest generalizations now being disclosed by Science which are severally true not of one class of phenomena but of *all* classes of phenomena; and which are thus the keys to all classes of phenomena.

[In logical order should here come the application of these First Principles to Inorganic Nature. But this great division it is proposed to pass over: partly because, even without it, the scheme is too extensive; partly because the interpretation of Organic Nature after the proposed method, is of more immediate im-

portance. The second work of the series will therefore be—]

THE PRINCIPLES OF BIOLOGY.

Vol. I.

PART I. The Data of Biology. Including those general truths of physics and chemistry with which rational biology must set out.

II. The Inductions of Biology. A statement of the leading generalizations which naturalists, physiologists, and comparative anatomists have established.

III. The Evolution of Life. Concerning the speculation commonly known as the Development Hypothesis—its *a priori* and *a posteriori* evidences.

Vol. II.

IV. Morphological Development. Pointing out the relations that are everywhere traceable between organic forms and the average of the various forces to which they are subject; and seeking in the cumulative effects of such forces a theory of the forms.

V. Physiological Development. The progressive differentiation of functions similarly traced; and similarly interpreted as consequent upon the exposure of different parts of organisms to different sets of conditions.

VI. The Laws of Multiplication. Generalizations respecting the rates of reproduction of the various classes of plants and animals; followed by an attempt

to show the dependence of these variations upon certain necessary causes.

The Principles of Psychology.

Vol. I.

Part I. The Data of Psychology. Treating of the general connections of mind and life, and their relations to other modes of the Unknowable.

II. The Inductions of Psychology. A digest of such generalizations respecting mental phenomena as have already been empirically established.

III. General Synthesis. A republication, with additional chapters, of the same part in the already published Principles of Psychology.

IV. Special Synthesis. A republication, with extensive revisions and additions, of the same part.

V. Physical Synthesis. An attempt to show the manner in which the succession of states of consciousness conforms to a certain fundamental law of nervous action that follows from the first principles laid down at the outset.

Vol. II.

VI. Special Analysis. As at present published, but further elaborated by some additional chapters.

VII. General Analysis. As at present published, with several explanations and additions.

VIII. Corollaries. Consisting in part of a number

of derivative principles which form a necessary introduction to sociology.

The Principles of Sociology.

Vol. I.

Part I. The Data of Sociology. A statement of the several sets of factors entering into social phenomena—human ideas and feelings considered in their necessary order of evolution; surrounding natural conditions; and those ever-complicating conditions to which society itself gives origin.

II. The Inductions of Sociology. General facts, structural and functional, as gathered from a survey of societies and their changes; in other words, the empirical generalizations that are arrived at by comparing different societies and successive phases of the same society.

III. Political Organization. The evolution of governments, general and local, as determined by natural causes; their several types and metamorphoses; their increasing complexity and specialization; and the progressive limitation of their functions.

Vol. II.

IV. Ecclesiastical Organization. Tracing the differentiation of religious government from secular; its successive complications and the multiplication of sects; the growth and continued modification of reli-

gious ideas, as caused by advancing knowledge and changing moral character; and the gradual reconciliation of these ideas with the truths of abstract science.

V. Ceremonial Organization. The natural history of that third kind of government which, having a common root with the others, and slowly becoming separate from and supplementary to them, serves to regulate the minor actions of life.*

VI. Industrial Organization. The development of productive and distributive agencies considered, like the foregoing, in its necessary causes; comprehending not only the progressive division of labour and the increasing complexity of each industrial agency, but also the successive forms of industrial government as passing through like phases with political government. †

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* In their published form these three divisions are entitled respectively: Political Institutions; Ecclesiastical Institutions; Ceremonial Institutions; and the last named is properly made to take precedence of the other two. A part on Domestic Institutions is inserted (as Part III) after the Inductions, and this of course disturbs the subsequent numbering of the divisions, as well as, to some extent, the volume arrangement.

* This division, and the whole of Vol. III, were skipped by Mr. Spencer when he decided at all hazards to push on with the closing volumes on Ethics; and they remain unpublished to-day. Now that the Principles of Ethics is completed, Mr. Spencer will presumably return to those omitted parts and take them up in the order given. I remember a close personal friend and consistent admirer of Mr. Spencer remarking to me some few years ago that she almost wished that he would never undertake to handle some of the subjects specified in the above-outlined third volume, inasmuch as his special preparation could hardly be held to fit him for thorough treatment of such a topic, for instance, as

Vol. III.

VII. Lingual Progress. The evolution of languages regarded as a psychological process determined by social conditions.

VIII. Intellectual Progress. Treated from the same point of view: including the growth of classifications; the evolution of science out of common knowledge; the advance from qualitative to quantitative prevision, from the indefinite to the definite, and from the concrete to the abstract.

IX. Æsthetic Progress. The fine arts similarly dealt with: tracing their gradual differentiation from primitive institutions and from each other; their increasing varieties of development; and their advance in reality of expression and superiority of aim.

X. Moral Progress. Exhibiting the genesis of the slow emotional modifications which human nature undergoes in its adaptation to the social state.

Linguistic Development. Doubtless anything he might write on this question would embroil him with many of the philologists, as his utterances upon mythology have already led him into conflict with Prof. Max Müller and his followers. How far this would be desirable, and what would be his probable chances of success under such circumstances, are matters upon which opinions will differ; but, at all events, it is instructive to notice that, as a friend has pointed out to me, Prof. Max Müller himself has recently been going sadly astray in his philological discussions for want of recognition of the principles of evolution in their application to language. All his learning notwithstanding, such want must necessarily condemn a large part of his investigations to sterility.

XI. The Consensus. Treating of the necessary interdependence of structures and of functions in each type of society and in the successive phases of social development.

The Principles of Morality.

Vol. I.

Part I. The Data of Morality. Generalizations furnished by biology, psychology, and sociology, which underlie a true theory of right living: in other words, the elements of that equilibrium between constitution and conditions of existence, which is at once the moral ideal and the limit towards which we are progressing.

II. The Inductions of Morality. Those empirically established rules of human action which are registered as essential laws by all civilized nations: that is to say, the generalizations of expediency.

III. Personal Morals. The principles of private conduct—physical, intellectual, moral, and religious—that follow from the conditions to complete individual life; or, what is the same thing, those modes of private action which must result from the eventual equilibration of internal desires and external needs.

Vol. II.

IV. Justice. The mutual limitations of men's actions, necessitated by their coexistence as units of a society—limitations, the perfect observance of which

constitutes that state of equilibrium forming the goal of political progress.

V. Negative Beneficence. Those secondary limitations, similarly necessitated, which, though less important and not cognizable by law, are yet requisite to prevent mutual destruction of happiness in various indirect ways: in other words, those minor self-restraints, dictated by what may be called passive sympathy.

VI. Positive Beneficence. Comprehending all modes of conduct, dictated by active sympathy, which imply pleasure in giving pleasure—modes of conduct that social adaptation has induced and must render ever more general; and which, in becoming universal, must fill to the full the possible measure of human happiness.

I reproduce this important document here for two reasons: first, because it is convenient for the student of Spencer to have under his eye for reference and guidance such a general programme of the scope and aim of the system taken as a whole, and of the concatenation of its various parts; and, secondly, because it is instructive to notice with what fidelity Mr. Spencer has adhered to his original plan. Any one who takes the trouble to compare the above sketch given here as it stood when it first appeared, more than thirty-three years ago, with the contents of the different volumes and portions of volumes that have been published up to the present time, can hardly fail to be

astonished to observe the remarkable correspondence between them—a correspondence which shows how fully and accurately Mr. Spencer must have had the whole vast territory mapped out in his mind, even down to the minutest details, before he sat down to commit himself to the penning of a single line.

II.

The philosophic undertaking thus outlined, and now brought within measurable distance of completion, differs from all other comprehensive bodies of thought with which in its external characteristics it might be compared, alike in its method and its scope. In approaching the study of the Synthetic System we cannot do better than emphasize its uniqueness in both of these aspects.

In the early days of philosophic speculation it was sufficient if, in the building up of his elaborate structure of doctrine, the thinker succeeded in making the various parts of his system coherent and harmonious among themselves. So long as they would hang together without internal friction or disorder, so long as in this way they would, verbally considered, produce the impression of organic unity, nothing more was required. How far they might or might not be congruous with the actual laws and processes of the universe was a question which, in the then condition of knowledge, would never be taken into serious consideration. Thus the Platos of old days, and the Hegels

of more recent times, could start from whatever datum they chose to postulate, and spin their poetic webs of fanciful metaphysics without troubling themselves to inquire whether the facts of the world were for or against them. In the former case, well and good; in the latter, *tant pis pour les faits:* in either event their work went on uninterrupted and untrammelled.* Wherever they looked out on the universe they saw nothing but a reflection of their own whims and theories; reminding us of Coleridge's brilliant metaphor of Jack Robinson between two mirrors, prolonged into an endless succession of Jack Robinsons. But Science, in opening up the arcana of the universe, has passed all such methods under summary condemnation. The fabled German is said, in the familiar story, to have evolved a camel out of the depths of his inner consciousness; and the monstrosity which he boldly offered to the world would have done well enough so long as no real camel had been examined and studied. But the importation of a genuine animal into the matter changed at once the attitude and increased the responsibilities of the would-be naturalist. His description of

* In Lord Bolingbroke's Letter to Alexander Pope there is a passage obviously more appropriate to certain later philosophers than to those he himself had in view when penning it: "Rather than creep up slowly, *a posteriori*, to a little general knowledge, they soar at once as far and as high as imagination can carry them. From thence they descend again, armed with systems and arguments *a priori;* and, regardless how these agree or clash with the phenomena of Nature, they impose them on mankind."

the camel must now not only possess the qualities of internal balance and feasibility, but it must also meet the additional requirement of resemblance to the camel of the actual world. The parable hardly needs interpretation. For this simply means that all philosophy worthy of the name must henceforth build upon foundations firmly laid in scientific verity. Any system that neglects science as its corner-stone stands self-condemned, and does not merit serious thought.

Now, the first characteristic mark of the Spencerian philosophy is, that its vast superstructure is reared not independently of science, still less in spite of science, but out of the very materials that science itself has furnished. Yet, in our task of building up in this way a body of doctrine which shall not only be verbally intelligible in itself but shall at every point stand the supreme test of direct comparison with fact, two methods are open to us. In the first place, we might separately examine the various concrete sciences in quest of the highest truth or truths that these would each yield; and setting together the generalizations thus reached, we might endeavour to formulate from these the still wider generalization in which they would all merge. Close analysis of this widest generalization would then reveal the ultimate axiom—a datum which, as referable to nothing beyond or behind it, must be taken, so to speak, upon its own credentials, and would be accepted as the starting-point of our

philosophy.* This would be to proceed according to the inductive method in its unadulterated form. But this would have its disadvantages. The enormous number and bewildering variety of the materials with which we should have to deal would render our inquiry so cumbrous and uncertain, that it is questionable whether the most carefully co-ordinated series of inductions would ever place us in undisputed possession of that widest generalization of which we are in search; and our doubt on this head would be strengthened on our recollecting that, magnificent as have been the results achieved by induction in the past, the richest domains of our modern science have not been conquered by its unaided strength and skill.† The second possible plan is to commence at the other end of the line. Suppose that by means of a direct examination of the facts of consciousness we could come in sight of a single *a priori* truth. Accepting this as our axiom, we should then have to deduce from it those all-embracing gen-

* It is well not to lose sight of the fact that the most rigid method of induction does not relieve us of the obligation of postulating somewhere an unproved and unprovable principle. We must fasten the final link of our chain somewhere, if we have to introduce a foot of Jove for the purpose. Otherwise our philosophy is without a basis, like the old Hindu theory of the universe. See particularly Mill *versus* Hamilton (Essays, vol. ii.).

† The case of Newton will at once suggest itself as an instance in point, since his brilliant discoveries were made by calling in the deductive in aid of the inductive method. All this is put with admirable lucidity in Mr. John Fiske's Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy, i, 265–267.

eralizations in which the special phenomena of all the concrete sciences find their interpretation. And here our deductive process must be brought to the touchstone of induction. If the widest generalizations yet reached by a co-ordination of the concrete sciences are found to be at the same time the necessary corollaries that we have already deduced from the ultimate principle previously postulated, our synthesis is placed upon the firmest of possible foundations. Our universal principles, formulated both deductively and inductively, have thus the highest kind of certitude, and may be boldly carried forward into all the particular groups of phenomena constituting the subject-matter of the various concrete sciences, with every prospect of their throwing light into many dark places by the way.

Now, this is the method adopted by Mr. Spencer. After the preparatory work of clearing the ground has been accomplished by showing what is the task that philosophy has to undertake, the volume concerned with the establishment of the first principles of the Synthetic System proceeds to a formulation of the laws of the knowable. Direct search leads to the enunciation of a single fundamental and ultimate principle—that of the persistence of force; and corollaries immediately deducible from this principle establish for us the necessity and mark out the law of evolution—a law to which, as our deductive inquiry shows us, all orders of cosmical phenomena *must* conform. Having in this way reached the statement of his largest principles, Mr. Spencer has

recourse to the method of induction. These principles are carried to the test of fact; are found to merge in the widest generalizations of science inductively arrived at; and are thus held to meet the most rigid demand, and to be demonstrated beyond possibility of question. The Spencerian philosophy has thus unique claims on the score of its logical completeness. Recognizing to the full the value of inductive verification, it presents us with a complete history of the knowable universe in its empirical form. But it does more than this: by affiliating its all-embracing generalizations upon principles already established, it furnishes a rational history of the knowable universe as well.

But if the Synthetic System stands alone in respect of its method, it does so no less in respect of its scope. The older philosophers demanded an explanation of existence; the problem for which they sought a solution was the problem of the nature of things; and, not content with the study of the phenomenal universe, it was their endeavour to sound the mystery of absolute being. What is the primary cause of the cosmos? What is its final cause—the end for which it exists? These, and nothing less than these, are the stupendous questions which generations of metaphysicians from time immemorial have busied themselves to answer. With what result? With the result that failure has followed every effort, and that every scheme, no matter how carefully planned, how elaborately developed, how verbally plausible, has sooner or later been forced to

take its place among the curiosities of misapplied ingenuity in the intellectual lumber-heap of the world. The futility of all the study devoted in the past to these fascinating but elusive questions—the absurdities that each fresh speculator will freely acknowledge as the characteristics of every system but his own—the total inadequacy of each new master-word to roll back for us the eternal gates that shut from human knowledge the final mystery of life; all these things have in themselves sufficed to lead some of the clearest and sanest intellects of the past to an appreciation of the fact that the old-world riddle remains unsolved because it is insoluble.* Fresh efforts to read the enigma of the Sphinx will therefore be followed by the familiar results. But we need no longer rest in any such empirical conclusion. Modern psychology shows us the reason of the historic failure by making clear the conditions under which all our thinking must be done—

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* Goethe—among the first to appreciate to the full the philosophic consequences of the limitations of human faculty—again and again insisted that our business is with the laws and conditions of the phenomenal universe, and not with the ultimate mystery that lies behind them.

"Wie? Wann? und Wo?
Die Götter blieben stumm.
Du halte dich ans Weil,
Und frage nicht Warum!"

Elsewhere he writes to this effect: "Man is born not to solve the problem of the universe but to find out where the problem begins, and then to restrain himself within the limits of the comprehensible."

conditions which, when once duly recognized, reveal beyond the shadow of doubt or the possibility of question why it has been, is, and ever must be futile for the human intelligence to attempt to rise from the relative and the phenomenal into the consideration of that absolute and noumenal existence of which these are but the manifestations.

We must make up our minds, therefore, that our system of philosophy must leave out of its account those very questions with which all metaphysics have been principally concerned. The primary and final causes of the universe present problems which we have to acknowledge to lie beyond our scope. What, then, is left us? Barred from any possible insight into the enigma of absolute cause and end, we have the whole field of secondary cause and end open for our exploration. Declining to undertake any solution of the *why* and *wherefore* of the cosmos, science is free to devote all its energies to the question of the *how*. What we demand from it is not, therefore, an explanation of the universe, but a complete co-ordination, or systematic organization, of those cosmical laws by which we symbolize the processes of the universe, and the interrelations of the various phenomena of which the universe is composed.

What, then, is philosophy? The old idea, that it consists of knowledge generically different from common knowledge, has to be abandoned; we find that the difference is one only of degree. "As each widest

generalization of science comprehends and consolidates the narrower generalizations of its own division, so the generalizations of philosophy comprehend and consolidate the widest generalizations of science. It is therefore a knowledge the extreme opposite in kind to that which experience first accumulates. It is the final product of that process which begins with a mere colligation of crude observations, goes on establishing propositions that are broader and more separated from particular cases, and ends in universal propositions. Or, to bring the definition to its simplest and clearest form: Knowledge of the lowest kind is *ununified* knowledge; science is *partially-unified* knowledge; philosophy is *completely-unified* knowledge." *

III.

Such, then, are the methods and scope of the Synthetic Philosophy. We proceed now to the briefest possible statement of its most important principles.

Starting, as we have seen, from the datum of the persistence of force—a datum which possesses the highest kind of axiomatic certitude, inasmuch as it forms a basis for all other general truths, while at the same time it constitutes the one inexpugnable yet inexplicable element of consciousness—Mr. Spencer goes on to formulate from this three universal laws:—the law of the instability of the homogeneous, the law of the multiplica-

* First Principles, § 37.

tion of effects, and the law of segregation. On these three laws he establishes the necessity of that redistribution of matter and motion of which evolution is one phase. This widest generalization of science is thus deprived of its merely empirical character, and is given a rational foundation.

Hence, the question, What is evolution? And how shall we define it in philosophical terminology—in terminology, that is, which will hold good, not for this or that class of phenomena, but for all classes of phenomena whatsoever? To answer these questions intelligibly, and to enter into the full meaning of the extremely abstract formula in which Mr. Spencer has summed up the universal characteristics of this class of change, it will be most convenient for us to turn back and follow the course of his thought, marking out the steps by which the formula itself was arrived at. Points otherwise obscure will by this means be robbed of much of their difficulty, and a good deal of subsequent elucidation will be spared.

We have called attention to the fact that Mr. Spencer's earliest speculations were of a humanitarian character, and that his line of approach to the study of general evolution lay through that limited phase of development which we call progress. The theory of progress had been handed down to the thinkers of the nineteenth century by those of the eighteenth, and, despite the absurdities and extravagances that had vitiated its first manifestations—despite the vagueness and the

crudity that it bore with it as an hereditary taint, the kernel of vital truth that it enfolded rendered it a fertile contribution to thought. Mr. Spencer's earliest writings are dominated by this idea of individual and social advance; but it was altogether foreign to his intellectual character to interest himself in the working out of a conception that was not at bottom susceptible of definite interpretation. It is all very well to talk about progress; but what *is* progress? This was the special form of the question to which for a number of years he was gradually feeling his way to an answer.

Already in Social Statics he had reached what then seemed to him an adequate reply. Asserting the necessity of progress (here metaphysically associated with a preordained order),* he develops his theory from Coleridge's definition of life as "a tendency towards individuation." It is in the gradual fulfilment of this tendency, says Mr. Spencer, that all progress will be found to consist. Throughout the whole animate world we discover it at work in the production of higher and higher forms of organization and structure, and in man its fullest manifestation is reached. "By virtue of his complexity of structure he is furthest removed from the inorganic world in which there is least individuality.

* This is one of the many points at which this remarkable book presents itself as a connecting link between eighteenth century theories of progress, with their express or implicit teleology, and the definite and scientific statement that Mr. Spencer afterwards evolved.

Again, his intelligence and adaptability commonly enable him to maintain life to old age—to complete the cycle of his existence; that is, to fill out the limits of this individuality to the full. Again, he is self-conscious; that is, he recognizes his own individuality. And . . . even the change observable in human affairs is still towards a greater development of individuality—may still be described as 'a tendency to individuation.'"*

Translated into more philosophical language, this tendency to individuation is found to embrace two closely interrelated processes. Obviously, increasing complexity is one of these; not so obviously this increase of complexity must have increase of unity as its natural accompaniment. Universal specialization, with its resulting advance in heterogeneity, is only possible if, while all things are becoming more and more characteristically marked off from one another, they are at the same time becoming gradually more and more interdependent. The line of growth is "at once towards complete separateness and complete union."† Differentiation without concomitant unification would lead to chaos and confusion; differentiation along with concomitant unification produces that organic harmony which we call progress.

This double aspect of the matter is clearly recognized in Social Statics,‡ and was never entirely lost

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* Social Statics, chap. xxx, § 12. † Ibid., chap. xxx, § 13.
‡ Chap. xxx, §§ 13, 14.

sight of in Mr. Spencer's subsequent speculations.* Yet, as was not unnatural, it was the more striking and conspicuous element in progress that for some time alone absorbed his attention. Allowing the doctrine of unification to drop practically out of his thought, he fixed his mind upon the factor of increasing differentiation, which, detached from all other considerations, he attempted, in the essay on Progress, its Law and Cause, to expand into a complete theory of universal development.

In this course he was materially assisted by German speculations on the evolution of the individual organism.† "The investigations of Wolff, Goethe, and Von Baer," he writes in the early part of the just-named article, "have established the truth that the series of changes gone through during the development of a seed into a tree, or an ovum into an animal, constitute an advance from homogeneity of structure to heterogeneity of structure. In its primary stage every germ consists of a substance that is uniform throughout, both in texture and chemical composition. The first step is the appearance of a difference between two parts of this substance; or, as the phenomenon is called in physiological language, a differentiation. . . . By endless such differentiations

* In the essays on the Philosophy of Style and the Genesis of Science, for example, the doctrine of increasing unification is clearly stated.

† These he became acquainted with in 1852—that is, after the publication of Social Statics. (See First Principles, § 119, note.)

there is finally produced that complex combination of tissues and organs constituting the adult animal or plant. This is the history of all organisms whatever. It is settled beyond dispute that organic progress consists in a change from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous. Now, we propose . . . to show that this law of organic progress is the law of all progress. . . . From the earliest traceable cosmical changes down to the latest results of civilization, we shall find that the transformation of the homogeneous into the heterogeneous is that in which progress essentially consists."

A full half of the essay in question is devoted to an inductive establishment of this thesis; the other half being taken up with the affiliation of this universal process upon a universal law—that every cause produces more than one effect. The statement set forth, therefore, is, that evolution is a change from a condition of homogeneity to a condition of heterogeneity, brought about by ever-increasing differentiations. So certain had Mr. Spencer now become that this was not only *a* law of evolution, but *the* law of evolution, that he incorporated the formula in the first edition of his First Principles.*

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* "In that essay [on Progress], . . . as also in the first edition of this work, I fell into the error of supposing that the transformation of the homogeneous into the heterogeneous constitutes evolution; whereas . . . it constitutes the secondary redistribution accompanying the primary redistribution in that evolution

Further thought, however, led him to see that this was only a partial view of the case. An important truth, of which he had just caught a glimpse in Social Statics, had now to be reinstated in his plan. The mere change in the direction of increasing heterogeneity or complexity could not, as he came presently to realize, be held to constitute evolution. An injury to an organism renders the organism more multiform in its composition; a cancer in the system produces marked increase in heterogeneity; a revolution in the social state renders the state far less homogeneous; but we look upon none of these changes as changes in the line of progress or evolution. On the contrary, we see at once that they tend in the opposite direction—in the direction of dissolution; for, let them go on long enough and far enough, and dissolution will be the inevitable result. It is clear, then, that we must seek for another law to condition this of progressive differentiation. When is it that the transformation from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous means evolution, and when is it that it means the reverse? The answer to this question will be found in a return to our half-realized but now partially-forgotten principle of unification. Add this to the previously-enunciated doctrine of increasing homogeneity, and the complete formula is reached. The differentiation of an organism into many special-

which we distinguish as compound—or, rather, . . . it constitutes the most conspicuous part of this secondary redistribution." (First Principles, § 119, note.)

ized parts is one requirement of the developmental process; the other requirement is seen to be fulfilled when and only when these various specialized parts become more and more interdependent. Along with advance towards increasing heterogeneity there must also be an advance towards completer organic unity. Apply this new statement of the law to the cases above referred to, and it will be seen immediately that the want before felt is now made good. A cancer in the system, a revolution in the state, while they increase the complexity, break up or jeopardize the unity, of organization. Evolution, therefore, is always integration, as dissolution is disintegration.

Thus we have followed Mr. Spencer to the establishment of his world-famous formula of evolution in its completed shape. Abstract and concise as it is in statement, it will now be found to present no insuperable difficulty, for we have reached it by a route that has made each part of it separately clear. Evolution, then, is to be defined as *a continuous change from indefinite incoherent homogeneity to definite coherent heterogeneity of structure and function, through successive differentiations and integrations.**

* In a purely introductory volume like the present, I have thought it best to give this definition in the simplest form compatible with complete statement. In its most fully developed shape it runs: Evolution is an integration of matter and concomitant dissipation of motion; during which the matter passes from an indefinite incoherent homogeneity to a definite coherent heterogeneity; and during which the retained motion undergoes a paral-

The world at large has a horror of abstract statements, and there is in the air a vague but none the less influential belief, that because long and unfamiliar words are often used to disguise paucity of thought, paucity of thought must always be predicated where they are employed. It is not surprising, therefore, that so many estimable people are more inclined to ridicule the above formula than to attempt to understand it; it is surprising only when we find men of cultivation and enlightenment following the same vulgar course. Prof. Goldwin Smith it was, we believe, who years ago remarked that the universe must have heaved a sigh of relief when this explanation of her processes was given to an astonished world through the cerebration of a distinguished thinker. Perhaps we may be allowed to smile at the epigram without losing one particle of our faith in the doctrine against which it is levelled. But of all the efforts hitherto made to meet a great principle with the weapons of verbal wit, that of Mr. Kirkman, the well-known English mathematician, holds an easy supremacy. Taking our formula as it stood in the edition of First Principles of 1862—the statement there given differing slightly from that adopted later—he undertakes to translate it "into plain English," and the following jargon of uncouth phraseology is the result:

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lel transformation (First Principles, § 145). Practically speaking, what we mainly have to keep in mind is, that evolution is a double-sided process—multiformity in unity, or specialization along with mutual dependence.

"Evolution is a change from a nohowish, untalkaboutable, all-alikeness to a somehowish and in-general talkaboutable, not-all-alikeness, by continuous something-elseifications and sticktogetherations." For myself, I can only say that I regret that Mr. Spencer ever saw fit to take this exhibition of intellectual gymnastics seriously, as he has done in the appendix to the fourth edition of First Principles. As a joke it is well enough; but a man who knows so little about the needs of language that he puts it forth in place of argument, and appears to think that he has thereby made short work of the principle that the formula embodies, is surely not worth powder and shot. Provided that Mr. Kirkman's translation is absolutely accurate (which in one or two points may be taken to be doubtful), and provided, further, that the English compounds that he offers in place of the Greek and Latin equivalents can be made to bear the same high degree of generality that the original words convey, then all that it is necessary to say is, that the principle remains just as true in the one form of statement as in the other. Let Mr. Kirkman call heterogeneity somethingelseification, and integration sticktogetheration, if it pleases him best to do so; it none the less remains a fact that the double change towards diversity in unity is that in which all evolution will be found to consist. Translate the whole formula into Hottentot or Cherokee, if you like; the truth for which it stands will not be made a whit less true.

IV.

One supremely important point must here be referred to in passing, to prevent possible misapprehensions.

It is a common error to suppose that evolution is continuous and uninterrupted—that its course may be symbolized by a straight line. A wavy line would, roughly speaking, be its more correct expression. An immediate corollary from Mr. Spencer's first principle of the persistence of force is the law of the rhythm of motion. Were there only a single body in space, a single force would impel that body at a uniform rate to all eternity along an undeviating course; but in that case no variety would ever arise and no evolution would be possible. Evolution, therefore, implies retrogression, and throughout the whole universe motion is rhythmical or undulatory. This is true of all phenomena, from the minutest changes cognizable by science to the latest transformation of societies studied by the economist and the historian.*

Evolution, then, as we have always to bear in mind, does not sum up the entire history of the universe, but only its ascending history. All existence passes through a cycle of change, and sooner or later dissolution asserts itself to undo the work that evolution has done. Thus we have throughout to recognize the ascending and the

* Diagrammatically, making allowance for the rhythm of all motion and the consequent alternation of evolution and dissolu-

descending scale, and to understand that the one is the necessary complement of the other. The flood of new light that this consideration lets in upon the problems of psychology and sociology is only now just beginning to be appreciated;* but the mind staggers before its

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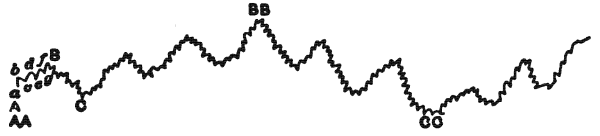
tion (progress and retrogression), the history of the universe in general and detail may be approximately presented in this way:



it being understood that, while each of the smallest lines is supposed itself to be made up of undulations and so on in a diminishing scale, the whole diagram as here given is likewise only a limb of a larger rhythm, and this again of a still larger rhythm, *ad infinitum*. In other words, as the minute undulations, *a*, *b*, *c*, *d*, *e*, *f*, *g*, etc., are components of the larger undulations A, B, C, etc., and these again of the still larger undulations AA, BB, CC, etc.; these still larger undulations AA, BB, CC, themselves go to make up vaster sweeps of rhythm, and so forth, to any extent. All this reminds us of De Morgan's verses:

"Great fleas have little fleas upon their backs to bite 'em,
And little fleas have lesser fleas, and so *ad infinitum;*
And the great fleas themselves, in turn, have greater fleas to go on,
And these again have greater still, and greater still, and so on."

* The law of rhythm, when once fully recognized by the student of human affairs, will introduce important changes into the philosophy of history. In other practical directions its influence promises to be at least as significant. Dealing with various illustrations of it, as furnished by individual and social life, Mr. Spencer wrote: "Nor are there wanting evidences of mental undulations greater in length than any of these [which he had just been considering]—undulations which take weeks, or months, or years, to complete themselves. We continually hear of moods which re-

larger possible implications. If the doctrine of rhythm —of the alternation of evolution and dissolution—holds good of every detail of the universe, it must hold good no less of the universe taken as a whole. We pause a moment upon the conception of eternal change—eternal in the past, eternal in the future—which this doctrine unavoidably suggests. "Apparently the universally-coexistent forces of attraction and repulsion, which, as we have seen, necessitate rhythm in all minor changes

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cur at intervals. Very many persons have their epochs of vivacity and depression. There are periods of industry following periods of idleness, and times at which particular subjects or tastes are cultivated with zeal, alternating with times at which they are neglected. Respecting which slow oscillations, the only qualification to be made is that, being affected by numerous influences, they are comparatively irregular" (First Principles, § 86). Only the other day, in Dr. O. W. Holmes's Over the Teacups (chap. viii), I came across the following striking passage, which reads almost like a commentary upon the one just given: "I think if patients and physicians were in the habit of recognizing the fact I am going to mention, both would be gainers. . . . It is a mistake to suppose that the normal course of health is represented by a straight horizontal line. Independently of the well-known causes which raise or depress the standard of vitality, there seems to be—I think I may venture to say there is—a rhythmic undulation in the flow of the vital force. The 'dynamo' which furnishes the working powers of consciousness and action has its annual, its monthly, its diurnal waves—even its momentary ripples—in the current it furnishes. There are greater and lesser curves in the movement of every day's life—a series of ascending and descending movements; a periodicity depending on the very nature of the force at work in the living organism. Thus we have our good seasons and our bad seasons, our good days and our bad days, life climbing and descending in long or short undulations, which I have called the curve of health."

throughout the universe, also necessitate rhythm in the totality of its changes—produce now an immeasurable period during which the attractive forces, predominating, cause universal concentration, and then an immeasurable period during which the repulsive forces, predominating, cause universal diffusion—alternate eras of evolution and dissolution. And thus there is suggested the conception of a past during which there have been successive evolutions analogous to that which is now going on; and a future during which successive other such evolutions may go on—ever the same in principle, but never the same in concrete result." *

V.

We may cap this brief survey of some of the main doctrines of First Principles by the following summary of his philosophy which Mr. Spencer himself drew up a number of years ago for publication in Appletons' American Cyclopædia, and which is here reproduced from that work:

1. Throughout the universe, in general and in detail, there is an unceasing redistribution of matter and motion.

2. This redistribution constitutes evolution where there is a predominant integration of matter and dissipation of motion, and constitutes dissolution where there is a predominant absorption of motion and disintegration of matter.

* First Principles, § 183.

3. Evolution is simple when the process of integration, or the formation of a coherent aggregate, proceeds uncomplicated by other processes.

4. Evolution is compound when along with this primary change from an incoherent to a coherent state there go on secondary changes, due to differences in the circumstances of the different parts of the aggregate.

5. These secondary changes constitute a transformation of the homogeneous into the heterogeneous—a transformation which, like the first, is exhibited in the universe as a whole and in all (or nearly all) its details —in the aggregate of stars and nebulæ; in the planetary system; in the earth as an inorganic mass; *in each organism, vegetal or animal* (Von Baer's law); in the aggregate of organisms throughout geologic time; in the mind; in society; in all products of social activity.

6. The process of integration, acting locally as well as generally, combines with the process of differentiation to render this change, not simply from homogeneity to heterogeneity, but from an indefinite homogeneity to a definite heterogeneity; and this trait of increasing definiteness, which accompanies the trait of increasing heterogeneity, is, like it, exhibited in the totality of things, and in all its divisions and subdivisions down to the minutest.

7. Along with this redistribution of the matter composing any evolving aggregate, there goes on a redistribution of the retained motion of its components in rela-

tion to one another; this also becomes, step by step, more definitely heterogeneous.

8. In the absence of a homogeneity that is infinite and absolute, this redistribution, of which evolution is one phase, is inevitable. The causes which necessitate it are:

9. The instability of the homogeneous, which is consequent upon the different exposures of the different parts of any limited aggregate to incident forces. The transformations hence resulting are complicated by—

10. The multiplication of effects: every mass and part of a mass on which a force falls subdivides and differentiates that force, which thereupon proceeds to work a variety of changes; and each of these becomes the parent of similarly multiplying changes: the multiplication of these becoming greater in proportion as the aggregate becomes more heterogeneous. And these two causes of increasing differentiations are furthered by—

11. Segregation, which is a process tending ever to separate unlike units, and to bring together like units, so serving continually to sharpen or make definite differentiations otherwise caused.

12. Equilibration is the final result of these transformations which an evolving aggregate undergoes. The changes go on until there is reached an equilibrium between the forces which all parts of the aggregate are exposed to, and the forces these parts oppose to them. Equilibration may pass through a transition stage of balanced motions (as in a planetary system), or

of balanced functions (as in a living body), on the way to ultimate equilibrium; but the state of rest in inorganic bodies, or death in organic bodies, is the necessary limit of the changes constituting evolution.

13. Dissolution is the counterchange which sooner or later every evolved aggregate undergoes. Remaining exposed to surrounding forces that are unequilibrated, each aggregate is ever liable to be dissipated by the increase, gradual or sudden, of its contained motion; and its dissipation, quickly undergone by bodies lately animate, and slowly undergone by inanimate masses, remains to be undergone at an indefinitely remote period by each planetary and stellar mass, which, since an indefinitely remote period in the past, has been slowly evolving: the cycle of its transformations being thus completed.

14. This rhythm of evolution and dissolution, completing itself during short periods in small aggregates, and in the vast aggregates distributed through space completing itself in periods which are immeasurable by human thought, is, so far as we can see, universal and eternal: each alternating phase of the process predominating—now in this region of space, and now in that—as local conditions determine.

15. All these phenomena, from their great features down to their minutest details, are necessary results of the persistence of force under its forms of matter and motion. Given these in their known distributions through space, and, their quantities being unchangeable,

either by increase or decrease, there inevitably result the continuous redistributions distinguishable as evolution and dissolution, as well as all those special traits above enumerated.

16. That which persists, unchanging in quantity but ever changing in form, under these sensible appearances which the universe presents to us, transcends human knowledge and conception; is an unknown and unknowable power, which we are obliged to recognize as without limit in space, and without beginning or end in time.

VI.

The whole body of philosophy, or completely-unified knowledge, Mr. Spencer divides into two parts: "On the one hand, the things contemplated may be the universal truths: all particular truths referred to being used simply for proof or elucidation of these universal truths. On the other hand, setting out with the universal truths as granted, the things contemplated may be the particular truths as interpreted by them. In both cases we deal with the universal truths; but in the one case they are passive and in the other case active—in the one case they form the products of exploration and in the other case the instruments of exploration. These divisions we may appropriately call General Philosophy and Special Philosophy respectively."* General Philosophy forms the subject-matter of First Prin-

* First Principles, § 38.

ciples; the subsequent volumes of the Synthetic Series are devoted to the task of applying the universal truths there formulated to the particular phenomena of Biology, Psychology, Sociology, and Ethics.

Some of the most striking features of Mr. Spencer's treatment of the two last-named subjects will be touched upon in the following chapters—their more obviously practical bearings justifying this special treatment. A word or two may here be given to the earlier portions of the work.

The aim of the Principles of Biology was, as Mr. Spencer himself stated in the preface, "to set forth the general truths of biology as illustrative of and as interpreted by the laws of evolution." Students of these two volumes have need to bear in mind that they were written and published at a time when the whole question of evolution was still under fierce discussion, and when even the scientific world itself was divided into hostile camps over every issue involved. Hence the special historic significance, over and above the general philosophic significance, of Part III, dealing with the arguments in favour of the development-hypothesis, and with the factors of organic evolution. Beyond this, little needs to be said by way of introduction to the work. Particular attention should, however, be directed to the closing division, in which the supremely important question of the laws of multiplication and their corollaries is treated at length.

This question has had special significance for stu-

dents and thinkers since about the close of the last century. One remarkable outgrowth of the generous ardour and noble enthusiasms which accompanied the earlier developments of the French Revolution was the strong belief in human perfectibility which suddenly took possession of some of the finest minds of the age. It seemed only necessary to throw off the numerous political and social shackles of the past, to get rid of the tyrannies of kingcraft and priestcraft and aristocracies, and to break the fetters of degrading forms and customs that had been handed down from the past; it seemed only necessary, in a word, to give men and women free play, and the brightest dreams, the most glorious imaginings of poet and seer would turn forthwith into still brighter, still more glorious realities. Something of the intense thrill of this great new hope we can catch in the earlier books of Wordsworth's Prelude; as in the later books we come into immediate touch with that numbing sense of disappointment and abject despair which settled down over the consciousness of the world when it was realized that France had indeed failed to make good the magnificent promises of 1789. We know how that practical failure brought the whole doctrine of human progress for a time into disrepute: such a work as Chateaubriand's Essai sur les Révolutions Anciennes et Modernes being simply one indication of a widespread reaction in thought. Meanwhile, expressive as it may now well seem to us to be of this sad change from sanguine expectation to doubt and de-

spondency, appeared in 1798 the first edition of one of the world's epoch-marking, if not epoch-making, books —Malthus's essay on The Principle of Population.* The central doctrine of that book—the work, strangely enough, of an English clergyman of the Established Church—struck a deadly blow at the gorgeous speculations of humanitarian dreamers. The earthly Eden which men had declared to be at hand was now pronounced an impossibility. For Malthus showed conclusively, as it seemed to himself and to many others of his and later times, that the world is and always must be overpopulated, and that the pressure of humanity upon the means of subsistence is not an accident but a necessity. If, therefore, it is inevitable that human beings should increase much more rapidly than their sustenance, misery in one form or the other is a necessary accompaniment of human life; and wholesale death by mere starvation is only prevented by the operation of other factors which have hitherto combined to prevent population from running too far in advance of its

* "There is nothing new but what has been forgotten," says a clever French paradox. For the sake of those interested in what Buckle called the "paternity of ideas," it may be pointed out that, original as the work of Malthus seemed to be, he was not without predecessors in his own chosen field. One Townsend, in an account of a journey through Spain, had already broached the problem of the relation of human population to the means of support; and even he had a precursor in that great writer who foreshadowed so many peculiarly modern ideas—Voltaire. (See the article Population in his Dictionnaire Philosophique.)

material of support. Let progressive civilization interfere with these factors, as it constantly tends to do—let it decrease wars, plagues, excessive and premature mortality, vices of various kinds, and forced or voluntary celibacy—and upon the removal of these manifold and hitherto stringent preventive checks a universal battle for life would ensue. Hence it is useless to indulge in lyric enthusiasms about the reign of plenty and the kingdom of peace and love upon earth. The reign of plenty is a myth, the kingdom of peace and love an airy fiction. An everlasting and inevitable want of balance between human population and its means of support is the one firm and overpowering reality.*

Malthus's book came upon the world with the blight of disillusion. Its conclusions were widely accepted; its theories passed into the economist's recognized body of thought. And now we are in a position to appreciate the importance of Mr. Spencer's contribution to the dis-

* How pregnant were Malthus's speculations is shown by the fact that it is in this essay of his that we find the starting-point of Darwin's own development of thought—the development which presently culminated in the Origin of Species. Given this universal overpopulation, and it is clear that wholesale destruction must be all the time at work. As animals and plants are thus perpetually tending to increase faster than their means of sustenance, a struggle among them must result; and in this struggle those individuals of every species are likely to conquer and survive which are equipped for the conflict by even the most minute variations favouring them in gaining food and avoiding enemies. (See Darwin's own introduction to the sixth edition of the Origin of Species.)

cussion of the general subject in the chapters referred to. A profound investigation of the whole question of multiplication, asexual and sexual, subhuman and human, leads him to the conclusion, established as usual inductively and deductively, that while excess of fertility has been and is the cause of man's evolution, every fresh step in that evolution itself necessitates in its turn a decline in fertility. That human population will forever continue to press upon the means of human subsistence, as Malthus supposed, is therefore not a fact. Individuation and genesis are in necessary antagonism, and advance in the former must be followed by decrease in the latter. Fecundity is thus not a permanent factor, as is implied in the Malthusian view, and pressure of population and its accompanying evils, instead of remaining the one problem to be encountered all along the line of human progress, must gradually work itself out altogether. "The excess of fertility has itself rendered the process of civilization inevitable; and the process of civilization must inevitably diminish fertility, and at last destroy its excess. From the beginning pressure of population has been the proximate cause of progress. It produced the original diffusion of the race. It compelled men to abandon predatory habits and take to agriculture. It led to the clearing of the earth's surface. It forced men into the social state; made social organization inevitable; and has developed the social sentiments. It has stimulated to progressive improvements in production and to increased skill in intelli-

gence. It is daily thrusting us into closer contact and more mutually dependent relationships. And after having caused, as it ultimately must, the due peopling of the globe, and the raising of all its habitable parts into the highest state of culture—after having brought all processes for the satisfaction of human wants to perfection—after having, at the same time, developed the intellect into complete competency for its work, and the feelings into complete fitness for social life—after having done all this, the pressure of population, as it gradually finishes its work, must gradually bring itself to an end." *

Thus, in the hands of the evolutionary philosopher, the Malthusian doctrine loses all its gloom and terror. He, in Emerson's phrase, has here, as so often elsewhere, converted "the Furies into Muses and the hells into benefit."

VII.

Many competent critics have regarded the Principles of Psychology as Mr. Spencer's greatest achievement, and not, perhaps, without good cause. Nowhere else, certainly, could we find a more striking exhibition of his magnificent powers of both analysis and synthesis, of his clear perception of the significance of minutest details, of his daring sweep of generalization and deduction, of his firm control over the longest and most

* Principles of Biology, § 376.

intricate chains of reasoning. To the phenomena of no other subject, it may be added, have evolutionary principles been applied with more conspicuous results.

The old psychology had been purely statical. Its subject-matter had been the manifestations of intelligence in the modern civilized adult; and a hard-and-fast line of demarkation had been drawn between these and all the manifestations of intelligence exhibited by the subhuman world. Mind in man was held to differ absolutely and generically from mind in animals; and no study of the latter could be resorted to in the hope of throwing light upon the problems of the former. The foolish antithesis of instinct and reason is a sturdy survival of this old thought. This traditional course, followed unquestioningly from generation to generation, and by school after school of metaphysicians, had naturally carried the subject of psychology but little beyond the point reached by the fantastic speculations of mediæval scholasticism. Evolution offered the student an entirely new standpoint. Its great principle of the continuity of all phenomena, applied to the problems of intelligence, showed that all absolute distinctions, here as elsewhere, were mere subjective illusions. Between mind in its highest development and mind in its first dim awakenings no boundary could anywhere be set; and the complex intellect of the modern adult, so far from being treated as a thing unique and apart, had thus henceforth to be regarded as the production of the compounding and recompounding of simpler and still

simpler elements. Given the nervous shock,* which Mr. Spencer distinguishes as the primordial and unresolvable element in consciousness, and the business of scientific psychology is to follow the process of progressive integration, step by step, through sensation, reflex action, instinct, memory, reason, the feelings, and the will. But more than this: the principle of continuity further warns us against any attempt to fix a barrier between physiological and psychological phenomena. The manifestations of physical and mental activity have also their unity of composition. "The life of the body and mental life are species, of which life, properly so called, is the genus." "Though we commonly regard mental and bodily life as distinct, it needs only to ascend somewhat above the ordinary point of view to see that they are but subdivisions of life in general, and that no line of demarkation can be drawn between them otherwise than arbitrarily. Doubtless to those who persist after the popular fashion in contemplating only the extreme forms of the two, this assertion will appear incredible.

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* Such is the word employed by Mr. Spencer, but he strictly means *psychical* shock. Anxious as he was throughout his argument to keep the psychical phenomena distinct from their physical accompaniments, it is a little curious that he should have slipped into such a careless use of the word "nervous"—a word that threatens to blur the whole issue. (See on this point the very interesting note on page 444 of volume ii of Mr. Fiske's Cosmic Philosophy.) Mr. Fiske ventured to change the unfortunate word to "psychical," and adds that Mr. Spencer authorized him to say that in so doing he had his concurrence.

. . . [But] it is not more certain that, from the simple reflex action by which the infant sucks, up to the elaborate reasoning of the adult man, the progress is by daily infinitesimal steps, than it is certain that between the automatic actions of the lowest creatures and the highest conscious actions of the human race a series of actions displayed by the various tribes of the animal kingdom may be so placed as to render it impossible to say of any one step in the series, Here intelligence begins." *

The method of investigation that evolution has thus rendered possible has achieved, along with many other splendid triumphs, one very notable success. It has effected a permanent compromise between two great antagonistic schools of psychology—the experimentalists and the transcendentalists, or the followers of Locke on the one hand, and those of Leibnitz and Kant on the other. This famous dispute, which antedated by centuries the celebrated philosophers with whose names it is generally associated, and which, before the rise of the doctrine of evolution, promised to be perennial, concerned the nature of the human faculty. "All our knowledge is derived from experience," was the fundamental dictum of the empiricists. "On the contrary," replied their opponents, "we possess ideas which transcend

* These quotations from the first edition of the Principles of Psychology are given here because they serve our immediate purpose somewhat better than the revised statements of the same ideas to be found in the later editions of the work.

experience—which are innate." Mr. Spencer, approaching the whole question from the evolutionary side, saw that the controversy from first to last was a controversy of partial views. The weakness of each system was that it accepted a portion of the truth for the entire truth. To say that, antecedent to experience, the mind is an absolute blank, is, as he pointed out, to ignore the all-essential questions, "Whence comes the power of organizing experiences? whence arise the different degrees of that power possessed by different races of organisms and different individuals of the same race?"* But is this to throw up the empirical case altogether? Not at all. The pre-established internal relations, of the innateness of which so much is made by the idealists, if transcendent to the experiences of the individual, are not transcendent to that vast chain of ancestral experience, running back through ages of barbarism and animality to the lowest beginnings of life, of which the present individual is only the terminal link. The moment the *venue* of discussion was changed from the limited area of individual experience to the immeasurable area of universal experience the ancient difficulty vanished. We no longer quarrel over the so-called "forms of thought," and the question of relative potential intellectuality becomes clear. Of a surety the doctrine of evolution is a great healer of philosophic discords, and, since it is notorious that philosophic discords have

* Principles of Psychology, § 208.

been almost as fierce and sanguinary as controversies in the theological arena, it should receive a generous meed of the blessing promised to peacemakers.

A word of warning must be added ere we close these few paragraphs on the Spencerian psychology.

A superficial reading of what has just been written concerning the continuity of phenomena and the impossibility of drawing any dividing line between physiological and psychical life might only too easily lead the unwary student to conclude that Mr. Spencer's doctrines end in materialism pure and simple. This, indeed, is the popular view of the matter held to with obstinate tenacity despite continual protest and repeated disproof. Yet on no point has Mr. Spencer endeavoured to make himself more explicit. Already in the concluding paragraphs of First Principles he did his utmost to show that the arguments contained in that work lend no support whatever to either of the current antagonistic views respecting the ultimate nature of things. "Their implications are no more materialistic than they are spiritualistic; and no more spiritualistic than they are materialistic," he asserts; since our antithetic conceptions of spirit and matter, necessary as they must seem to us, are still nothing more than symbols of the Unknown Reality which underlies both. Developing this truth more fully in the Principles of Psychology, he thus declares himself in the chapter on the Substance of Mind (§ 63): "Here . . . we arrive at the barrier which needs to be perpetually pointed out, alike to those who seek

materialistic explanations of mental phenomena, and to those who are alarmed lest such explanations may be found. This last class prove by their fear, almost as much as the first prove by their hope, that they believe Mind may possibly be interpreted in terms of Matter; whereas many whom they vituperate as materialists are profoundly convinced that there is not the remotest possibility of so interpreting them. For those who, not deterred by foregone conclusions, have pushed their analysis to the uttermost see very clearly, that the concept we form to ourselves of Matter is but the symbol of some form of power absolutely and forever unknown to us; and a symbol which we cannot suppose to be like the reality without involving ourselves in contradictions (First Principles, § 16). They also see that the representation of all objective activities in terms of Motion is but a representation of them, and not a knowledge of them; and that we are immediately brought to alternative absurdities if we assume the Power manifested to us as Motion, to be in itself that which we conceive as Motion (First Principles, § 17). When with these conclusions that Matter and Motion, as we think them, are but symbolic of unknowable forms of existence, we join the conclusion lately reached that Mind also is unknowable, and that the simplest form under which we can think of its substance is but a symbol of something that can never be rendered into thought; we see that the whole question is at last nothing more than the question whether these symbols

should be expressed in terms of those or those in terms of these—a question scarcely worth deciding, since either answer leaves us as completely outside of the reality as we were at first."

How thoroughly unmaterialistic is Mr. Spencer's whole view of the question is made manifest by the paragraph immediately following the one from which the above extract is taken. Here he distinctly says, once and for all, "that were we compelled to choose between the alternatives of translating mental phenomena into physical phenomena, or of translating physical phenomena into mental phenomena, the latter alternative would seem the more acceptable of the two." He proceeds to give, in the course of a long and weighty paragraph, his reasons for this assertion; and concluding that "of the two it seems easier to translate so-called Matter into so-called Spirit, than to translate so-called Spirit into so-called Matter (which latter is, indeed, wholly impossible)," he reminds us that "no translation can carry us beyond our symbols." After this, only the familiar ignorance, carelessness, and perversity of the general religious world can explain the fact that even to-day Mr. Spencer's teachings are frequently denounced as "materialistic." It is surprising how often the short-sightedness of the theologians has led them to treat with antagonism men who, if they only knew it, should rather be reckoned among the truest friends of religion.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SPENCERIAN SOCIOLOGY.

I.

MR. SPENCER'S social and political teachings are familiar enough in their main outlines to readers who otherwise know little or nothing of his works. The most popularly written and widely circulated of his books—the Education alone excepted—are those which deal directly with the problems arising from the relations of citizens to government and to one another. In the pages of Social Statics, the Introduction to the Study of Sociology, and The Man *versus* The State, these problems in their multifarious aspects are handled with rare force, clearness, and felicity of illustration; and though first principles are kept in view throughout, and are shown to constitute the firm foundation of every doctrine advanced—though in this way philosophic coherence and consistency are given to every chain of reasoning—the popular standpoint is that adopted; the arguments are directed rather to the general reader than to the special student. By the larger

public, therefore, Mr. Spencer's individualistic theories are accepted or rejected without any thought of their relation to his philosophic system as a whole; how they fall into the body of his work, and what exact place they occupy there, are questions that seldom come up for consideration.

This is the more natural because, even when we have grown tired, as Zschokke put it, of "living in the furnished lodgings of tradition," very few of us have thought out for ourselves a systematized theory of life. We have what we are pleased to call our ideas (usually more correctly to be described as our impressions) about most things; and the less we understand of a subject the stronger our assertions of opinion are likely to be. But these ideas rarely hang together among themselves—are rarely attached to any deep underlying principles. Their roots run down into the emotions; they draw their nourishment thence; and some accident of early education, environment, self-interest, or class-bias, gives them, unknown to ourselves, their special form and colour. It is curious in studying our friends —we are hardly likely to observe the inconsistencies in ourselves—to find, in consequence, what a strange jumble of contradictory notions the majority of them manage to find room for, without for a moment seeming to imperil thereby their self-satisfaction or peace of mind. The assertive radical, brought face to face with some novel form of an old question, unexpectedly develops a rabid conservatism; the bigoted conservative advocates

on some special isolated point doctrines which, applied to other and perhaps more familiar issues, he would look upon with horror. Men who are urging the world forward in one direction are holding it back in others; and the gospels of yesterday and to-morrow are proclaimed in one breath by the same preacher. Few realize the absurdity of all this; few are aware of the anarchy of thought and incongruity of social aims to which it must inevitably give rise; fewer still, perhaps, understand that it is due to the absence in most men—even in those of general intelligence and more than average culture—of a methodical habit of thought, and the guiding power of some great central principles, to the touchstone of which every judgment and opinion may be brought.

Caring nothing for the consistency of their own ideas, most readers would naturally fail to inquire into the consistency of the ideas of other people. Hence they are willing to deal with that one department of the Spencerian thought which happens to come under their particular notice without troubling to raise the question of its connection with other departments. Mr. Spencer's individualism may or may not organically belong to and of necessity grow out of the principles of evolution as by him expounded; but, while they will discuss the individualism itself, this is the last matter that is likely to attract their attention. Hence it is precisely this point we propose to deal with here. To expound Mr. Spencer's social and political views in their practi-

cal applications would be a work of supererogation; to discuss them would lie outside the scope of a volume like the present. But to show how these views affiliate upon the main body of his thought will be to carry out to the full the plan of this introduction.*

II.

The once-famous saying of Sir James Mackintosh, that "constitutions are not made, but grow," struck the men of his time as singularly original and suggestive; but, as Mr. Spencer says, "in our day, the most significant thing" about it is "that it was ever thought so significant." Not only has the principle enunciated in it long since passed into a commonplace, but from the evolutionary standpoint we all now see that it forms but a small portion of a much larger truth. Under all its aspects and through all its ramifications society itself is a thing of slow and natural development, not of artificial piecing together—a growth and not a manufacture. This means that it must be dealt with not as a mechanism, but as a living thing.

The comparison between society and an individual organism had been instituted before Mr. Spencer's time,

* There is the more need to do this, first, because many otherwise loyal adherents of Spencerianism refuse to follow their teacher into the extremes of his political thought; and, secondly, because of the opinion, widely diffused among them, that his social doctrines, espoused long before the working out of his general system, have since been cleverly dovetailed into that system, and form no proper part of it.

but in a way too vague for it to be productive of much result. Mr. Spencer, in taking the matter up among his earlier studies, endeavoured to do something more than point out more or less fanciful analogies. Utilizing the comprehensive generalizations of modern biology, he undertook to indicate the real parallelisms.*

These, summarized in the succinctest possible statements, are shown to be four in number:

1. Commencing as small aggregations, both societies and individual organisms insensibly augment in mass, in some instances eventually reaching a bulk ten thousand times greater than their original size.

2. At first so simple in structure as to be considered structureless, both societies and individual organisms assume in the course of their growth a continually increasing complexity of structure.

3. In a society in its early undeveloped state, as in an individual organism in its early and undeveloped state, there exists scarcely any mutual dependence of parts; in both cases the parts gradually acquire a mutual dependence, and this becomes at last so great that the life and activity of each part are made possible only by the life and activity of the rest.

4. The life and development of a society, like the

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* These parallelisms, outlined in the article on The Social Organism (first published in the Westminster Review for January, 1860), were subsequently worked out in detail in The Principles of Sociology, Part II. See also the essay on Specialized Administration.

life and development of an individual organism, are independent of and far more prolonged than the life and development of any of its component units, who severally are born, grow, reproduce, and die, while the body politic composed of them survives generation after generation, increasing in mass, completeness of structure, and functional activity.

Consideration of these striking parallelisms will reveal the fact that the most important of them—the second and third in the above tabulation—present elements that bring the growth of society directly under the general law of evolution. Societies, like individual organisms, pass, during the course of their development, from simplicity to complexity of structure, at the same time that their various parts gradually acquire greater and greater mutual dependence; in other words, the changes undergone by them are in the direction at once of increasing heterogeneity and of increasing unity. And it may be remarked incidentally that no more conspicuous illustrations of the formula of evolution can be found than those furnished by the study of social growth. Barbarous tribes, lowest in the scale of development, are nothing but loose, almost homogeneous aggregations of individuals and families, living in contiguity, but hardly at all depending one upon the other. Powers and functions are practically alike, the only marked differences being those which accompany difference of sex. "Every man is warrior, hunter, fisherman, toolmaker, builder; every woman performs the same drudg-

eries"—that is, there is as yet no specialization of parts; and at the same time "every family is self-sufficing, and, save for purposes of aggression and defence, might as well live apart from the rest"—there is little or no mutual dependence. Very early, however, important changes manifest themselves. Differentiation begins. With the appearance of some kind of chieftainship arises distinction between the governing and the governed; and as this distinction grows more and more decided, the controlling agencies gradually break up, and in course of time assume the form of the highly complex political organizations of semi-civilized and civilized lands. Meanwhile the accompanying industrial divergencies are even more significant. Individuals, no longer continuing to perform for themselves all the functions necessary for the preservation of their own lives and the lives of those immediately connected with them, begin to devote themselves to separate kinds of occupation; whence arise the first suggestions of that industrial specialization which has been carried to such an extreme in our own day, and which with every year is tending to become more marked. But one all-important fact must never be lost sight of. These changes along the line of ever-increasing heterogeneity can only go on step by step, in combination with corresponding changes along the line of ever-increasing integration. The governing agency can only assume the labours and responsibilities of oversight, guidance, and direction by being relieved, to a degree proportionate to the demand of

these upon it, of the daily strain of providing for its own wants. Regulative and maintaining agencies can only thus become distinct. Similarly with the industrial changes themselves. As soon as any one individual limits himself to the performance of one particular life-sustaining function, for which he may possess unusual aptitude, he must necessarily become dependent upon the rest of the community to the extent of the functions left unfulfilled by him; while he performs certain functions in excess, and thereby benefits others, others must also perform functions in excess for his benefit. Hence, it is clear that, if society is to maintain its corporate life, no differentiation can take place without integration; increase of specialization in social changes is not only accompanied by increase of mutual dependence, but is absolutely impossible without it.

From the first stages of social growth to the developments recorded in yesterday's newspaper, what we call progress has everywhere been marked by the same characteristics. All changes in the line of advance have been changes rendering the social structure more complex while increasing its organic unity; and this double-sided movement has by this time gone so far that we are to-day witnessing its effects in the modified interrelations of the great nations of the civilized world. The new thought of the solidarity of the human race simply reminds us of the application of the evolutionary principle to the widest possible issues. For not only are the great modern nations becoming more and more

completely specialized and unified within themselves, but the civilized world is itself developing into a vast organic whole, made up of many such highly differentiated but mutually dependent aggregations.

Two important aspects of the principles here indicated must now be re-emphasized as presenting truths to which we shall recur later on. In the first place, in the social as in the individual organism, repetition of similar parts implies a relatively low stage of development, higher stages being characterized by the marking off of special organs for the performance of special functions. In the second place, the activity of every organ being limited, adequate performance of its special function by each organ is incompatible with continuance on its part to perform other functions. That its own function may be duly carried on, it must be relieved by other organs of the need for sustaining other activities.

Having thus indicated the principal parallelisms between societies and individual organisms, Mr. Spencer proceeds to point out their chief differences. As there is no necessity here for us to follow him into his consideration and discussion of these, we will confine ourselves to the briefest enumeration of them. He finds the contrasts also to be four in number:

1. Societies have no specific external forms.

2. The living tissue whereof an individual organism consists forms a continuous mass; the living elements of a society do not form a continuous mass, but are

more or less widely dispersed over some portion of the earth's surface.

3. The ultimate living elements of an individual organism are mostly fixed in their relative positions; those of the social organism are capable of moving from place to place.

4. In the body of an animal only a special tissue is endowed with feeling; in a society all the members are endowed with feeling.

With much ingenuity Mr. Spencer labours to show that these obvious contrasts are neither so fundamental nor so important as would at first sight appear. This part of the matter, however, does not now concern us. But the last-named distinction between the social and the individual organism should be looked at a little more closely, because it points to a profound truth of immediate moment to us here. For what does this distinction imply? It implies nothing less than that there is a radical difference between the relations of parts and whole in the individual organism, and the relations of parts and whole in the social organism. "While in individual bodies the welfare of all other parts is rightly subservient to the welfare of the nervous system, whose pleasurable or painful activities make up the good or ill of life; in bodies politic the same thing does not hold, or holds to but a very slight extent. It is well that the lives of all parts of an animal should be merged in the life of the whole, because the whole has a corporate consciousness capable of happiness or

misery. But it is not so with a society, since its living units do not and cannot lose individual consciousness, and since the community as a whole has no corporate consciousness. And this is an everlasting reason why the welfares of citizens cannot rightly be sacrificed to some supposed benefit of the state; but why, on the other hand, the state is to be maintained solely for the benefit of citizens. The corporate life must here be subservient to the lives of the parts, instead of the lives of the parts being subservient to the corporate life." *

III.

This, which might at first sight seem to be a conclusion standing by itself, and of no further use to us, may for our present purposes be taken as a new point of departure. Let us examine in detail the question of the relations of parts to whole in the social organism.

From the earliest developments of gregariousness to the latest extension of governmental activity, the only ultimate authority for the restraints exercised by society in its corporate capacity over its individual members is the welfare of those individual members. The welfare of society is the proximate end only; the final end is the welfare of the units of which the society is composed. This has been made clear by the above considerations. But does this mean that the relations of the individual to the corporate life should be or could

* The Social Organism (Essays, vol. i).

be of a stable or unchanging character? From the evolutionary standpoint such an idea is on the face of it untenable. On the contrary, such relations must inevitably vary with the varying conditions of social growth. The social organism, like all other organisms whatsoever, must mould the activities of its inner life in response to outer needs. Only by adequately meeting those needs can its existence be maintained, and while the ultimate end of social organization can never be other than that alleged, furtherance of that ultimate end may often be impossible, save by temporary postponement of it to the proximate end; in other words, the welfare of society may have to take precedence of the welfare of the individual, and individual life be sacrificed to social preservation. We may put the matter even more strongly, and state at once that throughout the past the proximate end, that of social preservation, has habitually been of prime importance; the claims of the individual in contradistinction to those of the corporate body having only gradually emerged as vital issues. In all transitional states, indeed, the relations of which we speak must necessarily be relations of compromise; but such compromise will favour the whole as against the parts, or the parts as against the whole, according to the type of social organization—the type itself being evolved in answer to the medium of social needs. The question therefore arises, How do the general conditions of any given society tend to determine the relations of its citizens to the state?

The evolution of life at large, alike in its higher and in its lower forms, has been possible only because in the average of cases there has throughout been a definite connection between conduct and consequence. But for the fact that individuals structurally best adapted to the conditions of their existence have prospered by means of such fuller adaptation, while individuals less favourably endowed have dropped out in the struggle for existence, no advance in life could ever have taken place. This law, which ethically enunciated, becomes the principle that each individual ought to receive the good and evil arising from its own nature, is the primary law of existence, holding good of all creatures, and qualified in those living solitary lives only by that "self-subordination needed among the higher of them for the rearing of offspring."

In non-gregarious creatures, therefore, the only conflict is between self-subserving and race-subserving activities; and species which do not postpone in requisite degrees the former class of activities to the latter will inevitably disappear. But in gregarious creatures another factor comes into play. Each individual in the pursuit of his own satisfactions must be prevented from interfering with the similar pursuit of their own satisfactions on the part of others; for in the absence of such prevention an associated state would be impossible, and each individual would lose the benefits that co-operation would bring The associated state, therefore, demands, in addition to that large postponement of self to

offspring, which lies at the bottom of all life, a constant postponement of self to fellows, negatively by restraint of actions that impede, and positively by performance of actions that further, the fullest and most harmonious co-operation.

Putting these two principles together, we are able to establish an important conclusion. The prerequisite of life in general embodied in the first must be qualified in the way indicated by the second when the individual, no longer isolated, lives in association with others whose presence and claims necessarily limit the range of his activities. Hence we reach the formula of absolute justice.* "Every man is free to do that which he wills, provided he infringes not the equal freedom of any other man."

But now we have to notice that under certain conditions these abstract principles require still further qualification. The ultimate authority for the existence of

* This may be the proper place to point out a distinctive feature in Mr. Spencer's Ethics—the separation of absolute from relative ethics. Absolutely right conduct is conduct having no concomitant of pain, or painful consequences, either to self or others; all other conduct, though it may be relatively right, or the least wrong possible under the circumstances, is not absolutely right. In the drawing up of a code of absolute morality, therefore, we must consider the ideal man in an ideal state of society; and relative morality must then aim to approximate to this as closely as is possible under any given conditions. In discussing the Spencerian ethics this vital distinction must never be lost sight of. See Data of Ethics, chap. xv, and compare this with Social Statics, Part I, chap. i, and the article on Absolute Political Ethics (Essays, vol. iii).

the associated state is, as we have seen, the increased welfare that all its individual units are enabled to obtain by means of it. This renders the preservation of the associated state itself of the first importance; and when it is imperilled, sacrifice of the individual to secure its continuance receives strong ethical sanction. This fact gives us the clue for which we are in search in our inquiry as to how the relations of citizen to state depend upon existing social conditions. For the welfare of the individual can only, ethically considered, take entire and immediate precedence of the welfare of the community at large so long as the community itself is not in danger—in other words, during periods of sustained peace. During periods of military activity or preparation—that is, when rightly or wrongly it is supposed that the community is jeopardized from without—the individual has, to a large extent, to be made subservient to the state, often even to the extent of being called upon to render up property and life to aid in keeping the social structure intact.

We see, then, that in the social organism the relations of parts to whole depend upon the average activities of the whole. So long as the community is engaged in a struggle for existence with antagonistic communities, its corporate life has to be maintained at any cost—even at the cost of its component units; and societies in which this necessity is most completely met, stand, other things equal, the best chance of preservation. Sanction for the temporary postponement of the indi-

vidual to the state is thus obtained; but this sanction holds good only so long as the specified conditions continue. Just as soon as the external struggle for existence ceases, the sanction for the postponement of the individual to the state can no longer be alleged, and all qualification lapses in regard to the principles above set forth.

IV.

Before we can appreciate the full significance of this conclusion, we must look at the matter for a moment from a somewhat different point of view.

Theoretically, three kinds of social aggregation may be distinguished, according to the purposes which association is intended to subserve. Men may group themselves together (1) merely for the sake of companionship; (2) for combined action against enemies, animal or human, or both; or (3) for better satisfaction by means of reciprocal aid of the various requirements of life—higher as well as lower.* The resulting aggregates may be defined respectively as non-co-operative, military, and industrial.

Of the first, an instance is found in the case of

* Justice, § 102. All this does not, of course, mean that men have ever *consciously* banded themselves together for these or any other purposes. We have here nothing to do with the monstrous fiction of a social contract—one of the favourite theories of eighteenth-century speculation, from the days of Locke and Filmer onward. We simply recognize that, according to obtaining conditions, association has been naturally brought about here in response to one kind of demand, there in response to another.

the Esquimaux, who live in groups, but who, having no external enemies, never combine for purposes of corporate offence and defence, and among whom industrial co-operation has gone no further than a division of labour between man and wife in each separate family. Examples of the second class are of course very numerous, and may be found in the purest form in "hunting-tribes at large, the activities of which alternate between chasing animals and going to war with one another," and in which industrial co-operation, if exhibited at all, is exhibited only in a very rudimentary way. When we come to the third division we are met, in search for illustrations, by the difficulty arising from lack of material. The purely industrial society does not yet exist in a developed form. A few perfectly peaceful tribes are to be found here and there in the world—like the Bodos, the Dhimáls, and the Kocchs—who, never needing to combine for aggression or defence, do yet to some extent render mutual assistance in the simple activities of their daily lives. But all advanced peoples without exception, as well as most of those relatively low down in the scale of civilization, yield cases of association for the achievement of all the three ends above distinguished. The desire for social intercourse is satisfied; life is made easier and larger by means of industrial co-operation; but at the same time there is still need for corporate action, if not of an aggressive, then, at any rate, of a defensive nature.

Now, the fact that even the most fully industrialized

of developed societies are still *quasi*-military in their constitution, introduces us to an important truth. Antagonistic as are the military and the industrial activities, throughout the whole course of social evolution, from the very beginning until now, the former has played a main part in the development of the latter. But for war, little advance would have been possible. War has been essentially the consolidating factor, and its ever-widening sweep has in the upshot but cleared a larger area for the play of industrial forces. Each new integration brought about by conquest has ultimately changed the warlike relations formerly existing between the communities integrated into relations of a peaceful character; their interests, instead of being antagonistic, become interdependent. As this process, which has gone on from the earliest dawn of human history, continues, its results, though of the same general nature, will be on a grander scale. Eventually, war will bring about its own destruction by aiding in the production, throughout a world-area, of those industrial conditions which will render anti-industrial relations henceforth impossible.

Recognizing this fact—which is indeed one of too much significance ever to be lost sight of—we can understand how it is that even the most highly civilized nations are still in a transitional state. A factor of supreme importance in the earlier stages of their development, war, though of ever-decreasing importance in their more advanced stages, has, down to quite recent times,

played a large part in the unification of national interests, which is one phase of all social progress. Hence, we can for the time being reach nothing better than a compromise between the demands of military co-operation on the one hand, and the demands of industrial co-operation on the other. But here a further distinction is to be made. This compromise, formerly in favour of the military claims, is now (in some modern countries considerably, and in a few markedly) in favour of the industrial claims. While hitherto the all-important thing was to keep up military efficiency, and industry was valued only to the extent to which it aided in doing this; now, on the contrary, industrial growth is the all-important thing, and military efficiency is valued only in so far as, by yielding adequate protection, it furthers peaceful co-operation. Hence, though, among the more advanced societies, we cannot specify any as absolutely military or absolutely industrial, we can still divide them, accordingly as the warlike activities take precedence of the peaceful, or the reverse, into two classes, which we may call the military-industrial and the industrial-military.

What, now, should we infer to be, and do we actually find to be, the characteristic differences of these two classes of societies? Their most salient and fundamental points of distinction may be briefly summarized.*

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* Principles of Sociology, §§ 258–262. See also the article on Specialized Administration.

In the military-industrial type, the corporate life being the unit of organization, we have centralized control, despotic rule, and widely-ramified gradations of rank. As reflecting the average life of the community, the religion is one of enmity—is marked by the prominence of stern and repulsive doctrines; while the ecclesiastical system exhibits an elaborate hierarchy closely resembling the hierarchy of the political system. Meanwhile, industrial activities, regarded only as factors for the sustentation of the military system, are more or less subjected to state interference and control; and since it is the welfare of the state that is always held in view, the general life of the community is dealt with in any way that may seem to secure higher corporate capacity. Thus, the *régime* is one of compulsory co-operation. The individual belongs to the state and exists for the state.

Over against this we may set the leading characteristics of the industrial-military type. The need for such corporate action as is called for in war having largely lapsed, there is a relative absence of centralized control; democratic rule gradually supersedes despotic rule; and the old gradations of rank slowly lose their meaning and tend to disappear. The harsher traits of the religious creed drop away, and, in answer to the peaceful life of the society, gentler and kindlier aspects come into relief. Along with this goes the breaking up of the ecclesiastical as of the political hierarchy, and the rise and spread of non-conformity. Industrial activi-

ties, no longer considered only as furnishing maintenance for the state, little by little free themselves from state control and dictation, while the individual, ceasing to be simply a servant of the general community, refuses to tolerate the interference of the community in the various pursuits of his private life. This is the *régime* of voluntary co-operation. The state exists simply for the individual.

It is hardly necessary to say that, omitting the many other cases that might be cited in illustration, the general history of civilization during the past three or four hundred years has shown, along with the gradual decrease in military activity, a distinct, though of course by no means regular, movement away from the military-industrial type of social organization and towards the industrial-military type. This movement, though general, has gone further in some countries than in others; and the contrast presented to us to-day between England and America on the one hand, and the great continental nations of Europe upon the other, is a striking and instructive one. All this is manifest enough; but there is another point, equally significant in its way, that might easily escape attention. The metamorphosis in question goes on only while conditions remain favourable; as soon as they become unfavourable, a retrograde tendency asserts itself almost immediately. No lessons of recent history are more weighty than those taught by this social atavism. After remarking, in the course of one of his many contributions to

the discussion of this subject, that, just before the civil war, industrialization had advanced to such an extent in our Northern States that "military organization had almost disappeared, and everything martial had fallen into contempt," Mr. Spencer continues: "During the late war in America Mr. Seward's boast—'I touch this bell, and any man in the remotest State is a prisoner of the Government' (a boast which was not an empty one, and which was by many of the Republican party greatly applauded)—shows us how rapidly, along with militant activities, there tends to be resumed the needful type of centralized structure, and how there quickly grow up the corresponding sentiments and ideas. Our own history since 1815 has shown a double change of this kind. During the thirty years' peace the militant organization dwindled, the military sentiment greatly decreased, the industrial organization rapidly developed, the assertion of the individuality of the citizen became more decided, and many restrictive and despotic regulations were got rid of. Conversely, since the revival of militant activities and structures on the Continent our own offensive and defensive structures have been redeveloping; and the tendency towards increase of that centralized control which accompanies such structures has become marked." *

What practical conclusions are we to draw from the inquiries here instituted?

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* Specialized Administration. See also Justice, § 72, etc.

First, that the rise of individual independence of the state, and the decrease of state meddling with the multitudinous affairs of private life, have naturally accompanied the gradual decline of militancy and the slow reconstruction of the great nations of the world upon an industrial basis. Such has been throughout the most noteworthy characteristic of social evolution.* Secondly, that as, from first to last, the end to be achieved by society in its corporate capacity is the welfare of its units, the ethical warrant for the coercion of the individual by the state, derived from the condition of war, disappears as war itself ceases, and cannot be alleged as holding for a condition of peace. And, thirdly, that those who seek to reverse the order of social evolution by re-expansion of the scope of state activity and power, are endeavouring to fit down artificially a system belonging properly to one type of social structure upon the other type of social structure, which has all along been outgrowing it—are engaged, therefore, in a retrogressive enterprise, which is in the very nature of things foredoomed to disaster.†

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* An interesting side light is thrown upon this whole question of the gradual development of personality by such books as Sidney Lanier's English novel, and Mr. H. M. Posnett's Comparative Literature, in the International Scientific Series.

† It is not by accident that socialistic schemes flourish most in a military atmosphere. In Germany, "where militancy is most pronounced, and where the regulation of citizens is most elaborate, socialism is most highly developed, and from the head of the German military system has now come the proposal of regi-

V.

But these conclusions, important though they are, do not represent the whole of the case. Not only during the course of social development does ethical sanction for state interference with the individual gradually decline, but the relinquishment of such interference is seen, from the evolutionary point of view, to be a necessary accompaniment of the increasingly adequate performance on the part of government of the special functions for which it is properly responsible.

Here we must revert to the principle of the physiological division of labor, already touched upon. It has been shown that repetition of similar parts, whether in an individual structure or in society, implies lowness of organization, evolution being everywhere characterized by the complexity resulting from the multiplication of different parts fulfilling different duties. Beyond this, it has been made clear that specialization of function brings with it limitation of function. "At the same time that each part grows adapted to the particular duty it has to discharge, it grows unadapted to all other duties"*—a truth exemplified alike in biology and in political economy. The application of this principle to the matter in hand is obvious. "The governmental

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mental regulations for the working classes throughout Europe" (Justice, § 26).

* Representative Government—What is it Good for? (Essays, vol. iii).

part of the body politic exemplifies this truth equally with its other parts. In virtue of this universal law, a government cannot gain ability to perform its special work without losing such ability as it had to perform other work." *

Hence we must meet, with a more definite answer than has yet been given or implied, the question, What is the special work of a government?

We have said that the only ultimate sanction for social organization in any form is the welfare of the individual unit. Co-operation secures for all a larger and fuller life than each could secure for himself; and the business of the community in its corporate capacity is to maintain the conditions which make co-operation possible. How can it do this? By protecting the individual in such way that in each case the fundamental laws of life shall not be interfered with; in other words, by securing that state of things which enables each citizen to receive the full benefit of his character and activities, subject only to the limitations necessarily imposed upon him by the presence of fellow-citizens having like claims.

That this, and this alone, is the true function of the state, is proved (though not only in this way) by the striking fact that, whatever may have been the other duties assumed or rejected by governments in various places and at different times, this duty has never been

* Ibid. Compare the Essay on Over-Legislation (Essays, vol. iii).

overlooked. The earliest and the latest developments of social structure, differ though they may in every other respect, alike hold this end in view. Positive regulation of the citizen by the community has varied all the world over, and varies still in extent, rigor, and direction; negative regulation has uniformly been accepted, theoretically at any rate, as coming directly within the range of governmental activity.

This is clearly brought out by a comparison of the military and industrial types of society. We have seen that the relation of the individual to the community immediately depends upon the social structure evolved in response to average needs. Yet though, where the activities are predominantly warlike, the unit apparently exists for the sake of the whole, while where the activities are predominantly peaceful the whole clearly exists for the sake of the unit, in each case the ethical authority for state regulation, be this small or great, is ultimately the maintenance of the conditions prerequisite to peaceful co-operation. During periods of antagonistic relations with other communities the main business of government, therefore, is to protect society from external enemies, internal regulation being wholly subservient to this special end. When, with the gradual cessation of war, this function lapses, there remains still the duty of maintaining the conditions prerequisite to peaceful co-operation in other ways—namely, by protecting society from internal enemies. And now let us note the supremely important inference. In

the one case, as in the other, ethical sanction warrants the interference of the state with the individual so far as is necessary to achieve the object here set forth, and no further. As in the military *régime* no moral right can be shown to exist for state coercion of citizens beyond the point required for successful resistance to antagonistic societies, so in the industrial *régime* no moral right can be shown to exist for state coercion of citizens beyond the point required for successful resistance to antagonistic units; state functions are ethically limited to the maintenance of strictly equitable relations among the separate members of the community. Thus we come round from another side to the formula of abstract justice already given. Every man must be held free to do that which he wills, provided only he infringes not the equal freedom of other men; and the duty of the state is to guard each individual citizen from such infringement. When the state itself commits such infringement, therefore, it not only exceeds its duty, but it becomes actually guilty of that which it is its immediate and express duty to prevent.

Such, then, is the proper function of the state, and in fitting itself more completely for this, the state necessarily, as we have seen, becomes less fit for anything else. In low, undeveloped forms of society, the essential work of protection against enemies, internal and external, is performed with extreme imperfection, at the same time that it is encumbered with countless other kinds of work which do not appertain to govern-

ment at all; but with social evolution, progressive differentiation, while gradually relieving the ruling agency of these multitudinous extra duties, enables it to discharge its own particular function with ever-increasing success. Thus the natural tendency is towards specialized administration—towards the production of a type of government best adapted for the proper work of government, and *therefore* least adapted for any other sort of work whatsoever.*

This doctrine has been called by all sorts of hard names, not only by admitted socialists but by many "practical legislators" and "common-sense politicians," who, while they would be horrified at the thought of being identified with the socialists, are constantly favouring movements that are socialistic under the thinnest possible disguise. But it is safe to say that the majority of those who are so loud in their anathemas of Mr. Spencer's individualism are utterly unaware that it has anything but a negative side. Familiar with Mr. Spencer's unmeasured denunciation of state interference—denunciation everywhere backed up by long arrays of the most striking but never appreciated facts—they seem to think that there the matter ends. But there the matter does not end. The truth, already implied in the above considerations, and now to be definitely set forth, is simply this: that while Mr. Spencer pro-

* See particularly the essay on Representative Government—What is it good for?

tests against the continual meddling of government with affairs that do not concern it, he advocates at the same time a more and more complete and conscientious discharge on its part of the business that properly falls within its scope. Hitherto, and at the present time, over-legislation, where legislation is not wanted, has inevitably been accompanied by under-legislation where legislation is sadly called for; things are regulated that ought to be left to take care of themselves, and as a necessary consequence other things are left to take care of themselves that ought to be regulated. Mr. Spencer seeks to turn the scale to the other side—curtailing governmental activity in one direction, while expanding it in another.

In his conversation on The Americans * (October 20, 1882), there is a passage of special interest in this connection. "But we thought, Mr. Spencer," said the interviewer, referring to some remarks that had just passed concerning the relation of the individual to the community, "you were in favour of free government in the sense of relaxed restraints, and letting men and things very much alone, or what is called *laissez-faire*." "That," answered Mr. Spencer, "is a persistent misunderstanding of my opponents. Everywhere, along with the reprobation of government intrusion into various spheres where private activities should be left to themselves, I have contended that in its special sphere—the

* Reprinted in the collected edition of his Essays, vol. iii.

maintenance of equitable relations among citizens—governmental action should be extended and elaborated."

How often this contention has been made, careful study of even the more popular of Mr. Spencer's political writings will make clear.* Meanwhile, as it is not our purpose here to follow the general doctrine that we have outlined into details, we must rest content if we have shown that this positive view of the matter, so commonly lost sight of, is nevertheless of the essence of the whole. The object of this chapter, as stated at the outset, has been not to expound Mr. Spencer's social and political teachings in their particular applications, or to enter into any discussion of them from so-called practical points of view, but to indicate the principal lines of contact between them and the body of his thought. We trust that we have said enough to prove that his individualism, so far from being artificially foisted on to the rest of his system, as some would have us believe, grows naturally out of and therefore properly belongs to it—is an organic part of his general doctrine of universal evolution.

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* See especially the Essays, already so frequently referred to, on Representative Government, Over-Legislation, and Specialized Administration; also Political Institutions, *passim*, and Justice, chap. xxv, which last compare with Social Statics, chaps. xxi, xxii.

CHAPTER V.

THE ETHICAL SYSTEM OF SPENCER.

I.

HAS the doctrine of evolution modified our conceptions of morality? Has it in any way helped to establish the principles of right living upon a firm, scientific foundation? These are questions that meet us on the threshold of such a study as we are to take up in the present chapter, and they must be dealt with before we can place Mr. Spencer's contributions to ethical science in their proper light, or understand their full significance.

The struggle of a new idea concerning the universe with the old ideas whose peaceful reign it disturbs, almost invariably passes through two stages—a stage of positive antagonism and a stage of high-handed conciliation. At the outset it is war to the knife. Champions of the older order rush into the lists, intent on proving not so much that the new thought is untrue as that it is inexpedient. They ask the world not to examine the evidence, but to calculate the consequences. If the ancient cosmology is overthrown, and the phi-

losophy of life so long based upon it crumbles to pieces as a necessary result, then, argues the reactionist, we know what we have to expect. The foundations of morality will be swept away; social disintegration will follow; religion itself will perish. A thousand pulpits take up the warning cry; the press teems with hysterical vaticinations; strong voices are raised in argument or appeal.* Amid all the angry outcry and popular confusion that ensues, the new thought holds secure its tiny germ of life. While men work, and wrangle, and sleep, it makes its silent way; and before the world realizes the vastness of the change that has been wrought in its midst, the truth comes to be recognized as true. Then, strangely enough, we hear nothing more of the disastrous consequences that were to follow in its train. The moment for conciliation has arrived, and the attitude of the conservative is soon taken up. Where is the need of all this excitement? he asks. We all know the thing is true—in theory; but, after all, it is only a theory, and what difference does it make one way or the other? You are quite overrating the practical importance of the whole issue. The world is neither better nor worse for the revelation. The old religion is untouched, the old morality remains just where it was before.

Through these two stages of experience, no less than

* See, for example, Prof. Goldwin Smith's extraordinary diatribe on Will Morality survive Religion? in the Forum for April, 1891.

almost every other great theory that science has given to the world, the doctrine of evolution has passed on its way to general recognition. At first, the Cassandra-voices raised against it were of the loudest and the most persistent. The end of the moral cosmos was at hand. Natural selection was to give us a cold, bloodless system of unrestrained appetite, untempered egoism, unrelieved brutality, in place of the benign and simple altruism of the Sermon on the Mount. The higher feelings were to have no further play; every quality that had beautified the life of saint and martyr and philanthropist was to vanish before the new gospel of the survival of the fittest in the universal struggle for existence. Every one for himself, and the weakest to the wall—that was to be the modern transliteration of the Golden Rule, with what frightful results to the humanity of the future it was hardly needful to specify.* The prophetic picture drawn was dire enough, it is true; the more wonder surely (for all this, let us remember, took place not at the period of the Reformation, but within the memory of men now living) that it has so soon been all but forgotten. For the intellectual offspring and representatives of these passionate opponents of evolu-

* It is perhaps worth while to notice that in ethical speculations on the influence of the doctrine of evolution, survival of the fittest is too often taken to mean survival of the physically strongest—of the vulgarest, as Mr. Oscar Wilde would say. This, for instance, is the mistake made by Oliver Luttrel in Mr. Besant's Bell of St. Paul's; and his reasoning upon the subject is characteristic of a wide-spread error in general thought.

tion in the early years of its growth are anxious to have us know that they at least are not afraid of it. Why should they be? It was, as they now discover, implied in all their teaching long before the days of Darwin and Spencer; and as a matter of fact it adds nothing, one way or the other, to the great practical questions of life. The end of the moral cosmos at hand? Oh, no; for evolution, though it may have thrown some new light upon biology, has nothing whatever to do with ethics. Any attempt to work it out into practical applications will only reveal its sterility. Let the scientists do what they like about it, then. We are not concerned. Our morality is still the morality of them of old time. Evolution has not changed it—not even in the slightest particular.

In what sense it may be said that there is a shade of truth in this sweeping declaration, as well as the extreme falseness of the statement taken as a whole, will become clear later on. Meanwhile there is one point that we may conveniently deal with at once. It is commonly and properly said that the whole edifice of modern science is founded upon the datum of causation. The belief in the uniformity of Nature and of natural processes is exactly that which all our investigation is widening, deepening, and everywhere making more and more secure; and so strong is the hold that it has already taken upon the cultivated mind, that it is now admitted on all sides by those whose training in exact methods of inquiry renders them competent to

judge, that there is no room left for the ancient theological conceptions of the causeless, the lawless, the arbitrary, in the material universe as it stands revealed to our ken. The persistent tendency of all evolutionary thought has been to emphasize this sense of the universality of law where it was already present, and to introduce it where it did not exist before. In this way, as a recent writer on evolutionary morals has well pointed out, the doctrine of evolution has really contributed more to ethics than to the natural sciences. These latter "at least recognized before the appearance of the theory of evolution the element of constancy ordinarily called law, and attempted to formulate this constancy as a basis of thought and action."* But in ethics no such systematic attempt had been made, morality being, indeed, expressly regarded as a region outside and above the domain of law. With the application of evolutionary theories to moral principles went for the first time the emphatic assertion that the connection of cause and effect must be taken to hold good in moral no less than in natural science; that, indeed, only on recognition of this connection is any science of ethics possible. While the evolutionary theory, therefore, only strengthened and deepened the conception of causation already existing in other departments of research, it may be said almost to have introduced that conception into investi-

* C. M. Williams, A Review of the Systems of Ethics founded on the Theory of Evolution, pp. 514, 515.

gations on the subject of morality. Something of what is meant by the great change in thought thus rendered possible we shall see presently. Here we may well bear in mind the fact, that if the doctrine of evolution had done no more than impregnate sociological discussion with this principle of causation, it would have made good its claim to have given ethics a new basis and starting-point, since in this way it has bridged over the wide chasm between a merely empirical and a truly scientific system of morality.

Meanwhile, that we have now reached a crisis in morals has been growing more and more manifest to all who take an interest in the larger movements of the time. Be the influence of the theory of evolution upon ethics what it may, the most vigilant and sagacious thinkers on every side acknowledge that the forces most deeply implicated in the changes that are gradually coming over the whole of our civilization are carrying us to the verge of a moral interregnum. The supremacy of the older, theologically-derived sanctions of conduct is breaking down; and the danger, immediate and serious, is, lest they should be generally cast away as valueless and inefficient before any other sanctions are established to take their place. At this period of transition, while, as Matthew Arnold put it, "the old is out of date" and "the new is not yet born," the world at large undoubtedly stands in peril of a moral collapse. Half-educated reformers, of more zeal than wisdom, in their anxiety to sweep away every vestige of

what they fulminate against as the ancient superstitions of the race, are too apt to overlook the solemn fact, written none the less in letters of fire on every page of history, that the mere destruction of restraints and inspirations under and in virtue of which men have developed hitherto, would mean, not advance, but chaos. It is well enough to throw aside every husk of old doctrine; but may we not find ourselves sometimes in our careless haste discarding, along with the useless rubbish, some germs of vital truth that the world cannot afford to be without?* It is perhaps worth while to pause occasionally to ask ourselves such a question as this; and to remind ourselves that the emotions, upon which, after all, the larger part of morality finally depends, cannot without deadly risk be cut loose from their old moorings and set adrift upon the treacherous sea of chance, at the mercy of every current and wave. Upon the whole, when we remember the congruity that must, according to the evolutionary theory, exist between the creed of a people and their average needs, we cannot protest too vigorously against crude experiments and ill-advised tamperings with the world's heritage of traditions, especially when anything so sacred

* The case of Lessing is here in point. Writing to his friend Mendelssohn concerning the rationalistic experiences of his earlier years, he confesses that in "getting rid of certain prejudices" he had also deprived himself of some things that he would have to recover. "That I have not in part done so already," he adds, "is only due to my fear lest, by degrees, I should drag the whole rubbish into the house again."

and essential as the main-springs of conduct are concerned; we cannot too strongly discountenance the spirit of the rash iconoclast who cares only to sap the ancient foundations of moral faith, and has no principle of guidance to offer in exchange for those he is intent upon snatching away. In such an emergency, the clear course is to let the work of destruction take care of itself, and to see what can be accomplished in the far more difficult as well as infinitely more important task of reconstructing the bases of morality in accordance with the new thought and the growing knowledge of the time. It is the positive rather than the negative message of science that it concerns us to understand.

Recognition of this momentous fact led Mr. Spencer, while working out the Synthetic Philosophy, to depart from the regular outline as originally published, and to take up the last division—The Principles of Ethics—at the expense of several intervening portions of the scheme. In the preface, dated July, 1879, to The Data of Ethics (Part I of the completed work), he thus wrote in explanation of his course of action:

"I am the more anxious to indicate in outline, if I cannot complete, this final work, because the establishment of rules of right conduct on a scientific basis is a pressing need. Now that moral injunctions are losing the authority given by their supposed sacred origin, the secularization of morals is becoming imperative. Few things can happen more disastrous than the decay and

death of a regulative system no longer fit, before another and fitter regulative system has grown up to replace it. Most of those who reject the current creed appear to assume that the controlling agency furnished by it may safely be thrown aside, and the vacancy left unfilled by any other controlling agency. Meanwhile, those who defend the current creed allege that, in the absence of the guidance it yields, no guidance can exist: divine commandments they think the only possible guides. Thus, between these extreme opponents there is a certain community. The one holds that the gap left by disappearance of the code of supernatural ethics need not be filled by a code of natural ethics; and the other holds that it cannot be so filled. Both contemplate a vacuum, which the one wishes and the other fears. As the change which promises or threatens to bring about this state, desired or dreaded, is rapidly progressing, those who believe that the vacuum can be filled, and that it must be filled, are called on to do something in pursuance of their belief." *

This paragraph makes Mr. Spencer's position perfectly clear. As before pointed out, his interests had from the first been practical; his earliest publications—the letters on The Proper Sphere of Government and the more mature work on Social Statics—had dealt with the actual problems of the day; and the desire to apply philosophic principles to the questions of social

* Data of Ethics, p. vi.

growth and the conduct of life subsequently inspired the Synthetic System itself. Properly speaking, then, all his other work led up to his Ethics; to leave that division untouched, therefore, would have been to leave his whole enterprise, comprehensive and valuable as it might have been as a contribution to scientific generalization, in the condition of "Giotto's tower in the old Tuscan town"—a magnificent effort, yet "wanting still the glory of the spire." "My ultimate purpose," he writes in the preface from which I have just quoted, "lying behind all proximate purposes, has been that of finding for the principles of right and wrong, in conduct at large, a scientific basis." Naturally, therefore, he could not but feel that "to leave this purpose unfulfilled after making so extensive a preparation for fulfilling it, would be a failure the probability of which" he would not like to contemplate. Hence, during the past few years the labour spent, amid much interruption from ill-health, and some disturbance from other causes, upon the Principles of Ethics; the recent publication of Parts V and VI of which renders this most important of all modern works on moral science at length complete.

II.

Properly to appreciate the place occupied by the work of Spencer in the general development of ethical thought, we must understand something of what had been done towards the establishment of a scientific basis

of morality by writers who had preceded him in the field. This will bring out his relation to the doctrines of the so-called orthodox schools upon the one hand, and to the theories of earlier independent thinkers upon the other.

An intrinsic difference in principle has long divided all ethical investigators, no matter what their minor points of agreement or disagreement may be, into two great hostile camps, usually known as the intuitive or intuitional, and the inductive or utilitarian. This fundamental diversity of view may be traced back dimly to the days of Greek philosophy, but it has acquired its immediate importance only within comparatively recent days. Through Cudworth, Clarke, and Butler on the one side, and through Hobbes, Helvétius, and Bentham on the other, we can follow the main lines of divergence and antagonism, down to the time when the doctrine of evolution entered the arena, and, offering a hand to each of the hereditary foes, led the way to a conciliation hitherto undreamed of.

The main questions at issue between the intuitionists and the utilitarians, difficult as they may seem in solution, may be very briefly stated. They are the time-honoured questions of the ethical standard and the moral sense. What, in the ultimate analysis, is the standard or criterion of right and wrong? And, given that standard, how do we ourselves distinguish between them? Varied in detail as were the answers given by the intuitionists to these questions, they agreed substantially in

this—that both the criterion of right and wrong, and our own power of distinguishing between them, are to be sought in an innate and divinely-implanted moral sense or conscience. The human mind was thus regarded as possessing an ultra-experiential faculty of judgment concerning conduct—a faculty which is itself unresolvable into any simpler elements, and beyond which there can be no appeal. Against this reply it was the mission of utilitarianism to enter an emphatic protest. The followers of the newer school refused to accept the alleged innate and divinely-implanted moral sense as anything more than a myth. For them our only test of conduct is the test furnished by experience; and the so-called moral faculty or conscience, so far from being immediate and simple, is itself merely the organized registration in the modern civilized adult of his observations of the consequences of the actions of himself and others. Thus, from the standpoint of the intuitionist, virtue or right conduct is in itself not only a proximate but also an ultimate end; while the utilitarian regards it as a proximate end only; the ultimate end, which imparts to it its particular quality of virtuousness or rightness, being some kind of utility which it is held to subserve.

This, I think, is sufficiently exact, as well as clear; yet, as the point is of importance, I will emphasize what I have just said by an extract from Mr. Lecky, whose testimony I select because, being himself a strong supporter of the orthodox party, he will give us the most sympathetic view of his own side, together with a view

of the other uncharged by any possible partisan colouring. The intuitional moralists, writes this distinguished historian,* "believe that we have a natural power of perceiving that some qualities, such as benevolence, chastity, or veracity, are better than others, and that we ought to cultivate them and repress their opposites. In other words, they contend that, by the constitution of our nature, the notion of right carries with it a feeling of obligation; that to say a course of conduct is our duty, is in itself and apart from all consequences an intelligible and sufficient reason for practising it; and that we derive the first principles of our duties from intuition." The utilitarian, on the contrary, denies "that we have any such natural perception. He maintains that we have by nature absolutely no knowledge of merit and demerit, of the comparative merit of our feelings and actions, and that we derive these notions solely from an observation of the course of life which is conducive to human happiness. That which makes actions good is that they increase the happiness or decrease the pains of mankind. That which constitutes their demerit is their opposite tendency. To procure the greatest happiness of the greatest number † is therefore the highest aim of

* History of European Morals, chap. i. As I cordially dissent from most of the positions adopted by the author in the introductory chapter from which the above quotation is made, I am the more pleased to express my admiration of the learning, honesty, and acumen which characterize the whole of this masterly work.

† This principle—the greatest happiness principle, as it is succinctly called—is, of course, that enunciated by Bentham, the man

the moralist—the supreme type and expression of virtue."

These, amid many minor points of difference, not only helping to separate more thoroughly the two great parties from each other, but often breaking up those parties themselves into sundry more or less closely segregated clusters, may be taken as the most salient characteristics of the antagonistic schools. While they remained, in their older forms, the only important candidates for popular favour, the suffrages of the world were very unequally divided between them. Besides the rank and file of the various religious denominations, an overwhelming majority of the most prominent moralists, including all those belonging to the body of the Christian Church, gave in a full adhesion to the intuitionist doctrines. The transcendental nature of morality was the central principle around which men of the most diverse theological and social views were called upon to rally; and the orthodox army, no matter how much its champions might be divided among themselves, thus presented a solid front to the enemy. The other side was never popular; but it made up for this

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with whose name the system of the older utilitarianism is most intimately associated. It will be found stated and developed in his Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation, first published in 1789. The principle itself has from that time downward been the object of violent attack at the hands of the intuitional party; but perhaps the keenest criticism that it has ever been subjected to is that contained in the Data of Ethics, chap. xiii.

by attracting to itself some of the clearest-headed and most original thinkers of the time, making a special appeal to men of skeptical tendencies, as well as to those trained in scientific methods of investigation.

We need here touch upon those aspects only of the old intuitional-utilitarian controversy which will help to bring into conspicuous relief the signal advantages achieved by the application of evolutionary principles to the theoretic issues involved. A glance at the positions respectively taken up by the two parties on the question of the moral sense will, for this purpose, place us at the proper point of view.

Let us notice, then, that the diversity of moral sentiments and ideas exhibited by different peoples, and by the same peoples at different stages of their growth, is a problem which the intuitionists have never yet met with anything like a satisfactory solution. We are told that there are many religions, but only one morality. This is true in a sense, but not by any means in the sense intended by those by whom the phrase is currently employed. The statement, which indeed smacks significantly of the attractive humanitarianism of eighteenth-century philosophy, might have passed unquestioned at a time when sociological speculation was so entirely untrammelled by any reference to fact that men like Morelly and Rousseau could discourse eloquently of a mythical state of Nature and a purely hypothetical barbarism, and indignantly ask an artificial society to contrast man as the product of civilization with man

in his primitive condition of freedom and happy innocence. But what might have done well enough in Rousseau's day will not do in ours. Progress in ethnological and anthropological research has given us the real savage in place of the savage of our imagination; and instead of arguing as to what uncivilized man might have been and (in view of our theories) ought to have been, we must now take him, whether we like it or not, as he has been and is. We have to remember that the intuitional doctrine of the moral sense is an inheritance from a period when practically nothing was known of the actual history of our race;* it was constructed in reference to supposed theoretic necessities, and not upon an examination of facts, and it would have been surprising enough, therefore, if it could meet the results of exact and thorough investigation without serious and essential change. An inductive study of the diversities of moral theory and practice, made possible by our modern science of comparative culture, suffices to show us at once that we are not speaking too strongly when we say that, so far from ethical sanctions indicating the existence of anything like fundamental similarity, we are rather justified in asserting that there is no crime, recognized by us as such, which has not somewhere and at some time found its place in the catalogue of virtues, and no virtue which has not been officially condemned.

* "Inquiring into the pedigree of an idea is not a bad means of roughly estimating its value." (The Nebular Hypothesis).

Even in extreme cases the statement will be found to hold good. The murderous Fijian's only fear is lest he should not be active enough in slaughter to win the approbation of his gods; with the Egyptian, lying is honourable; while the Turkoman's code of moral injunctions prescribes theft. Nor when we compare civilized nations with one another do we find the results less significant. Polygamy, wrong in Europe and America, is right and proper in China, India, and Turkey; while infanticide, a practice that we hold in utter abhorrence, was not only common in Greece and Rome, but was even justified by the greatest ethical teachers of antiquity, Plato and Aristotle, who also held views concerning the relations of the sexes which we should look on as revolting. On any theory of a transcendental God-given sense of right and wrong, these facts present difficulties that, but for the overwhelming influence of preconceived ideas, would at once have been recognized as absolutely insuperable. An attempt has indeed been made to turn the edge of the objection by the statement that, notwithstanding such variations of sentiment and conduct, *some* idea of right and wrong is always present. But this assertion practically abandons the only position in the intuitional theory that is worth fighting for, since, in the first place, it allows the definite and clear-cut claim originally put forth to lapse into one too vague and indefinite to be of any real service; and, in the second place, it introduces the elements of education and environment—the very elements that the in-

tuitionists are naturally most anxious to keep out of the account. If the conscience is, after all that has been said for it, nothing more than a plastic and capricious faculty, which, instead of being a permanent, infallible, and absolute guide, may be so warped and distorted as to prompt here to theft and there to murder, while in other places theft and murder take rank among the most heinous crimes, then what becomes of the divine voice within us? and wherein is the extra-experiential moral sense one whit more sacred than any sense that might be acquired? Surely the oracles of God should speak with no uncertain sound, if they are to make good their claim to a divine origin and mission.

These difficulties in the intuitional theory early presented themselves to Mr. Spencer, though not till after he had practically committed himself to that theory in his published work. In his recent Inductions of Ethics (where the whole ground of moral divergences is covered in considerable detail) he writes (§ 191): "Though, as shown in my first work, Social Statics, I once espoused the doctrine of the intuitive moralists (at the outset in full, and in later chapters with some implied qualifications), yet it has gradually become clear to me that the qualifications required practically obliterate the doctrine as enunciated by them. It has become clear to me that if, among ourselves, the current belief is that a man who robs and does not repent will be eternally damned, while an accepted proverb among the Bilochs is that 'God will not favour a man who does not steal and rob,' it is

impossible to hold that men have in common an innate perception of right and wrong."

Against the orthodox intuitionists, therefore, the utilitarians undoubtedly possessed a strong case, since the old claim concerning conscience as an extra-experiential element of the mind crumbled to pieces the moment it was brought to the touchstone of fact. But, though the labour of destruction was easy, the labour of construction presented perplexities almost as great as those which the intuitionists had found blocking their path. It was one thing to show that the moral faculty could not be regarded as simple, independent, and transcendental; it was quite another thing to present a tenable hypothesis of its existence, and of the authoritativeness it undoubtedly possesses in the mind of the average civilized man.

Hence, even in the hands of its ablest exponents, the utilitarian theory remained in a crude and unsatisfactory shape. The problem that it sought to solve, though rightly recognized by it as a problem within the limits of scientific investigation, was for the time being beyond the reach of its resources and power. The conscience is not original and independent: true; but, then, whence and how is it derived? That was the knotty question, to which the intuitionists naturally demanded a reply. Bentham, who, though not theoretically the founder of utilitarianism, was the first to endeavour to make utility the basis of a coherent moral system, was himself no psychologist, and never approached the problems of ethics

from the psychological side; but several of his followers, notably the two Mills, saw this vulnerable spot in his armour, and attempted to make it good. The following extract from the younger of the just-named writers will probably give, in brief, the best specimen of the most advanced utilitarian speculation on this important point:

"The internal sanction of duty, whatever our standard of duty may be, is one and the same—a feeling in our own mind; a pain, more or less intense, attendant on violation of duty, which in properly-cultivated moral natures rises in the more serious cases into shrinking from it as an impossibility. This feeling, when disinterested, and connecting itself with the pure idea of duty, and not with some particular form of it, or with any of the merely accessory circumstances, is the essence of conscience; though in that complex phenomenon as it actually exists the simple fact is in general all incrusted over with collateral associations, derived from sympathy, from love, and still more from fear; from all the forms of religious feeling; from the recollections of childhood and of all our past life; from self-esteem, desire of the esteem of others, and occasionally even self-abasement. This extreme complication is, I apprehend, the origin of the sort of mystical character which, by a tendency of the human mind of which there are many other examples, is apt to be attributed to the idea of moral obligation, and which leads people to believe that the idea cannot possibly attach itself to any other objects

than those which, by a supposed mysterious law, are found in our present experience to excite it. Its binding force, however, consists in the existence of a mass of feeling which must be broken through in order to do what violates our standard of right, and which, if we do nevertheless violate that standard, will probably have to be encountered afterwards in the form of remorse. Whatever theory we have of the nature or origin of conscience, this is what essentially constitutes it." *

In Mill's view, therefore, as in that of the other members of his school, the moral sense arises in each individual as the result of his own experience of the connection between actions and their consequences, intrinsic and extrinsic, immediate and remote. Observation of the direct and indirect pains entailed by certain evil courses of conduct, which we thus learn to avoid altogether, or to follow at our peril, together with the indelible impressions left by early education and various environing influences during our plastic years, enter as most considerable factors into the building up of the complex moral sense; while an equally important though more subtle part is played by the principle of association. Pain and wrong action, pleasure and right action, are found in interconnection with striking regu-

* Utilitarianism, chap. iii. In their analysis of the conscience the older utilitarians do not seem to have advanced much beyond the point reached by Dr. David Hartley (1705–1757), who introduced into the consideration of the moral sense the important element of association, which he was the first to apply systematically to the general phenomena of the mind.

larity and persistence; whence, in accordance with the well-known psychological law, right and wrong, at first regarded only from the point of view of their consequences, come at length to have a direct power of appeal, and are sought or avoided, loved or hated, for their own sakes. Meanwhile, the abstract idea of rightness and duty is conceived as arising, like other abstract ideas, by generalization from countless experiences of concrete cases of right and duty; while the sense of coerciveness or obligation at large is interpreted as a result, immediately and by association, of the influence exercised upon the growing nature by the rigid discipline and sustained authority of the organized society in which, and the governmental agencies under which, the civilized individual develops to man's estate.

Now, it is hardly necessary to point out wherein this alleged explanation, suggestive as it doubtless is, must be regarded as paradoxically insufficient to meet the problem upon its most important side. While recognizing to the full the power of education, environment, and association, we still find ourselves unable to understand how, within the lifetime of the single individual, the idea of virtue as a separate, independent, and self-existent conception, could ever be generated out of and emerge from the mere personal observation of the persistent connection between certain courses of conduct and certain accompanying results. Serious as is the objection thus suggested of inadequacy of means to end, it becomes still more serious when we remember that the

specified connection between right action and pleasurable results can scarcely be said to persist within the limits of our own individual experiences with the constancy and regularity that the argument appears to demand. Could there ever in this way arise such a conception of rectitude as that which Tennyson embodies in the famous lines:

> "And because right is right, to follow right
> Is wisdom in the scorn of consequence"?

Simple or complex, innate or derived, the moral faculty, as we find it in the normal product of civilization, acts, if not with absolute uniformity, still with an immediateness and average certainty sufficient to make us pause before endorsing any theory that refuses to take us further in the matter than the individual's organized experiences of pleasures and pains. The issue may be dealt with on the grounds of common sense. According to the utilitarian hypothesis, each infant born into the world starts absolutely afresh. The mind is a *tabula rasa*, with no innate ideas, no intuitions of any kind. Upon this the environment is supposed to work; and the simple question is, whether the organization and registration of personal observations, impressions, and experiences, during the comparatively few years of childhood and adolescence, can be fairly taken to account for all that we know of the characteristics of the moral faculty as it exists within ourselves in the period of adult life? It is surely not strange that the intui-

tional school declined to answer this question in the affirmative.

The dispute between the two opposed theories of morals may, therefore, be said to have reached a deadlock. Each side had found the weak point in the other's system, while at the same time each failed to secure from attack its own. And now we are in a position to appreciate the flood of new light that was suddenly let in upon the whole controversy by the rise of the doctrine of evolution.

Notwithstanding all the profound differences that separated them, the two older schools possessed a single characteristic in common. Both had based their arguments and formulated their conclusions upon the conceptions of special creation and fixed types; and the discussion, with the full consent of both contending parties, had been in this way limited in range to the experiences of the individual life. Could the conscience ever have arisen after the manner alleged, within the span of the separate mortal career? This was the form that the issue had taken; and to the question in this shape one side had answered Yes, and the other No. Evolution at once widened the issue. Behind the individual it placed the race; behind civilized humanity, the ages of barbarism and animality, out of which, through untold centuries, we have been slowly and painfully struggling upward into higher developments of life. The problem was no longer that of explaining the fine sensitive conscience of the modern adult Caucasian

as the outgrowth of a few years of personal intercourse with his environment. The gradually-acquired experiences of countless generations, slowly registered through long periods of social consolidation, and handed down from age to age as slight but persistent modifications in the nervous organization of evolving man—these were the new factors which the development theory introduced into the discussion. An explanation which had properly been condemned as absurdly inadequate, so long as attention was confined to the brief terms of a separate life, assumed, immediately that account was taken of the element of hereditary transmission, the appearance of a rational and complete solution of the problem. In merging the life history of each single generation in the life history not only of the human race at large, but of all sentient existence, and in postulating the thread of continuity that, running through almost imperceptible gradations, binds the highest forms to the lowest, the evolutionist at once secured a new standpoint, and escaped the obvious charge of extravagance or specious reasoning. In this way evolution, having, as we have already seen, reconciled the adverse claims of the psychological schools of Locke and Kant, now also stepped forward to make peace between the hereditary foes—the intuitionists and the utilitarians. It showed that in the interpretation of conscience each side had part of the truth, and neither side the whole truth. The moral sense, like what we know as instinct, while innate and extra-

experiential in the individual, is acquired and dependent in the race.*

The attitude of the evolutionary moralist, thus made clear, will be made clearer still by the following extract from a letter written many years ago by Mr. Spencer to Mr. Mill, and subsequently published, in part, in the Data of Ethics:

"To make my position fully understood, it seems needful to add that corresponding to the fundamental propositions of a developed moral science there have been and still are developing in the race certain fundamental moral intuitions; and that though these moral intuitions are the results of accumulated experiences of utility, gradually organized and inherited, they have come to be quite independent of conscious experience. Just in the same way that I believe the intuition of space, possessed by any living individual, to have arisen from organized and consolidated expeperiences of all antecedent individuals who bequeathed

* It is only just to notice that the claim for an original and non-derivative moral sense has been very differently interpreted by different members of the older intuitional school. Kant, for instance, by far the greatest thinker among them all, distinctly admits, in his Critique of Practical Reason, that the moral imperative, conceived by him as transcendental, is transcendental only as to *form*. The *content* is derived. In other words, it gives the general sense of duty or obligation; but for our knowledge of what constitutes right and wrong in any particular case we have still to go back to experience. This, of course, is a far less generous demand than that made by the average intuitionist, and, indeed, yields half the case to the utilitarian.

to him their slowly developed nervous organizations—just as I believe that this intuition, requiring only to be made definite and complete by personal experiences, has practically become a form of thought, apparently quite independent of experience; so do I believe that the experiences of utility organized and consolidated through all past generations of the human race have been producing corresponding nervous modifications, which, by continued transmission and accumulation, have become in us certain faculties of moral intuition—certain emotions responding to right and wrong conduct, which have no apparent basis in the individual experiences of utility. I also hold that just as the space intuition responds to the exact demonstrations of geometry, and has its rough conclusions interpreted and verified by them, so will moral intuitions respond to the demonstrations of moral science, and will have their rough conclusions interpreted and verified by them."

Careful perusal of the above extract will enable us to understand Mr. Spencer's emphatic protest, made earlier in the same letter, against being classed among the anti-utilitarians, and will suggest, as well, those important differences that separate him from the older school, to which we must revert directly. But beyond this, it brings us round to a point at which we may touch again upon a question already referred to—the question as to how far it is true that the evolutionary theory has introduced any new elements into our ethical considerations. It will be seen that it has actually discarded neither of the

two great contradictory doctrines that it found in possession of the field; and in that sense, if by new we are to understand something absolutely unconnected with previous investigation, it may be urged that nothing new has been given us as a consequence of its application to the issues involved. But a new theory in science is seldom like a new fashion in dress; it is rarely more than a modification, or adaptation or re-interpretation, of some theory or theories already accepted in whole or in part; and the revelation, when it comes to shake the world, most frequently brings nothing beyond a new attitude, a fresh adjustment of familiar ideas, or a sudden flash of light into some detail hitherto unperceived. The effect of evolution upon the older moral thought is a case in illustration. It came not so much to destroy as to fulfil. For it has placed the doctrines of both the intuitionists and the utilitarians on a new basis and in a new light; it has harmonized their differences by showing their partial and supplementary character; and by promulgating a theory of the moral sense which covers all the facts advanced by both sides, while it avoids the difficulties which each had found insuperable, it has brought the whole matter for the first time within the range of scientific treatment.

Nor must we overlook the substantial contribution that evolution has made to the discussion of the perennial problem of evil. The existence of this disturbing factor in the moral universe has, more than any other question, agitated the human mind from the time of

Job downward, and with the progress of knowledge and the expansion of thought has given rise, in systems of theology and philosophy, to the most ingenious hypotheses and fantastic speculations. Evolution enables us to read at least some meaning and harmony into the turmoil and discord of the world. Here, again, the explanation it offers us is not marked by any absolute originality. Glimpses of the truth that evil is, so to speak, nothing but the friction due to the imperfect adaptation of human nature to social conditions, have from time to time been caught by thinkers of various schools; and Pope, in the early part of the last century, was only voicing the opinions of a large body of philosophers, when, working at second-hand over the doctrines of Leibnitzian optimism, he wrote:

> "All Nature is but art unknown to thee;
> All chance, direction which thou canst not see;
> All discord, harmony not understood;
> All partial evil, universal good." *

But these guesses and conjectures were of no scientific value whatever, and were at most nothing but faint adumbrations of that interpretation which evolution makes possible for us by turning back over the long past history of our race, and tracing out the struggle of the pre-social instinct with the conditions of social life. The modern doctrine of human development, if it leaves the teleology of the subject still involved in the old mystery (since any question of *why* the particular line

* Essay on Man, i, 289–292.

of progress revealed by evolution was necessary still remains, from the metaphysical side, unsolved and insoluble), at all events replaces by a statement of fact and induction the nebulous theories formerly in vogue. The patristic dogma of the fall of man is banished to the limbo of outgrown superstitions, along with all the Augustinian subtleties founded upon it; and what we have officially called sin, so far from having any supernatural causes or implications, we can now recognize as an inevitable accompaniment of the slow and painful adjustment of the natures of men to the circumstances and requirements of the associated state. The old Adam within us is the Adam of the pre-social stages of human history—the impulses of barbarism, the unrectified egoistic emotions of the dweller in cave and wilderness, which will from day to day burst loose and declare themselves, despite the long discipline to which mankind has been subjected through centuries of progressing civilization. Every time we give way to such impulses the old barbarian rises within us, and temporarily reasserts his power. Scratch the Russian and you will find the Tartar just beneath—so runs the proverb; and in the great mass of men the morality of civilization is as yet hardly more than skin-deep. As with the ship in Ibsen's grim and terrible poem,* our modern society

* Rhymed Epistle—a strange production, based upon the sailors' superstitious dread of making a voyage with a corpse on board, and written in answer to the question of a friend as to what was amiss with the present age.

carries with it a corpse in the cargo—the unbridled elemental passions, the brute instincts, the fierce tendencies of primitive man, handed down to us by the ages of the past.

What new significance is in this way given to the oft-repeated phrase which describes the criminal classes as the failures of civilization! They are the representatives of the savage left over in the midst of our more developed life, guided by the savage's predatory instincts, living in a state of natural enmity with those about them, preying upon their fellows, to whom they offer nothing in return, and thus remaining unintegrated into the great organization of mutual-dependent parts which constitutes society. The moral progress of man, as Mr. John Fiske has put it, is the gradual process of "throwing off the brute inheritance." The law of morality becomes more emphatically than ever the law of the higher life; sin is degeneration—a tendency towards reversion to the pre-social or animal type; and the ethical ideal of evolution, in Tennyson's language, is to

> "Move upward, working out the beast,
> And let the ape and tiger die." *

III.

The ethical system of Mr. Spencer, then, is utilitarian, but not in the narrow sense in which the word

* In Memoriam, 118. Tennyson has given poetic expression to the same evolutionary thought in other places, notably in his later poems, The Dawn, and The Making of Man.

utilitarian was formerly employed. The final criterion, as well as the ultimate end of universal conduct, is taken to be happiness, pleasure, or well-being; * that is to say, in the last analysis, that course of action, and that course alone, can be held to be absolutely right which meets this criterion and helps towards achievement of this end. But while the utilitarianism of Bentham and the Mills was merely empirical, Spencer's utilitarianism is rational. To make this difference clear will be to bring into relief the elements that are most noteworthy and characteristic in Mr. Spencer's ethical teaching, considered on its scientific side.

All the old moral systems have, as we have already intimated, been uniformly characterized by non-recognition of the principle of causation. Whether the position taken was that the revealed will of Deity is the sole ground of duty (as by the theological moralists strictly so called), or that our knowledge of right and wrong can come only through the instrumentality of a supernaturally-given conscience (as taught by the orthodox intuitionists), or that distinction in conduct arises

* The tendency of language is almost always towards degeneration, and it is sometimes a hard struggle to prevent our ideas from following our speech. It is unfortunate that the word pleasure has come to be generally used for the criterion and end mentioned above. The word is objectionable on account of its connotations; the idea called up is too limited in character, and has been seriously vitiated by evil associations. Happiness, though better, is still not wholly satisfactory. Perhaps well-being, with its wider sweep of meaning and absence of historic taint, is the best word for the purpose.

only by governmental enactment (as maintained in the political doctrine of Hobbes and his disciples), the implication was still the same. All these schools, so widely separated from one another at every other point, agree substantially in this: that they regard the rightness and wrongness of actions as qualities not necessarily inherent in the nature of the actions themselves, but impressed upon them by some extraneous and independent authority. Do we know that a certain action is wrong only because of a divine revelation through Scripture or conscience, or because of legislation directed against it? Then the statement implies that we could learn the wrongness of the said action in no other way—not even by observation of its results; and this is tantamount to saying that the action has not, in the nature of things, certain invariable consequences. But this leads us at once into an unforeseen dilemma. For if the supposed wrong action does not tend necessarily to produce certain evil consequences—that is, if its wrongness is not inherent, but accidental—then how are we the better off for knowing that it is wrong? The world might go on its way just as well, so far as present things are concerned, in the absence of the supernaturally-revealed or state-given knowledge, and all need for divine or legislative interference forthwith disappears. But if, on the other hand, the divine or legislative interference is supposed to be required because the welfare of the world will be furthered by the knowledge, then this means, if it means anything, that the evil action does tend to pro-

duce certain invariable consequences; and if this is so, then why cannot we study these consequences for ourselves, and reach a knowledge of the wrongness of the action by induction, or deduction, or both? Out of this logical labyrinth there seems no way of escape; and the whole difficulty arises from the fact that the necessary tendency of actions is overlooked—from the fact, in other words, that the element of causation in conduct is left out of the account.*

Now, this weakness in older ethical speculations is precisely what the general nature of those speculations, and the intellectual character of the times from which they date, would lead us to expect. But we are not so fully prepared to find the same weakness, though not in so pronounced a form, manifesting itself in the doctrines of the utilitarian school. Even in utilitarianism, recognition of causation is far from complete.

And here we revert to a statement already made: that the older utilitarianism had not advanced beyond the empirical stage in its treatment of moral phenomena. Its method was that of induction only. When observations of the results of various courses of conduct have been made in numerous cases, and with sufficient care, a generalization is possible, and the inductive statement is reached that certain actions do uniformly give rise to evil results, while certain others bring with them

* The line of argument adopted in this and the following paragraphs is worked out in detail in the Data of Ethics, chap. iv.

results of an opposite kind. Inferences from such a generalization may then be taken as rules of conduct; since actions that have been followed by certain consequences in the countless cases submitted to analysis may fairly be supposed to have in themselves a tendency to produce those consequences. But here utilitarianism stopped. The important step in advance taken by Mr. Spencer lies in his attempt to convert the principles of conduct thus reached, from truths of the empirical into truths of the rational order, by showing not only that, as inductively proved, certain actions are habitually accompanied by certain results, but also that it has to be deductively proved that in the very nature of things these results *must* go along with them. Only in this way can the element of causation be fully recognized; only in this way, therefore, can we have a science of ethics properly so called.*

From Mr. Spencer's letter to Mr. Mill, already laid under contribution, we may here transcribe a passage which will make the essential point in this discussion sufficiently clear:

"The view for which I contend is, that morality properly so called—the science of right conduct—has for its object to determine *how* and *why* certain modes of conduct are detrimental, and certain other modes beneficial. These good and bad results cannot be acci-

* For Mr. Spencer's earliest discussion, interesting in this connection, of the utilitarian system, see Social Statics, introduction.

dental, but must be necessary consequences of the constitution of things; and I conceive it to be the business of moral science to deduce from the laws of life and the conditions of existence what kinds of action necessarily tend to produce happiness and what kinds to produce unhappiness. Having done this, its deductions are to be recognized as laws of conduct; and are to be conformed to, irrespective of a direct estimation of happiness or misery.

Perhaps an analogy will most clearly show my meaning. During its early stages, planetary astronomy consisted of nothing more than accumulated observations respecting the positions and motions of the sun and planets; from which accumulated observations it came by and by to be empirically predicted, with an approach to truth, that certain of the heavenly bodies would have certain positions at certain times. But the modern science of planetary astronomy consists of deductions from the law of gravitation—deductions showing why the celestial bodies *necessarily* occupy certain places at certain times. Now the kind of relation which thus exists between ancient and modern astronomy is analogous to the kind of relation which, I conceive, exists between the expendiency-morality and moral science properly so called. And the objection which I have to the current utilitarianism is, that it recognizes no more developed form of morality—does not see that it has reached but the initial stage of moral science."

Reproducing this passage in the Data of Ethics, by

way of general summary of his discussion of the utilitarian standpoint, Mr. Spencer adds:

"Doubtless if utilitarians are asked whether it can be by mere chance that this kind of action works evil and that works good, they will answer—No; they will admit that such sequences are parts of a necessary order among phenomena. But though this truth is beyond question, and though, if there are causal relations between acts and their results, rules of conduct can become scientific only when they are deduced from these causal relations, there continues to be entire satisfaction with that form of utilitarianism in which these causal relations are practically ignored. It is supposed that in future, as now, utility is to be determined only by observation of results, and that there is no possibility of knowing by deduction from fundamental principles what conduct *must* be detrimental and what conduct *must* be beneficial." *

Such, then, is the foundation of Mr. Spencer's moral system, to the working out of which through the various departments of personal morals and social relationships the remainder of the Principles of Ethics is devoted. It remains but to add that affiliation of the principles here laid down upon the general doctrine of evolution leads to the assertion of some rather striking conclusions concerning the future moral progress of the race. We

* Data of Ethics, § 21. For a further discussion of the relations between expediency-morality and moral science, see the essay on Prison Ethics.

have seen that one of the fundamental doctrines of the Synthetic Philosophy is, that all things are gradually tending towards equilibrium; and as this must hold true in the super-organic no less than in the organic world, it results that the gradual adaptation of the natures of men to their environment cannot cease until between natures and environment there is a perfect balance or equilibrium. From the very commencement of social life down to the present time such tendency towards adjustment has been slowly going on, and it is going on still, moulding the characters of men and women everywhere into more and more complete harmony with the sum-total of the conditions under which they live. What will be the ultimate consequence? "The adaptation of man's nature," writes Mr. Spencer, "to the conditions of his existence cannot cease until the internal forces which we know as feelings are in equilibrium with the external forces they encounter. And the establishment of this equilibrium is the arrival at a state of human nature and social organization such that the individual has no desires but those which may be satisfied without exceeding his proper sphere of action, while society maintains no restraints but those which the individual voluntarily respects. The progressive extension of the liberty of citizens, and the reciprocal removal of political restrictions, are the steps by which we advance towards this state. And the ultimate abolition of all limits to the freedom of each, save those imposed by the like freedom of all, must result from

the complete equilibration between man's desires and the conduct necessitated by surrounding conditions." *

The ethical corollary of all this, set down though it is in terms of rigidly scientific reasoning, is more optimistic than the brightest dreams of revolutionist or prophet concerning the ideal developments of our race. For this equilibration of emotions and conditions means that at length the adaptation of men's natures to the demands of associated life will become so complete that all sense of internal as well as of external restraint and compulsion will entirely disappear. Right conduct will become instinctive and spontaneous; duty will always be synonymous with pleasure; love will indeed be "an unerring light" and "joy its own security," as Wordsworth sang; altruism and egoism will so closely merge that altruism will be simply the highest egoism; and the interests of the individual and of the race will be so completely unified that the prompting and impulses of every moment will minister at once to the immediate and ultimate furtherance of the one and the widest and fullest realization of the other.†

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* First Principles, § 175.

† In regard to this adjustment of the moral nature to the conditions, see especially Social Statics, Part I, chap. ii; Data of Ethics, §§ 46, 67, 96, 97; Inductions of Ethics, §§ 124, 191, 192.

CHAPTER VI.

RELIGIOUS ASPECTS OF THE SPENCERIAN PHILOSOPHY.

I.

It is a curious instance of the gratuitous perverseness of popular judgments, that because Mr. Spencer has been careful to mark out more clearly than any preceding philosopher the limits within which, from the very constitution of our intelligence, all our knowledge must be confined, his system should therefore have been pronounced a system of negations. Thousands of pulpits from which there never yet issued a syllable about his positive contributions to thought, have rung with denunciations of his agnosticism; thousands of general readers who know nothing of the light that he has thrown upon so many of the practical problems and philosophic controversies of the day, have their own pronounced ideas of his doctrine of the unknowable—a doctrine which may indeed be said to have taken the place of the old unscientific materialism, to which Mr. Spencer has himself given the death-blow, as the red rag of the modern theological world. How strange and

wayward and purblind all this is, it is hardly needful for us here to point out. The development of the doctrine in question occupies a hundred and twenty-three pages, or less than a quarter of one volume of the synthetic series—First Principles; and the chapters devoted to it represent but the clearing of the ground for constructive work, and properly form no part of the Synthetic System itself. Hence, even if we persist in treating the Absolute as a negation—which is precisely what, as we shall see, Mr. Spencer himself emphatically refuses to do—it is none the less manifest that to stigmatize the Synthetic Philosophy as merely iconoclastic, is fundamentally to misconceive its whole character and tendency.

Here we will consider the Spencerian doctrine of the unknowable not in its purely metaphysical but in its broadly religious aspects; and we will approach the whole question of what we must predict as the probable future of religion by way of his speculations concerning religious development in the past.

The evolutionist, it is almost superfluous to remark, is prevented by his general theory of things from regarding from the popular point of view the highly elaborated theological systems of the world. The relatively pure theism of modern Christianity cannot be accepted by him as an immediate, divine revelation, nor can he consent to draw a hard-and-fast line between this and other great concrete expressions of the religious emotion, or even between this and those ex-

tremely low expressions of it which the culture-history of the human race has brought before us in such bewildering variety. All such manifestations, whatever may be their dissimilarities, must for him remain manifestations differing in degree, not in kind, from one another; and like all other phenomena, they have to be traced back into their simplest forms and studied in the light of their slow and gradual evolution.

The first question, therefore, to be raised is the question of the feeling that lies at the heart of them all—the religious emotion. As we cannot consider this, any more than any other faculty of the mind, as extra-experiential and innate, we have to ask, Whence came it? What theory can we advance of its genesis and development?

It must at the outset be confessed that the inquiry to which we stand committed in seeking an answer to these questions is one beset by many obstacles; not because we expect to find the natural history of the phenomena involved generically different from the natural history of other mental phenomena, but because it is here especially difficult to make sure that we understand, even approximately, the intellectual condition and outlook of primitive man. It is true that the monstrous and impossible barbarian of eighteenth-century fancy no longer haunts, Frankenstein-like, the deep places of our speculation; it is true that we do not now wilfully read back wholesale into the savage mind the ideas and emotions that belong to our more developed state; yet, at the

same time, it is still hard enough to purge our thought of all trace of our advanced interpretations of things, and confront the universe in the only attitude possible to our far-off progenitors in the long ages before the beginnings of civilization. Till we can do this, however—till we can in a measure leave behind us qualities and tendencies that have become organized into the very woof and texture of our nature—we shall continue to commit the common mistake of accepting as original factors brought to light by our investigations, elements which in reality we ourselves have carried into our investigations with us; and this must inevitably to greater or less degree vitiate the entire course of our thought. Declining, then, to follow the still fashionable practice of using the more complex mental phenomena to interpret the less complex, we must make up our minds to deal with the whole question, not by analysis from above downward, but by synthesis from below upward.*

Much valuable help in this direction has during the past generation been given by the careful and systematic study of existing savage tribes. Here, it is true, the difficulties are numerous enough,† for the igno-

* Principles of Sociology, i, § 316.

† All these are admirably exposed and commented on by Sir John Lubbock in his Origin of Civilization, chapter i. Later in the same work, dealing specifically with the religious conceptions of savages, he writes: "Most of those who have endeavoured to account for the various superstitions of savage races, have done so by crediting them with a much more elaborate system of ideas than they in reality possess. Thus Lafitau supposes that fire was

rance, short-sightedness, superficiality, and preconceptions of travellers, upon whom we have almost wholly to rely for our data, combine to render their testimony too often of doubtful worth, and the subjective element will persistently interpose its distorting influence. But the learning and acumen of writers like Tylor and Lubbock have gone far towards clearing away the dangers and perplexities, and the conclusions established by them on many important points have enabled us to enter much more fully than was formerly possible into the recesses of the savage mind. This done, it remains for us to hold fast to the fact that the primeval man, whose mental condition and modes of activity we are trying to realize, is not to be thought of as on an intellectual equality with even the lowest of the savage tribes whose life is now partially laid open for our study. We may use these as convenient steps in our

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worshipped because it so well represents 'cette suprême intelligence dégagée de la nature, dont la puissance est toujours active. Again, with reference to idols, he observes that 'la dépendance que nous avons de l'imagination et des sens ne nous permettant pas de voir Dieu autrement qu'en énigme, comme parle Saint Paul, a causé une espèce de nécessité de nous le montrer sous des images sensibles, lesquelles fussent autant de symboles, qui nous élevassent jusqu'à lui, comme le portrait nous remet dans l'idée de celui dont il est la peinture.' Plutarch, again, supposed that the crocodile was worshipped in Egypt because, having no tongue, it was a type of the Deity, who made laws for Nature of his mere will," (chapter vi). All this is wild enough of a surety; but is it much wilder than a great deal contained in the new philosophy of early religions offered to the world by Prof. Max Müller and his followers among the comparative mythologists?

perilous descent, but we have to get down far below the level of even the wretched Bushmen, Australian aborigines and Fuegians, before we can commence, by aid of the historic imagination, our investigation of the facts of the primitive human faculty.*

In the experiences of creatures, then, who, intellectually and emotionally considered, differed from ourselves so radically and entirely at almost every point that it is only with the utmost difficulty that we can place ourselves provisionally upon their plane and in their attitude of thought, we have to seek for the earliest suggestions of the religious idea. But now, first of all, how for our purpose shall we define the religious idea? Some working definition, if only of the broadest and most rudimentary type, is necessary to begin with, and this definition must pierce far enough to the root of the matter to disentangle the idea itself from all its historic accumulations and developments. Writes Mr. Tylor: "By requiring in this definition the belief in a supreme Deity and of judgment after death, the adoration of idols or the practice of sacrifice, or other partially-diffused doctrines or rites, no doubt many tribes may be excluded from the catalogue of religious. But such narrow definition has the fault of identifying religion

* In the first part of his Principles of Sociology Mr. Spencer has devoted a great many chapters to an elaborate detailed study of primitive man and his ideas. The works of Dr. E. B. Tylor and Sir John Lubbock should be carefully read in connection with these.

rather with particular developments than with the deeper motive which underlies them." Wherefore, he very properly concludes that "it seems best to fall back at once on this essential source, and simply to claim, as a minimum definition of religion, the belief in spiritual beings." * Merely premising that such words as spiritual and supernatural, when employed in this connection, must be held free from all their usual modern connotations, this definition may be accepted as the broadest, and therefore the most satisfactory, that for our purpose we are likely to find. Widely as the countless concrete theological systems of the world may differ one from another, and from the fantastic and incoherent superstitions of savage tribes, in well-nigh every particular, belief in the reality of some form or manifestation of existence other than that which we describe as natural will be found invariably to distinguish and lie at the bottom of them all. It is this belief, and no other, that furnishes a bond of union between bodies of thought otherwise so dissimilar, for example, as nineteenth-century Christianity and East African fetichism; and, as being the one single quality which wholly and partially developed theologies without exception possess in common, it may be taken to represent the vital germ from which what, in a somewhat more advanced sense, is specifically called religion has everywhere arisen.†

* Primitive Culture, fifth American edition, i. 424.

† It may be pointed out that acceptance of this definition changes the issue in the old discussion as to the universality of

Accepting this as our starting-point, we find ourselves confronted by two separate questions. In the first place, whence arose the belief in a mode of existence other than our own? And, secondly, given this belief in its crudest form, and what was the general course of its early development? The answers given by Mr. Spencer to these questions will be found in his ghost-theory, or theory of the double, and in his doctrine of ancestor-worship. All sense of the supernatural, according to his view of the matter, may be traced back to the primitive belief in the ghost; and all religious systems whatsoever, arising at the outset from such belief, have passed through the preparatory stage of ancestor-worship on their way to their more complex and highly developed forms.

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religion. The discussion itself, from first to last, has been mainly one of terminology, the various disputants not being in agreement with one another, and sometimes indeed not with themselves, in regard to what they meant by the language employed. If we are to use the word religion in any higher sense than that given it in the text, then doubtless Sir John Lubbock is right in concluding that sundry savage tribes have been and are without religion (Origin of Civilization, chap. vi). Yet it is very questionable whether any one of the tribes referred to by him in confirmation of his statement would be found entirely lacking in some faint sense of a life-power other than their own. Both Mr. Spencer (Principles of Sociology, vol. i, § 146) and Dr. Tylor (Primitive Culture, i, 425) favour the belief that at all events no tribe that has yet been fairly studied has proved to be absolutely deficient in some trace of religious ideas as thus defined.

II.

The belief formerly almost universally in vogue among those who sought a natural genesis for religious ideas was that early man was led by a sense of wonder and awe to reverence for, and direct personification of, the natural objects influencing his daily life. Sun, moon, earth, winds, sea, so mysterious in their behaviour, so tremendous in their manifestations, were thus supposed to be the objects which, by heightening of the feelings of astonishment and dread, gradually gave rise to the sentiment that we call worship. But poetical as is the theory,* and congruous as its alleged experiences unquestionably are with the mental processes of our more developed state, the briefest consideration of the actual facts of the savage mind suffices to show its entire untenability. The primitive man had neither the emotional tendencies nor the intellectual tendencies requisite to produce the supposed chain of effects. The familiar sights and sounds of surrounding Nature, suggestive as they may be to the civilized adult, aroused in him no greater feeling of awe than they do to-day in the child or the village clown, who watches the rising and setting

* It is surprising how often even thoughtful men and women will be found embracing hypotheses merely because they appeal to their sense of general fitness or beauty. Rigid analysis of our current beliefs would probably disclose the fact that, partially intellectualized though they may be, the emotions lie at the root of a very considerable proportion of them.

of the sun, the waxing and waning of the moon, the ebbing and flowing of the sea, without the slightest impulse in the direction of worship. Any religious promptings of which we may ourselves be conscious as we stand face to face with such phenomena are not primitive, but distinctively modern,* and, so far from helping, stand as obstacles in the way of our understanding of the emotional attitude of early men. So, too, with the intellectual side of the question. The savage accepts the natural changes that go on around him—day and night, summer and winter, tidal ebb and flow—with complete mental indifference, and as matters of course. He, like the ignorant and brutal among ourselves, has no curiosity. He does not speculate concerning them, he asks no questions about their meaning, seeks for no interpretation. He lacks, therefore, the very traits from which any possible system of Nature-worship would have to originate.

What, then, must we conclude? That Nature-worship is not the primordial form of the religious idea, but a developed form of it. And now we have to ask—if our study of primitive characteristics, emotional and intellectual, forbids our accepting this commonly alleged explanation as the true explanation of the phenomenon under discussion—What theory will that study enable us to offer to take its place?

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* Any sense of a spiritual relation with Nature is, as the study of literature shows us, of very recent development.

"The mind of the savage," says Mr. Spencer, "like the mind of the civilized, proceeds by classing objects and relations with their likes in past experience."* But while their minds work in the same way, the experiences which furnish the materials for their operations are entirely different—being in the latter case almost infinitely varied, and in the former extremely limited and circumscribed. While, therefore, the civilized adult is able to classify both objects and actions according to their essential likenesses, these being often among the least obvious of their characteristics, conspicuous likenesses, which frequently have nothing whatever to do with essential nature, alone attract the savage attention. A single illustration will serve to make this abstract statement clear. According to testimony cited by Mr. Spencer, an Esquimaux has been known to mistake a piece of glass for a lump of ice. This error arose, not because the mind of the Esquimaux did not proceed in the same way as the mind of an educated European—namely, by classing the new object with what most resembled it in past experience—but because, owing to his small and superficial acquaintance with things, this rough grouping, in virtue of the most manifest external similarities, was the only grouping possible to him.

Passing over the discussion of the general theory of the outer world to which these limitations must necessarily give rise, we will concern ourselves with their in-

* Principles of Sociology, i, § 52.

fluence only in the production of the earliest religious ideas. Consider, then, the interpretation that must be forced upon the mind of primitive man by the familiar personal phenomena of shadows, reflections, dreams. The notion inevitably generated by them must be the notion of the duality of things. Watching his shadow, the savage becomes convinced that he is attended by a double, sometimes present, sometimes withdrawn. Observation of his reflection in the water strengthens this belief; and in both cases he finds evidence of the duplication not only of his own existence, but of almost all other existence as well. Knowing nothing of the physical causes of these results, he simply and naturally regards them as appended entities—which, however, possess the differential characteristic that they are visible without being tangible.* Hence the initial peculiarities of the double, or shadow, world. With these crude ideas combine ideas arising from the experiences of sleep. In dreams, the savage finds himself engaged in activities similar to those of waking life. He hunts, fishes, and feasts, fights enemies, and goes through dangers; and these visionary occurrences are to him just as real as the every-day occurrences which they faintly or vividly resemble. What is the inevitable re-

* Chamisso's well-known story of Peter Schlemihl—the man who sold his shadow—and Lamotte-Fouque's Saint Sylvester's Night Phantasy, in which a person loses his reflection, are playful reminiscences of this primitive belief in the actual reality of shadows and reflections.

sult? While all these dream-adventures have been taking place, his actual body, as he by-and-by learns from others, has been lying motionless and unresponsive. From this grows up the notion of the wandering double, or other-self, that goes away for a short time in dreams, and for longer periods in fevers, swoonings, and trances; and the identification of this other-self with the appended entity, shown in shadow and reflection, is almost certain to follow. In this way develops in complete form the belief in the double or ghost—a belief which the testimony of travellers and missionaries, so far as it has hitherto been carefully sifted and examined, reveals as existing even in savage tribes among whom the faintest trace or suggestion of any higher religious conception has been looked for in vain.

This belief naturally assumes special proportions in connection with the phenomenon of death. Temporarily withdrawn in sleep, fever, swoon, and trance, the double, or other-self, is held at dissolution to take a final departure. Yet, though now permanently detached from the tangible bodily self, to which no effort can recall it, it has not therefore passed into a state of absolute non-existence. It has vanished into the shadow-world, carrying with it most of its earthly characteristics, but becoming gradually endowed none the less with growing suggestions of superadded power. By-and-by the surrounding world is filled with these shadowy doubles—the belief in ghosts thus generated surviving down to our own time in the vulgar dread of dema-

terialized existences that are supposed to haunt "the glimpses of the moon, making night hideous."

Observe the natural result. A savage dreams of his dead father, brother, son. How does he interpret such an experience? As the actual visitation of the double or ghost of his departed relative. No other interpretation is, indeed, possible. Out of this springs the first idea of an after-life. But this after-life, as Sir John Lubbock has pointed out, is at the outset limited and temporary; savages are likely to dream, for the most part, only of the recently dead; and when a deceased friend is no longer dreamed about, he is no longer thought of as still existing.* Only later, along with the development of larger religious ideas, does this conception of the temporary after-life expand into the conception of an unending after-life, or what we call immortality.

But meanwhile, belief in the surviving double or ghost exercises remarkable influence over the whole of

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* "Ask the negro," says M. Du Chaillu, "where is the spirit of his great-grandfather? He says he does not know: it is done. Ask him about the spirit of his father or brother who died yesterday, then he is full of fear and terror; he believes it to be generally near the place where the body has been buried, and among many tribes the village is removed immediately after the death of one of the inhabitants. The same belief prevails among the Amazulu Kaffirs, as has been well shown by Mr. Callaway. They believe that the spirits of their deceased fathers and brothers still live, because they appear in dreams; by inverse reasoning, however, grandfathers are generally regarded as having ceased to exist."—Lubbock, Origin of Civilization, pp. 238, 239.

savage life. It originates, in the first place, the practice of ministering to the needs and desires of the spirit. The universal rite of leaving provisions with the corpse finds its explanation here; sometimes, where the double is thought of as material, it is supposed to make use of such provisions in their material form; sometimes the more refined conception is, that the ghost makes use only of the spirit of the things offered. Reason is thus also assigned for those continued periodic oblations to the dead of which travellers in different parts of the world have spoken, and which frequently persist, in more or less mutilated shapes, in the higher stages of advancing civilization. But this is by no means all. In these primitive observances we may recognize the germ of all religious ceremonial. The father of the family, the leader of the tribe, the chief of the clan, men of exceptional prowess and power during life, become after death the objects of special attention. Their utterances in dreams are accepted as commands of unusual importance; their known wishes become the foundations of law; everything is done to retain their favour and to keep them friendly. Hence arises ancestor-worship as a necessary stage in religious evolution. Little by little, along with social consolidation, goes consolidation of these incipient religious ideas. The tribe is dominated by some one man of extraordinary strength and character; success in war attends his guidance, success within the clan follows his counsel. Dying, he assumes a correspondingly important position in the ghost-world—his spirit

becomes the tribal god. His grave, and the rough structure raised around it for protection, initiate the temple; ministrations at his resting-place, and propitiatory offerings upon the ever-sacred spot, give rise to religious sacrifice; appeals to him for continued help are the first prayers; and in the praises of his great deeds, his courage, and his triumphs, recited or chanted within hearing of and to gratify his ghost, we may find the first indications of subsequent temple ritual.

To show how from these germs, *pari passu* with the expansion of thought and the general evolution of the social structure, there gradually grew up systems of fetichism, idolatry, Nature-worship, and other primitive bodies of theological thought with their accompanying cults; and still more to trace from these the slow formation in their first crude embodiments of the great concrete religions of the world, would here take us beyond our limits. All this Mr. Spencer has done in detail, and with wonderful wealth of illustration. The following points are those which we have here to bear in mind: First, that our present method of interpretation seeks the origin of all religious ideas, not according to the common mythological theory, in feelings and speculations about the powers of Nature which are obviously beyond the range of undeveloped thought, but in the savage's inevitable experiences of the duality of his own and other existence, and that, consequently, all so-called primitive religious ideas are really not original, but derived. Secondly, that the immediate and necessary out-

growth of these experiences was the rise of a universal system of ancestor-worship, which in time originated a more or less complex pantheon of deities—ancestors expanding into gods, and mighty rulers and leaders into gods-in-chief. Thirdly, that all forms of theism, even monotheism itself, are reached by generalization from earlier ideas, and are only possible when the mind has reached a certain degree of development; and, finally, that the course of evolution here indicated is to be held as marking out the line pursued by every religious system in its earliest stages—in other words, that we see no reason to regard any religion whatever as an exception to this general rule, because in its highly elaborated form it appears, superficially considered, to present no distinct reminiscences of these primitive stages of its history.

III.

Acceptance of the doctrine of evolution in its application to thought obliges us to acknowledge that in the development of religious, as of all other ideas, there must at every stage be a certain congruity between the beliefs held and the intellectual and moral character of those holding them. If it be true, as has been pertinently said, that "an honest God's the noblest work of man," it is no less true that this noblest work is only possible to noble natures in a comparatively advanced state of civilization. An indigenous creed will always evolve in conformity with the average needs of a nation

or tribe at any given time, and the changes it gradually undergoes—allowance being made for the subtle influence of interaction between belief and character—will be in keeping with the changing needs; while where a creed is imported ready-made from without, it will inevitably, in so far as it enters into the spiritual life at all, find the level of general character and ideals—a truth never more strikingly illustrated than in the history of proselytizing Christianity. And this forces us to recognition of the fact, not altogether easy of acceptance throughout the whole range of its implications, that "the religious creeds through which mankind successively pass are, during the eras in which they are severally held, the best that could be held; and that this is true not only of the latest and most refined creeds, but of all, even to the earliest and most gross." *

This principle becomes clearer when we remember that early creeds are everywhere fashioned upon the then existing social state; and since the social state is at every stage of its evolution the outgrowth of average needs, the creed itself is but the idealization and embodiment of those needs, and throws the weight of its influence where for the time being it is most required. A religious conception greatly beyond the medium social demand would also be beyond the reach of the medium intelligence; though possible to one or two in a gen-

* The Use of Anthropomorphism.

eration, it would be impossible to the large majority. Hence, the ideas formed of divine affairs and divine government are at all times reflections of earthly affairs and earthly government: the divine ideal, in other words, is simply the projection of the particular social ideal then in vogue. Man has all along made God in his own image; and more civilized periods, inheriting the conceptions handed down to them from periods less civilized, find themselves entrusted with the task of modifying these older conceptions to bring them into general harmony with broader and purer ideals. "Ascribed characters of deities," as Mr. Spencer says, "are continually adapted and readapted to the needs of the social state. During the militant phase of activity the chief god is conceived as holding insubordination the greatest crime [as it is then legally considered the greatest offence], as implacable in anger, as merciless in punishment; and any alleged attributes of milder kinds occupy but small space in the social consciousness. But where militancy declines, and the harsh, despotic form of government appropriate to it is gradually qualified by the form appropriate to industrialism, the foreground of the religious consciousness is increasingly filled with those ascribed traits of the divine nature which are congruous with the ethics of peace: divine love, divine forgiveness, divine mercy, are now the characteristics enlarged upon." *

* Ecclesiastical Institutions (Principles of Sociology, Part VI), § 657.

That all early religious conceptions are absolutely anthropomorphic, both in their positive aspects and in their limitations, is now admitted by all serious students of culture history; and we may here notice, in passing, the striking harmony of this fact with the general theory of ancestor-worship above outlined. Man was not only the primitive *type* of deity, as Dr. Tylor has said; he was the primitive deity; hence necessarily the purely manlike characteristics of all early gods. At first scarcely more intelligent, far-seeing, courageous, or potent than the living savage who ministered to his necessities, the surviving double or ghost only gradually acquired transcendent capacities and powers; and it is a familiar fact that even the Jahveh of comparatively speaking so advanced a people as the early Hebrews, was for a protracted period still markedly deficient not only in the higher virtues, but also in the higher intellectual qualities. Monotheism, or the conception of a single, all-powerful, ever-present deity, therefore comes at the far end of the evolution of religious ideas; which means, of course, that many popular theological theories, based upon the assumption of man's innate sense of the divine, require fundamental modification. But what we are most concerned to point out here is, that, as Mr. Spencer has shown in the little essay on The Use of Anthropomorphism, from which we have already quoted, anthropomorphism, even in its crudest and grossest forms, has had its relative justification, since it has played an important part in the higher development of the race.

The savage nature, needing strong checks, can most effectually be controlled by fear of the still more savage deity. The conception must be entirely concrete to enter as a moral motive into his action; and thus even the most repulsively diabolical characteristics aid in the production and preservation of restraints, which, not otherwise obtainable, help, like the iron hand and will of the earthly despot, to prepare the way for milder discipline. Something may in this way, therefore, be said even for the God of mediæval theology, and much for many of the crudest and most repulsive elements in the popular religious teachings of our own day. They yield important regulative factors in the lives of those for whom restraints and sanctions derived from more abstract doctrine would have no authority; and they could not be universally swept away, even if that were possible, without the most disastrous results. The only danger is that, through the influence of natural religious conservatism and intellectual vested interests, the old conceptions may only too often be found to survive the period of their beneficial activity. Then they become not aids, but hindrances, to further progress—obstacles in the way of that adjustment to which all evolution tends.*

* Recognition of the average congruity between men's beliefs and their needs must not blind us to the fact that all lower religious ideas are extremely tenacious of life, and tend to persist, with untold consequences for evil, in face of advancing civilization. The task of eliminating the worst features in the body of theological doctrine remaining over from the past, is in some respects the most important that each generation has to undertake; and

IV.

The principle that for all religious conceptions anthropomorphism is the necessary point of departure, interesting as it is for students of culture-history, is not here referred to for its own sake, but for its important implications in relation to the higher progress of theology. For the fact now to be recognized is, that even the most advanced theological systems of the world have not yet outgrown this earliest universal stage.

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how difficult it generally proves is shown by the ever-renewed struggle between so-called heterodox and so-called orthodox, trials for heresy, and other similar phenomena. It seems to me that Mr. Spencer himself is sometimes inclined to overlook or underrate this dynamic aspect of the matter. Meanwhile there is another thought that may be pertinently suggested. We speak too often of civilization as if it were a tide rising with something like uniformity all along the shore. We forget that in every country, at every period, stages of civilization overlap—that there are still to be found among ourselves left-over specimens and representatives of each epoch in the world's history, from the age of barbarism down to our own time. Appreciation of this fact should prevent a confusion of issues which, sometimes overtly, sometimes in partially disguised form, will be found to vitiate most discussions on present-day religious affairs. It is too often assumed to be an objection against a high religious creed that it is not applicable to every class of the community, and particularly that it does not go straight home with regenerating force to the lowest and most degraded characters. Hence, comparisons are instituted in all solemnity between the refined faiths of cultivated thinkers and the gross doctrines of the Salvation Army, and invariably in favour of the latter, because it has succeeded in reaching those whom the more refined faiths in question have never been able to touch! All that needs to be said in answer to this extraordinary argument is, that the semi-savage, even in the midst of surrounding civiliza-

Modern Christian theism itself, even in its purest forms, is still anthropomorphic theism—is still substantially an attempt to construct a philosophy of deity on the basis of human qualities and human powers.

The history of the slow and painful advance of theology from lower to higher forms has been the history of gradual de-anthropomorphization.* One by one the distinctively manlike characteristics have been dropped from the conception of God, and those remaining have been expanded to more than manlike proportions. These changes, it is almost needless to say, have corresponded with the progress of men towards higher social and individual ideals, and thus we find, as we should expect, that the passions and proclivities first winnowed out and repudiated are those which belong to the stages of barbarism now left behind. The savage trait of cannibalism does not, in the conception of the god, long survive the habit of cannibalism in any tribe, and

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tion, must have his semi-savage religion; but that we object to regard the repulsive doctrines that naturally prove the most operative in his case as therefore possessing the more essential religious vitality. The counterpart to the common error now referred to—an error repeated in many circles with offensive implications—is the scarcely less widely-spread tendency of well-meaning and cultivated men and women to believe in the amelioration of the lowest classes through the influence of high religious ideas that properly belong only to the intellectual and moral level of far more developed natures. We can never reiterate too strongly that, in the nature of things, no creed can resemble a patent medicine and suit all cases.

* For this useful if somewhat formidable-looking word we are indebted to Mr. John Fiske.

deception, fraud, and cruelty do not continue to be predicated of deity when truthfulness and mercy come to be recognized as qualities appertaining to higher manhood. At the same time, the limitations of human faculty are broken down in the image formed of the Divine Being. God is thought of no longer only as very powerful, very far-seeing, very good, but as powerful, far-seeing, good, in degrees altogether transcending human possibility—and finally as infinitely so. And now observe that, as each new step in advance is taken, as one by one the imperfect moral qualities are allowed to lapse, and the conception is ennobled and expanded on every side, every generation looks down upon those who continue to cling to the outgrown ideas with feelings of astonishment and disgust. The Christian theist is horrified at the suggestion of the cannibal deity of the Fijians; the modern defender of orthodoxy finds much that is repulsive with little that is admirable in the despotic and tyrannical God of mediæval theology; yet, throughout, the conception is that of idealized humanity. Even in the very loftiest theological teachings this still holds true. The moral qualities are infinitely purified—the intellectual qualities infinitely developed; but the difference is one of degree only, and not of kind. The qualities are human qualities still.

But must we rest here? Is anthropomorphic theism, even in its ultimate form, the final outcome of the religious idea? Is man, too long accepted by himself as *πάντων μέτρον*, the measure of all things, to set himself

up permanently as the type of Deity? Or may we not rather suppose, looking back over the course of religious evolution in the past, and humbly acknowledging the possibility of continued evolution in the future, that mankind may still reach conceptions of the Absolute Reality as much higher and truer and nobler than the now current conceptions of deity as these in their turn are higher and truer and nobler than the superstitions of the savage?—that the purgation of the merely human characteristics may still continue, till at length all thought of the manlike shall be entirely banished from our idea of God?—that, in other words, anthropomorphic theism, when brought to its highest degree of purification, may yet lead the way to religious ideas compared with which all thoughts of Deity that men have hitherto had will seem crude and gross?*

We shall best approach these questions from the negative side—by considering first of all the impossibility of continuing to think of the noumenal existence in any terms of human existence, no matter how high and pure these may be.

Theologians, metaphysicians, and all those who have

* No student of early religious thought can afford to overlook Browning's wonderfully subtle analysis of anthropomorphism in his Caliban upon Setebos. Perhaps the only needful commentary upon this extraordinary production is the motto which the poet himself chose for it from the Psalms, and which sufficiently indicates his point of view: "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself."

in any way concerned themselves with the ultimate problem of the universe, have agreed to define the First Cause of all things as both infinite and absolute. To this indeed they are driven, to avoid becoming entangled in meshes of difficulty and self-contradiction from which there is no escape. But as a matter of fact they escape Scylla only to fall into Charybdis. Verbally intelligible though their proposition may appear, it becomes totally unintelligible the moment we press close upon the meanings of the words employed, and endeavour to frame conceptions answering to the phraseology. For, in the first place, how can we think of an absolute cause? Absolute is that which exists out of all relation; while a cause can only be conceived as such in relation to its effect. Cancel the thought of effect, and you cancel the thought of cause. To speak of absolute cause, therefore, is to attempt to unite the ideas of non-relative and relative—which is manifestly an impossibility. "We attempt," writes Dean Mansel, whose arguments on this question were freely drawn upon by Mr. Spencer, and are here reproduced from the pages of First Principles, "to escape from this apparent contradiction by introducing the idea of succession in time. The Absolute exists of itself, and afterwards becomes a Cause. But here we are checked by the third conception, that of the Infinite. How can the Infinite become that which it was not from the first? If causation is a possible mode of existence, that which exists without causing is not infinite; that

which becomes a cause has passed beyond its former limits." *

To pursue this subject further would be to commit ourselves to an unwarranted digression into the domain of metaphysics. Observing simply that, as here shown, while it is impossible to think of the First Cause as finite and relative, it is equally impossible to frame any conception of it as infinite and absolute, we will pass on to notice that, even waiving these insuperable difficulties, others not less formidable stare us in the face. A large part of dogmatic theology is taken up with the discussion of the "attributes" of God. Yet it is easy to show not only that the various attributes so confidently ascribed to Deity are mutually destructive, and therefore cannot possibly be thought of together, but also that the conception of none of them can be made to combine with the conceptions of infinite and absolute, which for the sake of the argument we will consent for the moment to accept.

The question of the relation of God's "moral character" to his knowledge and his power introduces us to a familiar dilemma of old standing. We can think of a man as being at once very good and very wise and very powerful; but when we attempt to carry these qualities to an infinite degree, and at the same time bear in mind the actual history and condition of the

* Limits of Religious Thought, quoted in First Principles, § 13.

world, we find ourselves confronted by the problem that has already shaken so many noble minds. To put the difficulty in the well-known way. Evil and suffering exist; they belong, so far as we can see, to the very texture of universal life; all our progress has hitherto depended upon them. Now, God must have foreseen this before the creation of the world, or he cannot be omniscient. But if he foresaw it, he must have been able or not able to prevent it. In the former case, though all-powerful, he cannot be all-good; in the latter, though all-good, he cannot be all-powerful. To think of God, then, as at once all-wise, all-powerful, and all-good is clearly an impossibility. Here is the ancient stumbling-block—the ever-recurring problem which no amount of inquiry into the "purposes of the Creator" has ever yet enabled or ever will enable theology to meet with a satisfactory solution. To reconcile the sin and misery of the world with the infinite power, goodness, and wisdom of a personal Deity, remains today, as it has been from the first age of monotheism, one of the great unread and unreadable enigmas of human speculation. Here we hand it back to the theologians, who have made it their own by pre-emption, and who are indeed responsible for its existence. *Non nostrum tantas componere lites.*

For the whole difficulty, let it be understood, is not, as is too often assumed, a difficulty created by the blasphemous cavilling of those who refuse to accept, in lieu of explanation, the verbal jugglery of ecclesiastical spe-

cial pleading. It inheres in the very nature of anthropomorphic theism; and if blasphemy there be in the matter, the charge lies, as Mr. Fiske has properly pointed out, at the door of those who seek to maintain the anthropomorphic hypothesis. Hence the gain achieved by showing that this hypothesis is untenable. To do this we have to prove that, as above stated, beyond the fact that we cannot combine the ideas of infinite goodness, power, and wisdom in our conception of Deity, lies the further (less obvious but more significant) fact, that no "attribute" whatsoever can possibly be thought of in connection with Absolute and Infinite Existence.

To define God is to deny him, said Spinoza; and the veriest tyro in logic knows that definition involves circumscription. Yet upon definition have theologians from time immemorial expended their subtlest powers, with the result that they have succeeded in producing, in Mr. Matthew Arnold's famous phrase, nothing but a non-natural, magnified man. For their definitions are verbal only—they elude us the instant we endeavour to turn them into thought. We are told, for instance, that God is an infinite personality. But if we cannot think of an infinite cause, still more clear is it that we cannot think of an infinite personality. Personality implies limitation, or it means nothing at all. To talk of an Infinite Person, therefore, is to talk of something that is at once infinite and finite, unconditioned and conditioned, unlimited and limited—an impossibility. So is it with every quality related to personality. The-

ology argues about the will and the purpose of God. Mathematics, as Spinoza long ago intimated, might as well discuss the circularity of a triangle. Will and purpose are attributes of the limited and conditioned; they imply an end external to the agent, and a desire on his part to accomplish it. Attempt to attach these ideas to the idea of the Absolute and Infinite, and you will find yourself plunged into a sea of absurdity. How can there be an end external to the Absolute? and how can the Infinite pass through states of consciousness, constituting the act of volition? Even intelligence or consciousness itself is only conceivable as a relation, and therefore the Absolute cannot be thought of as conscious. Intelligence demands "a conscious subject and an object of which he is conscious. The subject is a subject to the object; the object is an object to the subject; and neither can exist by itself as the absolute. This difficulty . . . may be for the moment evaded by distinguishing between the absolute as related to another, and the absolute as related to itself. The absolute, it may be said, may possibly be conscious, provided it is only conscious of itself. But this alternative is, in ultimate analysis, no less self-destructive than the other. For the object of consciousness, whether a mode of the subject's existence or not, is either created in and by the act of consciousness, or has an existence independent of it. In the former case the object depends upon the subject, and the subject alone is the true absolute. In the latter case the subject depends upon the object, and

the object alone is the true absolute. Or, if we attempt a third hypothesis, and maintain that each exists independently of the other, we have no absolute at all, but only a pair of relatives; for coexistence, whether in consciousness or not, is itself a relation."* Or, to put the matter in language elsewhere employed by Mr. Spencer himself, "intelligence, as alone conceivable by us, presupposes existence independent of it and objective to it. . . . To speak of an intelligence which exists in the absence of such alien activities, is to use a meaningless word." Hence, the intelligence ascribed to the Absolute Being "answers in no respect to that which we know by the name. It is intelligence out of which all the characters constituting it have vanished."†

The fundamental assumptions of rational theology are thus, as Dean Mansel concludes, self-destructive. Turn where we will, choose our vocabulary as we may, we must inevitably commit ourselves to endless confusion, so long as we rest in even the highest and purest forms of anthropomorphic theism—so long, that is, as we persist in thinking of the ultimate reality that religion calls God, as a *quasi*-human entity, and deceive ourselves into believing that we are gaining anything like a truer and deeper understanding of his nature by applying to the Infinite and Absolute Existence qualities and attributes that can have no possible meaning when

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* Mansel, quoted in First Principles, § 13.
† Ecclesiastical Institutions, § 658.

taken out of connection with the finite and conditioned. Hence it is evident that the further progress of thought "must force men hereafter to drop the higher anthropomorphic characters given to the First Cause, as they have long since dropped the lower." *

It is only necessary to add to this part of the argument that the impossibility, thus made apparent, of defining the ultimate reality in terms of human activities, means of course the impossibility of defining the ultimate reality in any terms at all. Humanity furnishes us with our highest conception of life. That the infinite universe contains forms of existence transcending ours in inconceivable ways and in almost infinite degrees, is, beyond question, a rational supposition; but any attempt to image such superior forms must still be circumscribed by what we know of intelligence in the highest manifestations in which it has yet been revealed to us. We cannot in the nature of things get rid of our own limitations; wander where it will, our imagination must still be tethered fast to our own conditions. If, then, passing from the thought of transcendently superior phenomenal existences, which as phenomenal must have a certain kinship with ourselves, to the thought of the noumenal existence, which as noumenal can possess none of the characteristics of the phenomenal, we find inevitably that our human nature furnishes us with no kind of standard, criterion, or point of departure; we

* Ecclesiastical Institutions, § 658.

are bound to realize that no standard, criterion, or point of departure is possible to us. If the highest that we know leaves us without help in our effort to conceive that which an infinitely superior phenomenal intelligence would still be as far from apprehending as ourselves, then it is clear that the enterprise itself has to be relinquished. And thus, by noting the failure which must of necessity follow every attempt to frame a conception of the ultimate reality, we are led round to the great truth made clear the moment we recognize the relativity of all our thinking—the truth, namely, that all conception of Absolute Being is forever beyond our grasp.

V.

Here, then, we have established certain negative conclusions. We have seen, in the first place, that, according to the doctrine of evolution, we cannot regard man as possessing an innate, transcendental sense of Deity, and that we must therefore seek a natural genesis for religious as for all other ideas. One current hypothesis is thus overthrown. In the second place, we have found that the progress of religious thought has largely consisted in the gradual elimination of anthropomorphic elements from the idea of Deity, and that this elimination must go on, until all human or *quasi*-human attributes are entirely expunged. Accepted theological teachings in regard to the personality and character of God are thus shown to belong to a lower stage of re-

ligious thought—a stage already partially, and presently to be entirely, outgrown.

Fortunately, we do not have to rest in these emphatic repudiations of so much that seems most sacred in popular thought. There is a positive as well as a negative aspect to our whole argument—a constructive as well as destructive side. To this we will now turn.

That larger charity which is one of the most striking endowments of evolutionary habits of inquiry, has taught us to recognize "the soul of goodness in things evil," and the soul of truth in things erroneous. We no longer discard as absolutely and entirely without foundation even the strangest and most grotesque ideas that have ever gained foothold in the thoughts of our race. Absurd as they may seem to the superficial or careless observer, the mere fact that they have existed and have held their own, may be taken to prove that they originally "germinated out of actual experiences—originally contained, and perhaps still contain, some small amount of verity." *

If this is true in regard to belief in general, especially must it be held to be true in regard to such beliefs as have given evidence of unusual and persistent vitality. It was a cheerful doctrine of the old theology that if a thing were pleasant it was, therefore, certain to be wrong; whence, by analogy, it might be concluded that, from the same point of view, the more wide-

* First Principles, § 1.

spread an idea, the less chance there would be of its embodying any nucleus of reality. But, from the position here adopted, this atrabilious view of human life and destiny is shown to lack foundation. For, when any belief has become deeply embedded in human nature, when it resists modifications of fashion and thought, and holds its ground in perennial strength amid all the intellectual and moral upheavals of the ages, we see reason to infer that it does so because, whatever may be its encumbrances and adulterations of error, it contains some core of vital truth. Now, suppose that, recognizing this trait of universality and persistency in a given belief as *primâ facie* evidence of its possessing a strong basis of verity, we notice that it is not only very general and very stable, but also that it is a constituent element common to many otherwise conflicting systems of thought—what is the inference that we are compelled to draw? The inference, surely, that, generated among different men under almost infinitely varied conditions, caught up and preserved in creeds and philosophies having scarcely another point of similarity, and enduring amid the sweeping changes and far-reaching developments of thought, this belief must hold some kernel of truth of supreme importance—must shoot out some tendrils running far down into the deepest subsoil of human life and experience.

Bearing this in mind, we may recur to a point already dealt with. In seeking for the broadest possible definition of the religious idea, we concluded that in the

last analysis that idea would everywhere be found to depend upon the sense of an existence other than the existence which we describe as natural. Belief in a mode of life and power which is not the mode in which life and power are manifested in ourselves, is therefore the central belief around which all concrete forms of religion have gradually accumulated; it is the belief that all such concrete forms, whatever may be the diverse courses of their evolutions, continue to hold in common; it is the residual element left when all their differences are cancelled and all their antagonistic factors thrown aside. Almost if not quite universal, and obstinately persistent, it is therefore the belief that, however much it may be distorted or disguised, must be taken as embodying the largest and most important truth. Now, all religious systems have built upon the foundation furnished by this belief a theory of explanation—a philosophy—of the universe; recognizing one and all, from lowest to highest, that a mystery lies at the heart of things—a mystery from the overwhelming sense of which there is no possibility of escape. And what, in regard to this universal recognition of the problem of the universe, has been the course of the evolution of religious thought? Every stage in advance has only served to bring the sense of mystery into more conspicuous relief. Earlier interpretations, shown by wider knowledge and larger outlook to be insufficient, are discarded or modified; hypotheses framed by one generation are seen by the next generation to be untenable; until at length the inevita-

ble goal of the whole movement comes within sight, and the most thoughtful inquirers begin to realize that the mystery of which all the creeds have sought an explanation is a mystery for which no explanation can ever possibly be found. Thus, however much religious systems may differ from one another in their suggested solutions of the problem of life, and from that most developed philosophy which, conscious that every hypothesis that ever has been or ever can be framed concerning it, is untenable, declares the problem itself to be insoluble, they are at one upon the supreme point, that the mystery is there. This is a truth "respecting which there is a latent agreement among all mankind, from the fetich-worshipper to the most stoical critic of human creeds."*

In endeavouring to discover the natural history of the religious idea, we throw no discredit, then, upon the religious idea itself. On the contrary, we put forward a loftier theory of it than has ever yet been promulgated by those who have adopted the ordinary supernatural basis of interpretation. For we find the vital germ of truth in all its diverse manifestations; and, impatient with no so-called superstition, we lay bare those deep foundations upon which all the religions ultimately rest. Here, as in the case of the moral sense, it is difficult to see what advantage the advocates of supernatural origin can possibly claim over those against whose theories of a natural origin they so fiercely protest.

* First Principles, § 14.

Thus we have two permanent elements in religious thought: the belief in a mode of life and power other than our own, and a sense of the ultimate mystery of the universe; the former of them being used as a key to the latter. We have seen that the inevitable tendency of religious development is to make this mystery more apparent. Let us now inquire into the evolution of the other element—that idea of an existence not our own, upon which all religious interpretations of the origin and meaning of the universe have been based.

The following extract from Mr. Spencer's Ecclesiastical Institutions (§ 659) will here serve our purpose much better than any words of our own:

"Every voluntary act yields to the primitive man proof of a source of energy within him. Not that he thinks about his internal experiences; but in these experiences this notion lies latent. When producing motion in his limbs, and through them motion in other things, he is aware of the accompanying feeling of effort. And this sense of effort, which is the perceived antecedent of changes produced by him, becomes the conceived antecedent of changes not produced by him—furnishes him with a term of thought by which to represent the genesis of these objective changes. At first this idea of muscular forces as anteceding unusual events around him, carries with it the whole assemblage of associated ideas. He thinks of the implied efforts as efforts exercised by beings like himself. In course of time these doubles of the dead, supposed to be workers of all but the most

familiar changes, are modified in conception. Besides becoming less grossly material, some of them are developed into larger personalities presiding over classes of phenomena which, being comparatively regular in their order, suggest a belief in beings who, while far more powerful than men, are less variable in their modes of action; so that the idea of force as exercised by such beings comes to be less associated with the idea of a human ghost. Further advances, by which minor supernatural agents are merged in one general agent, and by which the personality of this general agent is rendered vague while becoming widely extended, tend still further to dissociate the notion of objective force from the force known as such in consciousness; and the dissociation reaches its extreme in the thoughts of the man of science, who interprets in terms of force not only the visible changes of sensible bodies, but all physical changes whatever, even up to the undulations of the ethereal medium. Nevertheless, this force (be it force under that statical form by which matter resists, or under that dynamical form distinguished as energy) is to the last thought of in terms of that internal energy which he is conscious of as muscular effort. He is compelled to symbolize objective force in terms of subjective force from lack of any other symbol.

"See, now, the implications. That internal energy in which the experiences of the primitive man was always the immediate antecedent of changes wrought by him; that energy which, when interpreting external

changes, he thought of along with those attributes of a human personality connected with it in himself—is the same energy which, freed from anthropomorphic accompaniments, is now figured as the cause of all external phenomena. The last stage reached is recognition of the truth that force as it exists beyond consciousness cannot be like what we know as force within consciousness; and that yet, as either is capable of generating the other, they must be different modes of the same. Consequently, the final outcome of that speculation commenced by the primitive man is that the Power manifested throughout the universe distinguished as material, is the same Power which in ourselves wells up under the form of consciousness."

Little comment upon this passage is called for. The sense of a mode of life and power other than our own, which, as we have seen, has from the first been taken as the clue to the arcanum of creation, necessarily arises under an anthropomorphic form, and under this form continues to persist through all the less developed stages of thought. Meanwhile, the tendency to de-anthropomorphization little by little modifies all the earlier religious conceptions by depriving them one by one of their human and *quasi*-human characteristics, beginning with the lower, but gradually passing onward to the higher; until finally, through continuance of the same tendency, all such characteristics will disappear. When this has at length taken place, there will be nothing left in the thought but the permanent and inexpugnable

sense of the power of which all the phenomenal universe is but the transient expression—the reality that underlies it all. Thus the conception of the life not ourselves—the life by which all existence is sustained—just as it has been enlarging from the very beginning "must go on enlarging, until, by disappearance of its limits, it becomes a consciousness which transcends the forms of distinct thought, though it forever remains a consciousness." *

All this is surely a sufficient answer to those who maintain that Mr. Spencer's doctrine of the Absolute is merely a negation. On the contrary, for him it is the highest possible affirmation. Unknowable in itself, the noumenon—the reality behind phenomena—is still the foundation of all our knowledge. Whatever else may be doubted, this at least can never be called in question. It is the one inexpugnable element in consciousness, left over in the last analysis as the ultimate, inexplicable, indestructible first principle of thought. Obliterate it, and the whole fabric of our knowledge would crumble to nothing.†

VI.

To recapitulate. Stating the matter broadly, and in the first place regarding only its negative aspects, we have seen that the Spencerian doctrine cuts the ground directly from beneath all forms of anthropomorphic

* Ecclesiastical Institutions, § 658.

† First Principles, § 26.

theism. There are high and low forms of such theism, varying all along the line from that of the Fijian, who pictures his gods as cannibals as brutal and bloody as himself, to that of so refined and subtle a thinker as Dr. Martineau, who talks of the "character of God," and "the order of affections in him"; but be their differences otherwise what they may, they correspond in their ascription to the Absolute and Infinite Power of traits and characteristics having purely relative and finite connotations. Any real grappling with the question at issue, any firm determination not to rest content with merely verbal explanations, or admit the validity of specious phrases that cannot be translated into ideas and grasped as such, must inevitably force us to an admission of the impossibility, we will not say of defining, but of conceiving, the nature of the eternal and ever-working power which lies behind all the phenomena of the sensible universe. All our knowledge is limited to phenomena; and when, from dealing with phenomena, we pass on to think or speak of that which is not phenomenon but reality, we are bound to think and speak in terms which necessarily lose all their meaning in the transfer. Will, intention, foresight, personality, purpose—we know what these mean when applied to creatures conditioned like ourselves; applied to the Unconditioned, they are empty words, having no meaning at all, or meanings which imply countless absurdities and contradictions. "To think that God is, as we can think him to be, is blasphemy"—such is the conclusion

to which we are ultimately brought. However vast, however deep, our knowledge of the phenomenal universe may hereafter become, it is that phenomenal universe which must forever offer an adamantine barrier to our thought. Science may press forward in every direction, and open up vistas of which at present we do not even dream; but her ever-widening circle will only bring us into larger touch with the nescience that lies beyond. The dividing line between appearance and reality can never be passed, no matter what achievements of insight and genius and knowledge the future ages may hold in store; and for all mankind, as for us, the Reality will remain the great unsolved Enigma—the Unknown, the Unknowable.

But happily our philosophy brings a message of promise as well as a message of discouragement. In his well-known controversy with Mr. Frederic Harrison, some years ago, Mr. Spencer very properly called his brilliant but volatile antagonist to task for loudly applauding the irreparable defeat which theology had sustained at his (Spencer's) hands, while refusing to acknowledge the services he had rendered to religion by showing the essential form of truth which, amid manifold errors and divagations, every theology contains. The whole of this discussion only served to emphasize in many minds the feeling that it is not a little unfortunate that Mr. Spencer should have made such prominent use of the word unknowable, not because his meaning is not perfectly plain to the careful student of Part

I of First Principles, but because he has thus left a loophole for what has been well described as some of the dreariest twaddle which has been given to the world under the name of philosophical discussion since the days of mediæval scholasticism. For the word unknowable has allowed the adverse critic to assume, and to build a whole superstructure of argument upon the assumption, that Mr. Spencer's doctrine of the Absolute is a vacuum—a mere negation of thought. So far from this being the case, we have shown that, for the Spencerian, the truth that behind all we know and can know, eluding thought and transcending imagination, there is the one Eternal Reality, is the corner-stone of all our knowledge—the one fact that can never be either analyzed or got rid of. And here we may notice how in this final datum of consciousness religion and science find their complete and permanent reconciliation. For the supreme and everlasting power which religion calls God, is the eternal and inscrutable energy which science finds at the back of its widest generalizations and beneath its deepest investigations. All science leads at last to the mystery with which all religion begins.

It is true that all this means the inevitable sacrifice of many of the ideas now most deeply embedded in the current creeds. It is true that it forces us to look for a more and more complete purgation from the conception of Deity of all human attributes; since to speak of the Divine will, or a personal creator, or an intelligent Governor of the universe, is seen, when viewed from the

standpoint of philosophical exactness, to be scarcely more admissible than to go back at once to the quaintly manlike images of the early Hebrew Scriptures. It is true that it forces us to realise with ever-increasing vividness how little all our feeble guessings must be worth in face of the great Enigma, since we are probably incalculably further from the truth when we speak of the Infinite and Absolute in terms of human emotion and human intelligence than we should be if we attempted to describe human emotion and human intelligence in terms of a plant's functions; for we have always to remember, with the humility which science inculcates, but to which theology has been too often a stranger, that the choice is not between personality and something lower, but between personality and something infinitely and therefore inconceivably higher. But all this notwithstanding, and though we are forced to admit the futility of all the efforts of all the theologies to formulate that which is forever beyond formulation, we are not therefore to suppose that we are left without touch upon the Unseen and Eternal, or that there is no kinship and no communion between our spirits and the Source and Sustainer of all things. Given the ultimate Reality—the great central fact of consciousness—and we are forced to conceive of that Reality, not, indeed, as personal and conscious, but as the power which is manifested in personality and consciousness in ourselves; personality and consciousness being modes in which the Eternal Energy expresses itself owing to our being condi-

tioned by that which is not ourselves. Thus, seeing our human necessity to give some form to our conceptions, and our human inability to find any form higher than the highest within ourselves, we may even allow ourselves to carry the ideas of personality and consciousness with us in our thought of the ultimate Reality, if we bear ever in mind the one supremely important fact that our language does not *define* but *symbolize*, and thus avoid the danger of passing, as it is so easy to do, from symbolism, which may be defensible, to definition, which can lead to nothing but the confusion of empty dogmatism, and the ignorance which mistakes itself for knowledge.

Does this seem, after all, to be offering little in place of that which is taken away? To the present generation this must needs perhaps be so. Men move with difficulty from concrete image to abstract statement. The religious progress of the world has been like the slow ascent of a man up a sheer perpendicular cliff—every new foothold upward has been carved out and graven deep with infinite labour and countless tears. The thought a little in advance of the grasp of each era has to that era necessarily seemed chilling and repulsive—it has lacked that warm glow which is only possible to ideas long steeped in the emotions. No wonder, then, that when his anthropomorphic error had been proved to him, the old monk Serapion should have cried aloud in all the agony of his despair, "You have robbed me of my God!" No wonder that in the hour of unspeakable craving Luther's wife should have exclaimed

against the coldness and hardness of her new creed. This must needs be the cry of many in every period of transition from lower to higher thought in the future, as it has already been the cry of many during every such crisis in the past. We may intellectually seize and appropriate those vast cosmical ideas which the wider knowledge of our time is yielding us in place of the simpler and cruder imaginings of the past; we may even realize that these new ideas are infinitely more impressive, more awe-inspiring, more truly religious than any that have been possible to mankind hitherto; but until these ideas can grow sacred to us through habit and association, until they can sink down into our feelings and dwell there, and become saturated with the finer atmosphere of our thought, they will be little to us but the abstractions of philosophy. That the mass of men will get far forward in the difficult task of thus incorporating them and making them their own, in our time, or for many generations to come, can hardly be supposed. But that adjustment of emotion to knowledge, which has already performed such wonders for our race in the past, will in the future vitalize these new and now strange concepts of our philosophy surely and perhaps more rapidly than some of us are apt to imagine.

> "The common problem—yours, mine, every one's—
> Is not to fancy what were fair in life
> Provided it could be, but finding first
> What may be, then find how to make it fair
> Up to one's means—a very different thing."

So writes Browning in Bishop Blougram's Apology. And the religious problem of the race at large is similar to this. The emotions of each generation, adjusted to the average knowledge of that generation, cannot but receive a rude shock when some new scientific discovery sweeps away their old foundations, and thus shatters the ancient bases of religious faith. At such a crisis what is to be done? Nothing, but to accept the new truth in all humility, and, in the firm trust that the further evolution of thought will presently lead to the complete reharmonization of knowledge and feeling, to set our faces resolutely toward the light. The true religious teacher in such a transitional period is, therefore, not the man who enters the battle-field of thought to fight for the knowledge of yesterday against the knowledge of to-day; but rather he who, gifted with prophetic vision, is the first to enter sympathetically into all that science reveals concerning the order of the universe, and to proclaim its religious bearings to a world that, for the time being, it has blinded "by excess of light." Would that preachers and theologians could only thus realize their privileges and their responsibilities, and from the history of the many epochs of dire struggle and confusion through which, amid darkness and despair, men have in the long ago of the past been carried forward, as on a tidal wave, to higher levels of thought and feeling, could but catch the inspiration of a larger faith in what the future holds in store! Meanwhile, it is to the great poets particularly that we

have to look for help. In the following magnificent lines of Wordsworth, for example, we may perhaps read the promise of a near and complete translation of the religious ideas which we have been here trying to interpret, out of the language of science into the language of the feelings—the proper language, be it ever remembered, for all religious thought:

> "I have felt
> A presence that disturbs me with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
> A motion and a spirit that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things." *

Of one thing at least we may rest assured. As each larger thought of the universe has at length been grown up into, and from the vantage-point then reached men have looked back and seen their older conceptions in all their limitations and crudity; so will this largest thought yet brought upon the horizon of our possibility

* Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey, 1798. This superb production, together with such poems as Tennyson's Ancient Sage and Akbar's Dream—perhaps the finest religious poems of our time—should be carefully compared with those passages in The Task in which Cowper gave expression to the mechanical theism of Paley and his school. Such a comparison enables us to appreciate the real advance that we have made toward an emotionalization of the new thoughts of science concerning the universe and the final mystery of life.

be also emotionally appropriated; and so, also, when this has been done, will men realize how imperfect were all the ideas belonging to their stage of anthropomorphic theism. Then indeed will the religious emotions, harmonizing with a wider, truer, and deeper knowledge of the Cosmos, and a fuller and profounder sense of the Reality of which the universe is but the fleeting manifestation, as much transcend the religious emotions of our own day as do these the religious emotions of the fetich-worshipping savage. Nor can the future progress of science do otherwise than strengthen and enlarge them. As knowledge grows "from more to more," so will "more of reverence in us dwell," and the choral harmonies of knowledge and feeling in the time to come will be richer and vaster than the broken music of the past. For with every fresh exploration through a universe which is literally pulsating with life—a universe "boundless inward in the atom, boundless outward through the whole"—one fact will ever rise into greater distinctness, and fill a larger place in the minds of men—the fact that, amid all the "mysteries which become the more mysterious the more they are thought about, there will remain the absolute certainty" that we are "ever in presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy, from which all things proceed."

APPENDIX.

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF MR. SPENCER'S PRINCIPAL WRITINGS.

[NEARLY all Mr. Spencer's magazine articles, and sundry of his shorter separate publications, are contained in the library edition of his Essays, Scientific, Political, and Speculative, issued by Messrs. D. Appleton & Co., in 1892. The volume numbers added to various of the following titles refer to this collection.]

1842. Letters on the Proper Sphere of Government.
1850. Social Statics. (Selections from this work were published along with a new edition of The Man *versus* The State in 1892.)
1852. Theory of Population. (Afterwards developed in Part VI of The Principles of Biology.)
Use and Beauty (vol. ii).
The Development Hypothesis (vol. i).
The Sources of Architectural Types (vol. ii).
Philosophy of Style (vol. ii).
Gracefulness (vol. ii).
Use of Anthropomorphism.
1853. Over-Legislation (vol. iii).
Valuation of Evidence (vol. ii).
The Universal Postulate. (Afterwards embodied in The Principles of Psychology, Part VII, chapter xi.)

1854. Manners and Fashion (vol. iii).
The Genesis of Science (vol. ii).
The Art of Education. (Now forming chapter ii of the work on Education.)
Railway Morals and Railway Policy (vol. iii).
Personal Beauty (vol. ii).
1855. Principles of Psychology (first edition).
1857. Progress, its Law and Cause (vol. i).
Origin and Function of Music (vol. ii).
Transcendental Physiology (vol. i).
Representative Government (vol. iii).
1858. State Tamperings with Money and Banks (vol. iii).
Moral Education. (Now forming chapter iii of the work on Education.)
The Nebular Hypothesis (vol. i).
Archetype and Homologies of the Vertebrate Skeleton.
1859. The Laws of Organic Form. (Afterwards developed in Part IV of The Principles of Biology.)
Physical Education. (Now forming chapter iv of the work on Education.)
What Knowledge is of most Worth? (Now forming chapter i of the same work.)
Illogical Geology (vol. i).
The Morals of Trade (vol. iii).
1860. Bain on the Emotions and the Will (vol. i).
The Social Organism (vol. i).
The Physiology of Laughter (vol. ii).
Parliamentary Reform (vol iii).
Prison Ethics (vol. iii).
1861. Education, Intellectual, Moral, and Physical.
1862. First Principles.
On Laws in General and the Order of their Discovery (vol. ii). (A chapter from the first edition of First Principles, omitted from the reorganized edition.)
1864. What is Electricity? (vol. ii).
Classification of the Sciences (vol. ii).
Reasons for dissenting from the Philosophy of M. Comte (vol. ii). (First published as an appendix to the just-named article.)

1865. The Collective Wisdom (vol. iii).
Political Fetichism (vol. iii).
Mill *vs.* Hamilton—The Test of Truth (vol. ii).
1867. First Principles (remodelled).
Principles of Biology (two volumes).
1870. Origin of Animal Worship (vol. i).
1871. Specialized Administration (vol. iii).
Morals and Moral Sentiments (vol. i).
1872. Principles of Psychology (enlarged edition, two volumes).
Mr. Martineau on Evolution (vol. i).
1873. The Study of Sociology. (International Scientific Series.)
Replies to Criticisms (vol. ii). (Mainly on the doctrines of First Principles.)
1875. Note to Prof. Cairns's Critique on the Study of Sociology (Fortnightly Review, February).
1876. Comparative Psychology of Man (vol. i).
1877. Principles of Sociology (vol. i).
A Short Rejoinder [to J. F. McLennan] (Fortnightly Review, June).
1879. Ceremonial Institutions. (Part IV of The Principles of Sociology.)
The Data of Ethics. (Part I of The Principles of Ethics.)
1881. Prof. Green's Explanations (vol. ii). (Replying to strictures on The Principles of Psychology.)
1882. Political Institutions. (Part V of The Principles of Sociology.)
The Americans: A Conversation and a Speech (vol. iii).
Prof. Goldwin Smith as a Critic (Contemporary Review, June).
1884. The Man *versus* The State.
Retrogressive Religion (Nineteenth Century, July).
Last Words about Agnosticism and the Religion of Humanity (Nineteenth Century, November).
1885. Ecclesiastical Institutions. (Part V of The Principles of Sociology.)
A Rejoinder to M. de Laveleye (Contemporary Review, April).
1886. The Factors of Organic Evolution (vol. i).
1888. The Ethics of Kant (vol. iii).
1890. Absolute Political Ethics (vol. iii).

1891. From Freedom to Bondage (vol. iii). (First published as an introduction to a collection of antisocialistic essays entitled A Plea for Liberty.)
Justice. (Part IV of The Principles of Ethics.)
1892. The Inductions of Ethics—The Ethics of Individual Life. (Parts II and III of The Principles of Ethics.)
1893. The Inadequacy of Natural Selection.
Negative Beneficence—Positive Beneficence. (Parts V and VI of The Principles of Ethics.)
A Rejoinder to Prof. Weismann.

To the above list have to be added the eight parts of the Descriptive Sociology, a cyclopædia of social facts, collected arranged, and published under Mr. Spencer's supervision. With the issue of the eighth division, Mr. Spencer announced that, owing to the deficient public response, the enterprise would have to be abandoned. The published divisions are as follows:

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