BUCKLE AND THE ECONOMICS OF KNOWLEDGE

It seems at first sight like a satire on the teaching of Henry Thomas Buckle that, nearly twenty years after his death,[1] public interest should be more attracted by the pettiest details of his personal life than by the intellectual achievements but for which those details would never have been recorded, or, had they been recorded, would never have been studied. It might be urged that this was just the sort of gossip from which he desired to set history free, and to substitute for it an inquiry into the general laws by which men's actions in their totality are determined. Yet many of these details strikingly illustrate a peculiar and neglected aspect of his philosophy. For he held that moral and affectional motives are all-powerful with the individual, although exercising an inappreciable influence on masses of men acting together. Accordingly he considered that much which ought not to find a place in history might very properly be relegated to biography, regarding the latter, indeed, as not susceptible of scientific treatment. His life, then, if it does not verify his entire philosophy, at least does not contradict it. It may also be taken as confirming and deepening the personal impression made long ago on his more sympathetic readers. There are passages in the *History of Civilisation*

[1] Written in 1880.

which show plainly enough that Buckle was full of deep tenderness and ardent enthusiasm. But without Mr. Huth's biography[1] we should not have known how thoroughly good a man he was. Every page exhibits him to us as a genial companion, a judicious adviser, a devoted friend. But we learn little more about his peculiar cast of intellect than that he had a memory even greater, if possible, than Macaulay's. For the rest, nothing that Mr. Huth has published tends to elucidate the causes, whether general or special, which made his philosophy what it was. Fortunately, however, the information required for that purpose is easily accessible. Next after his country, parentage, and early associations, Buckle's true antecedents and environment are to be found in the school of thought to which for the most part he belonged. The object of this essay is to show what tendencies he represented, and in what particular directions he attempted to work them out.

The English thought of the last half century, so far as it is really English and not a revival of old dogmas or an importation from the Continent, has been, under its most general aspect, a philosophy of freedom, individuality, spontaneity, experimentalism. Foreign observers often take it, superficially enough, for mere empiricism—the fit expression of a national character which they persist in regarding as narrow, selfish, and materialistic, incapable of wide ideas or of lofty aspirations. That such a people should also have created the richest poetic literature of modern times is an anomaly which

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

they do not feel called upon to explain. Perhaps a little reflection would show them that our art and our philosophy, so far from being opposed, are products of the same imaginative genius working in different directions. It would then be understood that, if we appeal to experience, the enlargement and not the limitation of knowledge is what we have most at heart; and that our utilitarianism is not the substitution of a low for a high standard, but of a progressive for a stationary, a social for a personal morality. Moreover, the English habit of individual liberty combines with the restless English imagination in leading our foremost minds to adopt whatever abstract theories offer the widest scope to spontaneity, to freedom of enterprise, to variety of choice. It was his thorough comprehension of this tendency and the consistent manner in which he brought it to bear on speculation that qualified John Stuart Mill to be for so many years the leader of English thought. His *Essay on Liberty* only expresses more briefly and clearly the fundamental aim of his larger works, which was to show that existing beliefs and customs, resting as they did on experience, might be superseded by a wider experience. He has told us himself that this was the aim of his *Logic;* and the drift of his *Political Economy* is evidently to exalt as much as possible the part played by free and conscious human agency in the distribution of wealth. That the system of Herbert Spencer is from beginning to end a philosophy of liberty and individualism need only be stated to be perceived. We know from his own declaration that the whole series of works composing it were

undertaken with a view to its ethical conclusion, and we know also that his ethical ideal is a society where the component parts interfere to the least possible extent with one another. Thinkers of a more limited scope are dominated by a similar tendency. Charles Darwin has, so to speak, projected the experimental method into nature, and shown that it is the condition not only of scientific progress, but of all vital progress whatever. Spontaneous variation and natural selection correspond exactly to repeated trial and failure followed by eventual success; and among animals also those families prosper most where there is most diversity developed—in other words, where originality is least trammeled. The same idea is present in Alexander Bain's theory of voluntary action, which offers a parallel to Darwin's theory of organic evolution the more remarkable from its having been worked out before the latter was published. According to it, all sorts of movements are spontaneously set up by young creatures, and only those muscular combinations survive in memory that experience proves to be associated with pleasurable feeling, or with relief from painful feeling. Another instance of the prominence given to experimental freedom by English thought is the place which Stanley Jevons assigns to hypothesis in his *Principles of Science,* particularly in the chapter on "The Character of the Experimentalist," where it is very clearly explained that scientific discoveries are not made by divination, but by repeated guesses, most of which are utterly wrong. The two greatest works of modern English historical literature, Grote's *Greece* and Macaulay's

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

But, over a large part of the globe, human intelligence had to contend with an even more formidable enemy than the protective spirit—an enemy, indeed, to whom the unconquerable pertinacity of that spirit was, in most instances, due. Such was the point of view from which Buckle regarded Nature. He speaks of her as carrying on a perpetual warfare with man, sometimes victorious, sometimes vanquished, but always tending to thwart and drag him back to her own level. It is astonishing that one who formulated this fundamental antithesis so sharply, and who in

other respects has so frequently expressed his adhesion to the popular metaphysics of the 'fifties, should ever have been charged with materialism. A notion has somehow gained currency that Buckle proposed to deduce the history of every country from its physical geography. Nothing could well be more unlike the truth. He distinctly marks off the regions where, in his phraseology, nature was subordinated to man from those where man was subordinated to nature; and it was with the former that, as a historian of civilisation, he was almost exclusively concerned. The idea that human beings and human societies are themselves natural products had apparently never occurred to him. This, however, was not for want of acquaintance with the theory of evolution, the basis of which he had fully accepted. Writing some years before the appearance of the *Origin of Species*, he alludes to fixity of species as an "old dogma" on which successful attacks had already been made;[1] and in the same passage he assumes that phenomena of every order have always been determined by their own laws without any interference from without. But he was averse from accepting the absolute dependence of mind on brain, nor could he well have done so consistently with his passionate faith in its immortality. Hence his scornful doubt that the human mind could be handed down like an heirloom;[2] his opinion that the intellectual and moral faculties do not improve; and his deliberate

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

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

omission of race from the physical conditions which a historian has to consider. Even where he does admit physical influences they are of a very indirect character, and they are just those which would be picked out by the economist and the literary student rather than by the physiologist. Nature wars against political liberty by producing over-population, and so enabling landlords and capitalists to concentrate all power in their own hands. She wars against intellectual liberty by the multiplication of extraordinary and terrifying phenomena which stimulate the imagination at the expense of the understanding. Buckle seems to have confounded an originally rapid rate of increase in population with its final increase up to or beyond the limit of subsistence. Over-population is theoretically possible under any conditions of climate, food, and soil; and it is not necessarily involved in one rate of increase more than in another. The existence of vast plains isolated from the rest of the world, whether fertile or barren, seems a likelier cause of despotism than any other that can be named; while, conversely, whatever geographical circumstances are favourable to the development of several independent national centres, near enough for active intercourse with each other, but protected by natural frontiers against mutual aggression, and similarly situated with regard to the world at large—such regions, in short, as Greece, the basin of the Mediterranean, and Western Europe generally—are also favourable to liberty. It would seem also that the aspects of nature have much less to do with superstitious beliefs than Buckle supposed. For such beliefs were originally diffused over the whole

earth under very similar forms; they have not remained constantly associated with awe-inspiring scenery; and where such an association does exist, as for instance in South America or the East Indies, it can be better explained by difficulty of communication with the centres of enlightenment than by any direct influence exercised on the imagination.

My object, however, is not so much to criticise Buckle's views as to show in what modes of thought they originated. And here we have a remarkable verification of the guiding principle laid down at starting. Following the true English method, our philosopher construes universal history, not as an organically connected whole, but as a great collection of spontaneous experiments on the possibility of human progress. Mind is scattered broadcast over the whole earth, but in only a few instances does it meet with conditions favourable to its development. Everywhere outside Europe civilisation has been arrested, either because wealth could not be accumulated at all, or because it could not be diffused so widely among the masses as to enable them to understand and act on the ideas put forward by men of genius. In Europe a new set of forces, historical instead of geographical, come into play, and a series of eliminations bring us at last to England as the only country where mind has been able to manifest its inherent powers of expansion on a scale wide enough to furnish materials for determining the natural law of all progress. By an equally ingenious train of reasoning Guizot proves that civilisation can best be studied in France; a country which Auguste Comte, on quite different grounds, also erects into

the normal type of intellectual evolution. No doubt the patriotic bias spoken of by Herbert Spencer has something to do with these preferences; but a deeper reason will be found in the character impressed on every philosophy by the social conditions under which it is framed. A thinker who translates the ideas of his own nation into abstract formulæ will naturally find that this same nation best satisfies the requirements of his particular system. He may even extend the method to particular periods, and imagine that the world was never so enlightened as when his theory of what it ought to be first became fixed.

Besides his patriotic feelings, there was probably another strong motive which induced Buckle to select a single country for the application of his new method. This was the desire to simplify the hypothetical science of history, which, but for some such artifice, threatened to become unmanageably complex and difficult. The same consideration throws some light on his celebrated rejection of morality as a factor in the progress of civilisation. None of the author's theories provoked so much hostile criticism at the time of their first publication, nor were any of them supported by such weak and inconsistent arguments. It will perhaps be worth while to glance at the principal assumptions which those arguments involve. They are as follows: (1) The innate moral dispositions do not change; (2) Moral truth is not progressive; (3) Innate disposition and knowledge between them account for the whole of moral conduct; (4) Moral forces exercise no great or lasting effect on human affairs. Of these four propositions three are refuted

by the history of slavery alone. It was not always known that slavery is wrong, nor, in fact, was it always wrong; the perception of its iniquity was made more active by religious feeling; and its abolition was in great part due to the excitement thus produced. With regard to the alleged stationariness of the innate moral dispositions—by which term of course nothing more than sympathy need be implied—everything goes to prove that on the average civilised children are born with a better nature than savage children, or than their own remote ancestors. It is, however, conceivable that, conceding the existence of moral progress, more may have been done for human happiness by purely intellectual progress. One great example of a benefit due entirely to the latter is, according to Buckle, the comparative infrequency of war in modern times. His argument is a perfect nest of fallacies. The stimulus given to war by intellectual causes, such as individual genius and the adoption of new beliefs by whole nations or sections of nations, is entirely ignored. It is taken for granted that the invention of gunpowder localised the military spirit in a separate class and thereby weakened it, whereas the localisation seems to have been greater before gunpowder came into general use;[1] nor was it likely that war should become less popular when its risks were confined to a particular class than when they were shared by the whole community. That national quarrels are discouraged by the diffusion of sound economical doctrine is doubtless true; but the false doctrines

[1] See Macaulay's Essay on Machiavelli.

from which those quarrels formerly sprang were equally intellectual forces, only made possible by a great development of reflection. Buckle gives as a reason for neglecting the influence of legislation on progress, that the best laws are those which have been passed for the repeal of bad ones; he does not consider how easily the same argument might be turned against his own favourite theory of social dynamics—a remark which applies equally to that other great intellectual triumph, the decline of religious persecution. For, so far, it is the most intellectual religions that have been the most intolerant; and modern thought in winning liberty has only won back what ancient thought enjoyed everywhere except at Athens. Nor is this all. Another influence adverse to war is, we are told, the great increase of travelling due to the extension of locomotion by steam. Different nations are brought into closer contact with one another, their mutual esteem is thereby increased, and their hostile feelings are proportionately diminished. Now, what is this mutual esteem if not a moral motive, brought into play, indeed, by intellect, but itself the determining antecedent? And, to make the self-contradiction worse, we learn that the reason why men's respect for each other grows with their mutual intimacy is that the good in human nature considerably outweighs the bad. If so, what becomes of the position that virtue and vice exactly balance and neutralise each other's effects?

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

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

In estimating the influence of religion, literature, and government on civilisation, Buckle finds his task greatly simplified by the previous elimination of morality; the immediate effects of these three agents (to which art should have been added as a fourth) being exercised on action rather than on knowledge; while, again, the consciousness that morality depends upon such complex conditions was a further motive for leaving it out of account altogether. Yet even so the questions raised in this connection are most inadequately treated in the chapter specially devoted to them. So far as literature is concerned, Buckle himself subsequently took up a totally different position, expatiating eloquently on the stimulus which poetry gives to scientific discovery, and on the importance of keeping the intellect in perpetual contact with the emotions;[1] for which purpose, as need hardly be

[1] II., p. 502.

observed, literature is our most valuable auxiliary. His remarks on this head remind us of what Professor Tyndall has since said; and a little farther reflection might have led him to anticipate what the same authority has stated with respect to the moral basis of intellectual work.

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

It sometimes happens that a philosopher errs,

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

books, inventions, discoveries, and ideas from all quarters.

When Buckle began to write the Renaissance had not yet attracted the universal attention it was destined to receive a few years after his death; still, its immense importance in the life of reason had already been pointed out before his time, and no one can now[1] help noticing what a void is produced by its total absence from the pages of this historian. He seems to think that, towards the close of the sixteenth century, men suddenly, and for no particular reason except the negative one of ecclesiastical decay, began doubting what they had hitherto believed, and that modern enlightenment sprang as spontaneously from their doubts. The truth is that they questioned one set of beliefs because they had become familiarised with another and contradictory set, embodied in the classic literature of Greece and Rome. Nor was the intellectual life of England dependent only for its first awakening on an external stimulus; it was sustained through the whole seventeenth century by continual contact with the minds of other nations; while no sooner was their influence partially withdrawn, as happened in the eighteenth century, than it fell into a speedy decline. Buckle has noticed the dearth of speculative genius which followed the deaths of Locke and Newton, but he has failed adequately to explain it. Curiously enough, too, the explanation which he does offer is inconsistent with his own principles. According to him, it arose from the diversion of the national genius

[1] Written in 1880.

partly into practical pursuits, partly into political contests.[1] Here, then, are two most serious disturbances, totally unconnected with the protective spirit, not allowed for in his general philosophy of history, and all the more dangerous that they are likely to gain instead of losing strength with advancing civilisation. That, however, he exaggerates their effect during the period referred to will become evident when we consider how much greater their activity has since become, without proving incompatible with a brilliant revival of science and philosophy. If we ask what was the cause of that revival, Buckle will himself supply us with the answer. He attributes it first to the influence of the Scotch school, and then to the "sudden admiration for German literature of which Coleridge was the principal exponent."[2] Only prejudice could have prevented him from acknowledging our obligations to France as well.

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

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

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

[1] II., p. 99.

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

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

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

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

The protective spirit, as has been already observed, is twofold. It may either interfere with men's actions, or with their beliefs, or with both. In France it chiefly took the direction of political tutelage, in Scotland of ecclesiastical intolerance, in Spain of both combined ; the consequence being that in the last-named country progress was completely arrested, while in the other two it has been irregular and unhealthy. The French Revolution was a reaction against the protective spirit, and its destructive violence was due to the rigour of the repression which provoked it. Few liberal thinkers will deny that Buckle's criticisms on the past and present condition of the countries just enumerated contain a large amount of truth. It is quite another question whether the wide generalisations founded on his historical survey are equally to be trusted. To begin with, it seems to me that the assumption of a fixed antithesis between the people and their rulers is eminently misleading. A country may be governed by a foreign race, possibly for its own good, but at any rate without its own consent

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

or co-operation, like India at the present moment; or again it may be dominated by a priesthood sprung from its own ranks and speaking its own language, but to all intents and purposes the soldiers of an alien power, and quite out of sympathy with its real opinions; but apart from these exceptions every government is really representative, even when it is not created by the popular vote, and merely gives a sharper expression to the collective will or to the prevalent beliefs of the people. Sometimes the rulers will be a little in advance of their subjects, and sometimes a little behind them; but, to use a favourite formula of our author's, deviations in one direction will be compensated by deviations in another. Here the government will be too interfering, and there too remiss; but in either case the error will be attended by counterbalancing advantages; and probably each nation will have something to learn from the other. Everywhere there will be obstacles to progress; but they will arise far more from the natural inertia of the human mind, varying with race and geographical position, than from the distribution and application of political power; and they will equally affect all classes of society.

Again, Buckle seems to confound under the common name of political protection five distinct ideas: (1) Despotism of any kind; (2) the concentration of power in a few hands; (3) the favouring of one class at the expense of others; (4) interference with individuals for their own good; and (5) the feeling of personal loyalty towards a hereditary chief. He even goes so far as to identify what is called a paternal government with a

"government in which supreme power is vested in the sovereign or in a few privileged classes."[1] Yet surely the government of Turkey is not paternal; nor is the development of democracy unfavourable to benevolent interference with private interests, as the present tendency of legislation in England proves. Buckle also associates economic protection with political absolutism and centralisation, although in the United States it flourishes under conditions the very reverse of these; while only a few years after the publication of his first volume free-trade was imposed on France by a despotic ruler.

Undoubtedly there are countries where the principle of authority is highly developed, and others where it is restricted within very narrow limits; but to say that the former are necessarily animated by a spirit unfavourable to scientific progress is probably more than Buckle would have ventured to assert in so many words; although, on putting his various expressions together, this is the only interpretation that they will stand. Yet it is notorious that science has received great encouragement from many absolute rulers both in ancient and modern times. In France it made great progress under the old *régime*. In Germany it has co-existed with a complete absence of political freedom. Perhaps he would have held that mere knowledge was an insufficient return for the sacrifice of individualism and spontaneity; but we have only to deal with his clear and categorical assertions—(1) "that the progress of mankind

[1] I., p. 557.

depends on the success with which the laws of phenomena are investigated, and on the extent to which a knowledge of these laws is diffused"; and (2) "that the great enemy of this movement is the protective spirit."[1] Now, I maintain that, whatever else the history of France proves, it does not prove the second of these propositions. Let us consider what arguments it suggests to Buckle. He does not, indeed, discuss the endowment of research put in practice on a large scale by Louis XIV., but he censures the encouragement given to literature by that monarch on grounds which, if they are worth anything, must equally apply to science. As usual, the principles invoked are purely economic. We are told that—

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

[1] II., p. 1.

[2] I., pp. 628–29.

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

Buckle, however, in the chapter to which I have been referring, evades the real issue by speaking at one time as if the interests of science or philosophy were identical with those of literature, and

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

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

[1] I., p. 648.

now is, compared with what it was twenty years ago, and at the present wretched state of French literature as compared with the generation of 1830, I am inclined to think that here also we are in presence of some mysterious rhythm, according to which many more great writers are born at one time than at another.[1]

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

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

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

worthy of an English philosopher to point out that in the intellectual sphere also competition is needed to secure efficiency; that great thought has always been aggressive and defiant; and that the weakening of its antagonist may dangerously react upon itself.

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

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

that the method chosen was a mistaken one, and that its inadequacy may be demonstrated from the portions which he lived to complete.

It would appear, to begin with, that Buckle had either no clear idea of what is meant by induction and deduction, or ideas which were the reverse of true. And here let us pause to observe that our philosopher, while professing to discard the methods employed by metaphysicians for investigating the laws of mind, and setting very little value on the positive results which they have attained,[1] has in fact borrowed the whole framework of his system from these very metaphysicians, without acknowledgment and without criticism. He justly censures Reid for multiplying unproved assumptions. Yet he had a common-sense system of his own; only he never got so far as Reid; he never consciously formulated it to himself. Preoccupied with the idea of general laws as the one great object of knowledge, he forgot that, before laws can be even looked for, a preliminary mental analysis is needed, sometimes of infinitely greater difficulty and importance than any subsequent part of the inquiry. But, as nobody can move an inch without such an analysis, he takes for granted the distinctions of common language and common thought, without perceiving their purely relative and provisional value. It is only by studying the history of these distinctions that we can free ourselves from their tyranny. Buckle, apparently, had never done so,

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

and, not having mastered them, they have mastered him. They are perpetually misleading, or tripping him up, or gathering in a hopeless tangle about his steps. So it is with the antithesis between nature and man derived from the Greek Sophists; the antithesis between the intellectual and the moral derived from Aristotle; the Socratic confusion of dutifulness with knowledge; and the assumption of an immemorial, unchanging moral code, smacking strongly of intuitionism. Then, again, we have the scholastic separation of the imagination from the understanding; and on it is superimposed a theory that art is due to the one and science to the other. This supplies him with a ready explanation of the disproportionate development of art in Italy and Spain; the imagination being stimulated to excess in those countries by the more imposing aspects of nature as compared with Northern Europe. It seems to have escaped his notice that in art the Belgians far surpass the Swiss, while in science the relation is reversed. Elsewhere, as I have already observed, he does justice to the scientific uses of the imagination, but straightway proceeds to confound imagination either with a knowledge of the emotions or with the emotions themselves. These, he incidentally declares, "are as much a part of us as the understanding"—which has never been denied—and adds that "they are as truthful" and "as likely to be right";[1] a doctrine which, if it has any meaning at all, would immediately reopen the floodgates of superstition, and reverse the conclusions elsewhere maintained by its author.

[1] II., p. 502.

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

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

To which he adds that—

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

Yet we had been previously told that—

> the inductive philosopher is naturally cautious, patient,

[1] II., p. 419.

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

One need only look at the mathematical sciences, which are universally admitted to be deductive, to see the absurdity of all this. To ascend from the part to the whole must always be *cæteris paribus* a more daring and hazardous process than to descend from the whole to the part. The truth is that what Buckle had in his mind throughout was not the opposition between two kinds of reasoning, but between reasoning on the one hand and observation and experiment on the other. For he mentions America as an extreme instance of the inductive spirit, and Germany of the deductive. Now, the Americans are well known to be excellent observers, but they have not contributed much to our stock of generalisations, either by the discovery of new or by the resolution of old laws; while German philosophy is remarkable for its habit of challenging current assumptions, and for its constant endeavour to construct systems out of the fewest possible first principles. Yet this interpretation, although it gives an intelligible meaning to some passages, is irreconcilable with others which seem to confound induction with the general principle of all reasoning, the demand of a proof; while deduction is represented as the submission of reason to unsupported authorities. Accordingly, the one method is characterised as theological, and the other as anti-theological.[2] The distinction cannot, in my opinion, be maintained. Particular facts may be, equally with general propositions, taken

[1] *Loc. cit.*

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

for granted or accepted on faith, and theological systems not only may be, but have been, built up out of such alleged facts, with no more aid from general assumptions than is necessary to any inductive process whatever. And the errors of such a system, or of any system, may often be most effectually overthrown by showing that it involves a contradiction, either of its general propositions with each other, or of those propositions with their logical consequences—that is to say, by deductive reasoning. It has even been held that the function of syllogistic logic is essentially negative, that it only amounts to the complete elimination of self-contradiction from thought. Buckle most unfairly opposes the rigorous and scientific employment of the one method to the loose and popular employment of the other, thus altogether missing the close connection which recent logicians have shown to subsist between them.

When Buckle proceeds to illustrate the different types of reasoning by a survey of the literatures where he supposes them to be exemplified, his original misapprehension is continued and reinforced by other misapprehensions in the interpretation of those literatures. The Scotch intellect in the eighteenth century is chosen as an example of the deductive spirit; and the tendency of Scotch metaphysicians to assume the existence of ultimate principles in the human mind is given as an especial instance of its operation. An historian might perhaps be equally justified in taking Hume, Adam Smith, James Mill, and Thomas Brown, who all pursued the contrary method, as the

genuine representatives of Scotch philosophy. But, passing over this objection, is it not obvious that we have here a confusion of psychology with logic ; that to insist (whether rightly or wrongly) on the indecomposable character of certain mental phenomena ; to maintain even that we have internal sources of knowledge independent of experience—is an entirely different thing from preferring one kind of demonstration to another? It might as well be said that the chemist who believes in the indecomposable character of the so-called elements is more deductive than he who seeks to resolve them all into a single substance, as that the *a priori* psychologist is so distinguished from his analytical rival. Indeed, of the two I should say that he who evolves all the manifold varieties of consciousness from the combinations of a few simple feelings, approaches nearest to the mathematical, and therefore to the deductive, method. The common-sense school, as their very name implies, were not reasoners at all ; they never went beyond a superficial description and classification of the mental phenomena.

In dealing with the origin of this so-called philosophy, Buckle is equally at fault. According to him, its method is theological, its results are secular and liberal. The truth, however, is that Hutcheson, the founder of the school, borrowed his innate principles from Shaftesbury and Butler, who, being English, ought, on our author's view, to have taught the contrary system ; while the habit of assuming their existence, once introduced, found high favour with orthodox Scotchmen, because it seemed to make for the spirituality of the soul and

the supernatural origin of conscience; thus furnishing a welcome support to those dogmas by which they were still powerfully affected. We are told that in Scotland the intellectual classes have long been remarkable for "boldness of investigation and freedom from prejudice."[1] I believe all continental critics will agree with me in thinking that they have been, comparatively speaking, much more remarkable for narrowness and timidity.

It is quite in accordance with his singular view of method that Buckle should declare Hume's metaphysical essays an exception to the generally deductive character of Scotch philosophy. For Hume was both the most sceptical of all thinkers and the one who carried the experiential system farthest. Yet, looking not at the matter, but at the logical form of those essays, I do not see how they can be distinguished from his other writings. For reasons already suggested, I should be inclined to consider them better examples of deduction than of induction. But, properly speaking, there is a stage at which speculation is so little developed that it cannot be brought under any strictly defined type of reasoning at all. Its method is then that of analogy, a rough attempt to interpret the unknown in terms of the known. The *Natural History of Religion* is a good example of this process. Hume, without investigating the evidence furnished by travellers, declared that polytheism was the natural religion of savages. Does it follow that his conclusions were evolved out of his own mind? By no means. He argued from the widest

[1] I., p. 225.

experience that the more abstract and universal a notion is, the more difficult is it to grasp; and that the higher manifestations of mind follow, instead of preceding, the lower. In fact, he argued from all that was already known by experience of children, of uneducated persons, and of savages, to what still remained to be known of these last. To collect the facts about savage belief, and then to restate them in abstract terms, would not have been induction, because it would not have been reasoning of any kind, but simply description.

Buckle's account of Adam Smith is open both to these and to other criticisms. The works of that great thinker are represented as a perfect type of the deductive method. The *Theory of Moral Sentiments* and the *Wealth of Nations* are interpreted as complementary portions of a single science, having for its object the reduction of human nature to law. The peculiarity of the scheme is that the two grand motives of human action are separately considered, and treated apart from each other's disturbing action. These two motives are sympathy and selfishness; the one is discussed in the *Moral Sentiments*, the other in the *Wealth of Nations*. By a logical artifice, each in turn is assumed to be the whole factor in human conduct; although, in reality, their effects are always conjoined. Buckle exemplifies what he supposes to have been the method of Adam Smith by a singularly unlucky illustration from geometry. Real lines, he tells us, always have both length and breadth; but the geometrician, in order to avoid insoluble complications, assumes that they possess the former attribute only. We are not informed whether he

subsequently rectifies his omission by postulating lines which have breadth without length; but to complete the parallel he certainly ought to do so. A much more pertinent illustration would have been furnished by dynamics, which really does begin with the effect of forces taken singly, and afterwards proceeds to study them in combination. I conceive, however, that no such idea ever entered the head of Adam Smith as is attributed to him by his admirer. His two great works would, indeed, according to Buckle's theory, serve, not to complete, but to contradict and upset each other. For, be it observed, they do not study simple tendencies, but actual concrete facts of history and every-day life. To say that whatever men feel and think and do is the effect of their sympathies, and then to say that it is the effect of their selfishness, would, if these two forces were necessarily opposed to one another, be simply an unintelligible paradox. But the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* is, as its very name implies, an inquiry into the origin of certain feelings, which are nowhere assumed to exercise a paramount influence over human conduct; nor, although they are derived from sympathy, do they exhaust its manifestations. Neither do sympathy and selfishness, in Smith's view of them, either divide the whole field of human nature, or reciprocally exclude one another.[1] The tendency to give and to seek for sympathy does not, in its original form, imply any self-sacrifice, and, in its more complex manifestations, is eminently favourable to

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

that desire for wealth which Adam Smith regards as the principal cause of economic progress. Thus the *Wealth of Nations*, so far from taking up a psychological position opposed to, or lying outside, that of the *Moral Sentiments*, simply assumes the existence of desires which, in that work, had been explained, whether rightly or wrongly, as a particular manifestation of our social feelings. Moreover, even if its reasonings were based on the supposition that selfishness (in its narrowest sense) is the sole spring of action, they would not give a complete account of it, but only of so much as is concerned with the production of economical phenomena; while, again, the analysis of those phenomena embraces a variety of topics with which the science of human nature, properly so called, has nothing whatever to do.

But if Adam Smith's works do not, when taken together, constitute a deductive psychology, can it be said that each of them singly is an example of the deductive method? Certainly not according to Buckle's own definitions. For the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* makes no unsupported assertions; it perpetually appeals to experience; and, instead of multiplying ethical principles, seeks to reduce them to one. Neither does the *Wealth of Nations* reason down from causes to effects, but, contrariwise, ascends from effects to causes, which, we are elsewhere informed, is a process characteristic of induction.[1] We begin with the division of labour, and are gradually led on to exchange, to the circulating medium, and to the different elements of

[1] II., p. 515.

price. Our modern systems are arranged on the opposite plan; they follow the objective order of things, not the subjective order of thoughts. It is true that Adam Smith does not obey the rules of induction laid down by Bacon; but then no science ever was, or ever could be, constructed in accordance with those rules. The same remark applies to Scotch physical philosophy. No doubt, it was largely hypothetical, conjectural, and not immediately verified by experience. But when was there ever a physical philosophy of which the same could not be said? Buckle does, indeed, draw a very marked distinction between the literatures of Scotland, on the one hand, and of England and France on the other. The former alone, according to him, was deductive; the latter two were inductive. But, had he taken pains to analyse the productions of English and French philosophy from the logical point of view, he could hardly have failed to notice how little they differed, in that respect, from the Scotch systems. He admits that Harvey and Newton used the deductive method. But Harvey and Newton between them represent half the scientific English intellect of their century; and if we add Hobbes, who assuredly reasoned from generals to particulars quite as much as, if not more than, Adam Smith, the balance will incline heavily against induction. Observation and experiment were, it is true, the favourite occupations of English science in the eighteenth century; but these are only subsidiary operations, not to be confounded with the generalising process itself.

With regard to the French philosophy of the same period, only a preconceived theory could have

made anyone blind to its predominatingly deductive character. To prove this, I need only quote what M. Taine, a most competent authority, has stated on the subject :—

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

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

[1] *L'Ancien Régime*, I., pp. 262-3.

notorious that to illustrate it at greater length would be a waste of words.

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

to have been both deductive and sceptical, the possibility of a close connexion between the two characteristics is demonstrated; and a further proof will be found in the circumstance that English scepticism has always flourished most when deduction has been most generally employed.[1]

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

So far the respective influence of the two systems,

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

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

as viewed by Buckle, is negative rather than positive. The one, according to his theory, does, and the other does not, remove the causes of popular superstition. The one does, and the other does not, leave the foremost minds completely free to work out the remotest consequences of their speculations. We now pass to the positive reason why induction should contribute more powerfully than the rival method to a general diffusion of knowledge. We are told that this is because the observations on which it rests, being accessible to a far greater number of minds, are proportionately better appreciated and more readily accepted than the abstract reasonings of deduction. Possibly our author may have had in his mind various passages where Aristotle describes induction as clearer, more persuasive, and more popular than the syllogism, which, on the other hand, is more cogent, and corresponds better to the order of natural causation. Such a distinction, however, applies rather to the loose illustrative induction of the Greeks than to the rigorous observations and experiments of modern science, where the facts are often much more abstruse than the inferences founded upon them. What these facts are can only be known to a few; the vulgar either remain ignorant of their existence, or else take it on trust; and, when faith is once admitted, all kinds of conclusions may profit by it equally, irrespective of the evidence on which they rest. Again, when Buckle says that "for one person who can think there are at least a hundred persons who can observe,"[1] he forgets that

[1] II., p. 582.

induction, being a process of reasoning, is necessarily a process of thought. Nor has the greater or less difficulty of understanding and practically applying a principle when once discovered anything to do with the kind of investigation by which it has been reached, or with the kind of proof by which it has been established. It might also be easily maintained that, while the tendency of generalisation is to lead us away from experience, the tendency of deduction is to lead us back to experience. A new truth may easily commend itself to the popular mind by explaining a multitude of phenomena which never would have suggested it to the original discoverer. Nothing serves to extend a knowledge of scientific theories so much as the inventions by which they are utilised. But both the making and the explaining of inventions are essentially deductive processes; they are the application of general laws to concrete facts. The truth is that, while all knowledge tends spontaneously to spread, the means by which its diffusion can be hastened have little or nothing to do with the order of investigations by which it was first obtained. The remark may seem commonplace, but popular education is not a question of logical method at all. It depends primarily on scholastic machinery, and more remotely on religion, literature, and government—that is to say, on agencies which Buckle has summarily excluded from his scheme of intellectual progress.

The theory of logical economy equally breaks down when we come to examine its historical verification. It is not true that Greek philosophy had no power to diminish popular superstition. One

need only compare Euripides with Æschylus, or even Xenophon with Herodotus, to appreciate its effect. Without it, indeed, the conversion of the Roman world from a naturalistic polytheism to an ethical monotheism could never have been accomplished; without it Roman jurisprudence could not have been rationalised; without its revival mediæval darkness could not have been so speedily dissipated. The case of Germany is still stronger. No doubt the state of German middle-class education leaves much to be desired, and, by all accounts, is rather deteriorating than improving. No doubt, also, there is a deep division between the intellectual classes and the rest of the people. But this is due far more to the literary peculiarities of German philosophy than to its method of research. The public are repelled by speculative treatises, not because they reason from first principles, but because they are detestably written. A profoundly speculative work like the *Philosophy of the Unconscious* will run through several editions, if its style be but tolerably good. For the same reason Buckle's own book has had a great success in Germany—greater even than in England—although its method is rather deductive than inductive. But whether German philosophy be popularly studied or not, the scepticism now diffused through every class in Germany bears witness to the immense influence which it exerts on public opinion. If it is to be taken as a symptom of superstition that the Scotch churches are "still filled with devout and ignorant worshippers,"[1] it must surely be taken as

[1] II., pp. 589.

a symptom of the contrary that the German churches are so scantily attended. Whatever Buckle says of Scotland is just what a continental critic would say of England, and, if so, every such charge would redound to the discredit of the inductive method which is supposed to have regulated our civilisation. Again, one would suppose from Buckle's language on the subject that the northern and southern divisions of Great Britain were sundered either by a difference of language or by an impassable frontier, instead of reading the same books, profiting by the same discoveries, and carrying on an uninterrupted exchange of ideas. Whatever our literature has done for ourselves, it ought to have done, although perhaps not to an equal extent, for the Scotch.

A less ingenious theorist than Buckle would probably have been contented with a more obvious explanation of whatever bigotry still survives in Scotland. Having once struck deeper root, the theological or puritanical spirit has naturally remained stronger in that country than in England or France ; but there seems no reason for believing that Scotland compares with them, in that respect, more unfavourably now than at any time during the last three centuries. Granting that she is not yet on a level with them, it does not follow that she has not made equal progress in the same period. And if, as will hardly be denied, she is no longer (for good or evil) in the religious condition of the seventeenth century, why should not the change be attributed, at least in part, to her philosophy? It is no little matter that she should have produced two such writers as Burns and Scott, at once so

national, so popular, and so filled with the secular and humanistic spirit of modern civilisation. Surely their appearance, coming when it did, together with that of the numerous minor luminaries who surrounded them, was not unconnected with the triumphs already won by their predecessors in the more abstract spheres of thought. And if Scotch literature cannot truly be said to have exercised no influence on the national spirit, neither can it be said to have received none in return.[1] If the Scotch thinkers, with one exception, let theology alone, this was not from any incapacity on their part to call in question its fundamental assumptions, but because they either shared its beliefs, or were deterred by the strength of public opinion from openly assailing them. And the solitary exception, Hume, differed from his contemporaries not because he employed the inductive method, but because he lived a good deal abroad, and never held a university professorship at home.

We have seen, then, that the philosophy of individualism, when carried from the economics of material industry into the more complex economics of mental energy, gives rise to misconceptions and inconsistencies at every step. After the whole weight of human progress has been thrown on advancing knowledge, the basis of knowledge itself is so isolated, so narrowed, so weakened by internal disintegration, that the resulting strain terminates in a complete collapse. Where the analogy of material industry might have been profitably

[1] II., pp. 586.

employed, it is neglected. Where the laws regulating production, distribution, and governmental interference are inapplicable, they are forcibly imposed on the phenomena. Standing by the ruined edifice, we ask ourselves on what other plan it could have been built. The answer is that, first of all, the materials which our architect pushed aside must be properly utilised. We must not isolate from each other forces which are only different aspects of a fundamental unity, inseparable in the completed idea no less than in the living fact. We must overcome these scholastic antitheses of nature and man, morals and intellect, imagination and understanding, emotion and reason, induction and deduction. We must cease to look on the governing classes as eternal blunderers and bullies. In the history of our race, everything is natural, everything is human, everything emotional, imaginative, and moral. I will even say that, using the word "religion" to denote the provisional synthesis of these various agencies, and extending the word "government" to all forms of co-operation, whether spontaneous or permanently organised, everything is religious and governmental. Still more, if possible, must we recognise within each department a necessary consensus of functions. Whatever makes for the accumulation of knowledge makes also for its diffusion, and reciprocally. Without hypothesis there would be no induction, and without experience no deduction. The one process, as Stanley Jevons has shown, is an inversion of the other. Moreover, the generalisations with which our inquiries begin are partial and precarious; their growth in solidity and in sweep

is proportioned to the number of particulars successfully explained by their application. Neither can the intellect of any nation continue to advance without perpetual excitement from its neighbours; and it is here, I think, that we can learn the most valuable lessons from Buckle. He was right in assigning a distinct scientific genius to each of the great civilised peoples; but the narrowness of his own economic scheme prevented him from discerning what were, in each instance, the differential characteristics. I firmly believe, however, that such a comparative psychology is possible, and that even now its outlines might be traced. For example, at the beginning of this essay I have attempted to show that there is a unity of composition running through the most divergent manifestations of our modern English philosophy. But this is a vein of thought which cannot be worked out any farther within my present limits.

It would have been impossible to tell beforehand what view of history would be taken by the studious son of an English merchant, whose opinions were formed during the great agitation for free-trade. But, when we know by experience what view he actually did take, the theory seems to be in perfect harmony with a social environment of which it was the most interesting, though not the most highly organised nor the most enduring expression. In endeavouring to represent Buckle's philosophy as something more than a mere product of individual genius, I have been faithful, amid all differences, to that most general principle which it shares with every philosophy worthy of the name, and which it has contributed so powerfully to enforce. Twenty-

five years ago the idea of law, universal and unbroken, was almost a paradox. It is now almost a commonplace; and among those by whose efforts so vast a change in public opinion was accomplished must be placed the name of this noble thinker, whose learning and eloquence have not often been singly equalled, and, in their combination, have never, to my knowledge, been approached.

THE MORALS OF AN IMMORALIST—FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

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

This speculative weakness, assuming it to exist, is not easy to explain. It certainly is not connected with any admitted deficiency on the practical side. The Germans yield to no other great nation in moral seriousness and dutifulness; such triumphs

ex. now.

as they have achieved in war and peace would have been impossible to a selfish, a frivolous, or a self-indulgent race. Nor has the disposition to theorise on what they do ever been lacking among them; if anything, it is present to excess. In fact, what one misses is not ethical theorising, but originality and life in the theories.

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

Within our own memory Germany has for the first time produced a truly ethical genius—a thinker with whom problems of conduct constituted from beginning to end the supreme, if not the sole, interest of life. It may seem strange that I should say so much of the dæmonic and tragic figure whose name stands at the head of this study. For Friedrich Nietzsche habitually posed as an

immoralist, an emancipator from moral restrictions, speaking of what he called "moralin" as a deadly poison. Nietzsche's friends, however, a most respectable set of people, were not in the least appalled by such language, nor need we take it in very deadly earnest. They saw in it no more than a strong way of saying that much of what passes for absolute right and good is only true within certain very narrow limitations, and that there are impulses, supposed to be very virtuous, which tend on the whole to do mankind more harm than good, as well as impulses, supposed to be vicious, that tend to exalt it in the scale of real value.

In giving this paradoxical form to his morality Nietzsche was merely following the constant tradition of German philosophy. We are accustomed, and for that matter his own countrymen are accustomed, to look on Hegel as a quite exceptional instance of what may be done in the way of setting common sense at defiance. But Hegel, with his immanent dialectic of self-contradictory positions, reconciled in a higher synthesis, only brought to a point what had been more or less the method of all his predecessors, and was destined to be the method of his chief successors also. Kant naïvely supposed that he was dissipating Hume's scepticism by an audacity of negation before which Hume would have shrunk back appalled; and, not content with that performance, he proceeded to integrate Free Will with a system which, literally to all appearances, left Determinism master of the field. Fichte, after reducing the non-ego—that is, the whole objective world—to an assumption of the ego, sets the ego the task of negating its own negation, which is at the

same time the condition of its existence, with the comfortable assurance that a consummation which would be fatal to both parties needs all eternity for its achievement. More impatient than his master, Schelling boldly identifies the two under the names of "object" and "subject," and the world goes on as before—indeed, according to him, always has gone on precisely because it always knew that there was no difference between them. Schopenhauer, after disdainfully rejecting the systems of his fellow metaphysicians as so many absurdities, sets up a new absolute, which, after willing itself out of nonentity into existence, learns from sad experience the desirability of willing itself back from existence into nonentity again. And to this contradiction, which lies at the very basis of his system, he adds another not less serious contradiction in working out its details. While asserting the substantial identity of all our individual wills with one another and with the universal will of which they are so many partial manifestations, he yet limits the self-negating power of each will to itself. On entering into Nirvâna I redeem myself alone; the infinite anguish of the world goes on as before. Yet at the same time the short cut of suicide is barred to me by the solemn warning that self-inflicted death amounts to a rebellious reaffirmation of the will which it seems to deny.

This immanent self-contradiction of German thought, although it first became open and scandalous in Kant's criticism, is older than Kant. To go no further back, it already afflicts the monadology of Leibnitz. Those minute individual existences of which the world consists have no

windows opening on the world, nor do they receive influences of any kind from one another; but all go on developing at the same pace, each by virtue of an evolutionary principle peculiar to itself. Thus, although every monad reflects the universe at an angle of its own, it has no reason to believe that this phantasmagoria represents an objective reality, for its whole experience would be the same supposing no such reality to be present; and although, by the hypothesis, solipsism is not true, there seems to be no evidence of its untruth.

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

Furthermore, it is necessary, or at least traditional, that a German philosopher, to be original, should not only end by contradicting himself, but that he should begin by contradicting another German, preferentially his own master. And we shall find that the author of *Zarathustra* was quite up to the mark in this respect also. The teacher to whose school he first belonged, and who afterwards became the chief object of his attacks, was Schopenhauer. Nietzsche was twenty years of age and a university student when, in 1865, he first came across the great pessimist's writings, at that

time only in the first dawn of their popularity. What chiefly attracted him seems to have been their high literary merit and the sincerity of their author—a sincerity displayed above all in his attitude towards theology. Schopenhauer really stood no farther from the central beliefs of Christianity than Hegel, if as far; but he never bowed down in the temple of Rimmon to the extent of passing himself off as an orthodox Lutheran or other Churchman of any kind. He venerated the figure of Christ; but there could be no doubt that his metaphysics excluded the notion of a God and of a future life just as much as they excluded the possibility of a happy life on earth. And that was why the bankruptcy of Hegelianism after 1848 left the system of Kant's rival continuator in a position no better than before. For to the pietistic and obscurantist reaction that succeeded the abortive revolution free thought was as hateful under the form of atheistic pessimism as under the form of optimistic pantheism. We are apt to look on Germany as the great emancipator from superstition, and I have already acknowledged the greatness of our own indebtedness to her delivering example; but in this instance, as in the early eighteenth century, she seems to have been led out of darkness by light from the West, by the influence of Buckle and Darwin, and by Renan's *Vie de Jésus,* followed up as this was by Strauss's second *Leben Jesu.* At any rate, a far more liberal tone prevailed in the sixties than in the previous decade; and Schopenhauer's philosophy profited by the new spirit, which it also stimulated in the highest degree, to achieve a rapid and dazzling success.

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

At a much later period our immoralist loved to maintain that the sincerity which, as a religious habit, revolts against the profession of a false religion is, as a moral habit, destructive of the morality which is no more than a convention. And he also maintained, in contemptuous reference to George Eliot, that to believe in Christian morality apart from Christianity is a weak inconsistency.[2] It was both ungracious and unjust to taunt our

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

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

great ethical novelist with being characteristically English or womanish in this respect; for Schopenhauer, who was Continental and virile, had made the same mistake, if mistake it is, and Nietzsche had at first followed his master's example. Accepting pessimism to this extent, that the search for happiness must be abandoned as a chimera, in his work on *The Origin of Tragedy* (published 1872), he tells us that a chief note of tragic culture is "an attempt to make the sufferings of the world our own by an effort of sympathetic love."[1] Greek tragedy preaches a gospel of universal harmony, whereby everyone feels himself not merely united, fused, and reconciled, but absolutely one with his neighbour.[2] And in a subsequent work on *The Study of History*, among the redeeming representatives of humanity, he names not only those who have passed through existence in pride and strength, or in profound meditation, but also those who have come "to pity and help."[3] Later again he tells us that "there is not enough goodness and love in the world to let them be wasted on imaginary objects."[4] And he had previously made the perfectly sane and sufficiently obvious remark that goodness and pity fortunately do not depend on the decay and growth of religion; although "*practical* morality will suffer by its collapse." At the same time, this dependence of action on religious sanctions deprives it, in his opinion, of all ethical value.[5]

Returning to Schopenhauer, it is noticeable that Nietzsche accepted his teaching not only on the

[1] *WW.*, I., p. 128. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 24. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 297.
[4] *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, p. 129; *WW.*, II., 133.
[5] *WW.*, X., p. 214.

ethical, but also on the metaphysical, side. His work on *The Origin of Tragedy* is a bold attempt to read the philosophy of pessimism into the Greek tragic drama. It arose, according to him, from a combination of the worship of Dionysus with the worship of Apollo. The one god represents the element of Will and the other the element of Representation in his master's great work. Dionysus stands for "that original and eternal pain which is the sole substance of the world," "the true reality and primordial One with its eternal suffering and self-contradiction, seeking for deliverance by the creation of beautiful appearance—the Apolline element of Greek tragedy."[1]

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

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

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

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

Unfortunately, the moral end of genius has, so far, been very imperfectly fulfilled. "Artists undoubtedly create their works for the benefit of other men; and yet none will ever understand and love their works as they did." It would have been a better arrangement had the relation been reversed,

so that the effect should far exceed the cause.[1] Such blunders are, however, to be expected. "Nature always wills the common good, but is incapable of choosing the best means for that purpose. She shoots philosophers like arrows at the human race, in the hope that they will strike and stick somewhere"—whereas they are mostly wasted.[2]

Nature, then, must be taught better—she must receive a more intelligent direction; and here morality intervenes, although not quite according to the highest ideals now prevalent. "The goal of human endeavour has hitherto been sought in the happiness of all men or of the majority, or in the development of great communities; and under this false persuasion people will be found ready enough to give their lives for the State; whereas they would hesitate to make the sacrifice were it demanded, not by the State, but by an individual. As if value and significance were to be determined by counting heads!" A much mistaken view, thinks our author, with the old bias of a university teacher. "Humanity must be ever working at the production of great individuals: that, and nothing else, is its task......a consideration suggested by every species of animal and plant."[3] In our case education must supplement nature. Young men should be taught to compensate for their own imperfection and failure by contributing to the development of something higher and more human than themselves.[4] But the hope thus awakened soon droops. "It is hard to produce such a state

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

of mind, for love alone can inspire the consciousness of one's own imperfection ; and love cannot be taught."[1] Indeed, things are tending in a directly opposite direction. Writing in 1874, Nietzsche tells us that "the world was never more worldly, never poorer in love and goodness."[2] A common view is to value culture as a means for procuring its possessor the greatest possible amount of earthly happiness.[3] Or again, the selfishness of the State demands that all culture shall be made instrumental to its service and aggrandisement. Christianity in particular, which began as one of the purest expressions of the impulse towards culture, "has been diverted from the production of saints into a means for the manufacture of useful citizens."[4] Science offers no help; it is "cold, dry, loveless ; it ignores the deep sense of dissatisfaction and longing."[5] And "such is the hatred for originality now prevailing that Socrates could not have lived among us, or at least not lived to seventy."[6]

It will be seen from the above extracts that, up to the age of thirty at least, Nietzsche still accepted those altruistic ideals which in later life he was never weary of denouncing. In this respect he followed Schopenhauer, who contrived to combine the most absolute disinterestedness in theory with the most absolute selfishness in practice. A really consistent pessimism would remain neutral as between egoism and altruism, since the furtherance of life is of equally little value to myself and to others. But Nietzsche had never been a pessimist in the complete or Hindoo sense of cultivating the

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

will not to live, regarding such an aspiration as self-contradictory, or at least unthinkable. And, apart from logic, his personal experiences were such as to disgust him with the master's ideal of pleasure as what alone makes life worth living. While still a student at Leipzig the Prussian military law obliged him to serve for a time in the artillery. His career as a gunner did not last long, for a rupture of the thoracic muscles, caused by the attempt to mount a restive horse, resulted in an illness that incapacitated him from continued service in the ranks, and a short attendance with the ambulance corps before Metz in 1870 had a still more ruinous effect on his constitution. But even so much of a soldier's life, chiming in well with the aristocratic and fighting instincts of his Polish blood, gave the young professor a new idea of the possible value of life. If existence yielded no happiness, it still afforded the joy of victoriously resisting the assaults of pain; and from that heroic conflict, continued in after years through intense agonies of suffering, he came forth an optimist, continuing in his faith to the end.

Hellenic studies no doubt contributed to his conversion. In his first work, when still under the influence of Wagner and Schopenhauer, Nietzsche had falsely interpreted Greek tragedy as a pessimistic manifesto, and, by a strangely perverted reading of literary history, he had ascribed its dissolution to the opposite teaching of Socrates and Euripides. We have already come across a passage indicating a much more favourable view of Socrates; and in another passage, written about 1877, a good time is looked forward to when Xenophon's *Memorabilia*

will be substituted for the Bible as a manual of rational morality.[1] Earlier still the age had been referred for its models to the old Greek world, "so great, so natural, and so human."[2] It was through the higher power of their moral nature that the Greeks were victorious over all other civilisations.[3]

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

[1] *WW.*, III., p. 248.
[2] *WW.*, I., p. 352.
[3] *Ibid.*, 384.
[4] *Leben*, II., p. 857.

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

It will be remembered that in embracing pessimism our moralist had also embraced the ethical ideal of universal benevolence associated with it by Schopenhauer and the Hindoos; and how, under the concurrent influence of Wagner and the Greeks, he had sought to concentrate the passion for disinterested self-devotion on the systematic culture of genius. Unfortunately, the only two great men that he recognised as such in recent history had both proved false guides; and this seems in the first instance to have made him distrust genius as a social danger. Its worship,

he remarks, is a survival of the adoration formerly given to gods, and to kings as their representatives. "The elevation of individuals into superhuman beings encourages the idea that large sections of the people are baser and more barbarous than they really are."[1] Genius even "acts as an enemy of truth by keeping up an intense ardour of conviction and discouraging the cautious and modest tone of science";[2] while "never to have changed one's opinions is the sign of having remained in a belated stage of culture."[3]

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

Wagner was intensely German, intensely anti-French; and Nietzsche, when he wrote about the

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

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

In the writings of the second period the references to England are particularly complimentary. She is "now [1877-1878] unmistakably ahead of all other nations in philosophy, natural science, history, discoveries, and the spread of culture." This is due to the strength of individual character, resulting from a long national inheritance, enjoyed by her great men of science, and from their independence of learned association.[3] Furthermore, "we must allow English writers the credit of having

[1] *WW.*, I., pp. 164-65. [2] *WW.*, XI., pp. 94-95.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

made admirable contributions towards an ideal scientific literature for the people. *Their* handbooks are the work of their most distinguished scholars—men of whole-minded, rich, and generous natures."[1] Nor is it only among men of learning that this strength of character is exhibited. "English artisans work hard at their trade not merely for profit but for power, and not merely for power but for the utmost freedom and individual distinction."[2] Schopenhauer is now praised for the appreciation of hard facts, the determination to be clear and reasonable, that often make him seem so much of an Englishman and so little of a German."[3]

Everything written at this time bears what on the Continent is called a positivist impress. Nietzsche does not seem to have read Comte, but he refers admiringly to him as "that great and honest Frenchman with whom no German or English thinker can compare for comprehension and mastery of the exact sciences," while totally rejecting the religious and constructive element of his teaching.[4] For himself our philosopher professes to know little about the results of science; "but that little has been inexhaustibly serviceable in clearing up obscurities and abolishing former modes of thought and action."[5] As the quintessence of our positive knowledge three propositions are stated: (1) There is no God; (2) there is no moral world—*i.e.,* no retribution for good or evil conduct; (3) good and evil are determined by the

[1] *WW.*, III., p. 102.
[2] *WW.*, II., p. 357.
[3] *WW.*, V., p. 130.
[4] *WW.*, IV., pp. 348–49.
[5] *WW.*, XI., p. 402.

ideals and directions of life, the best part of these being inherited, but with a possibility that the resulting judgments may be falsified by the demands of our actual ideals.[1] With the disappearance of theism pessimism ceases to have any meaning. The world is neither good nor bad; such notions apply only to human beings, and in their ordinary acceptation cannot rightly be applied even to these.[2] For "free will is an illusion";[3] "that intelligible freedom" under cover of which Schopenhauer sought to rehabilitate moral responsibility is a fable;[4] and "the thing in itself" an illegitimate inference from phenomena.[5] In fact, Schopenhauer's metaphysic was simply a revival of mediæval Christianity, due to want of scientific knowledge.[6]

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

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

composition easy for himself and fruitful of easy reading for others; but, combined with the passion of the higher German intellect for self-contradiction, it involves him in hopeless confusions of thought.

In accordance with this mental habit the destructive criticism of morality is interspersed with appeals to moral motives and standards, or is even carried on with their aid. As a conclusive argument against unselfishness we are told that "to be always acting for others is almost as mischievous as to act against them: it is a forcible intrusion on their sphere of action.......Not to think of others, but always to be acting most strictly for one's self, is a high sort of morality. The world is imperfect because so much is done for others."[1] An ex-gunner might have remembered that the way to hit a distant mark is not to aim straight at it. A false and fussy altruism is not the alternative to taking exclusive care of number one. "Love mankind! But I say, rejoice in mankind, and therefore help to produce the sort of people in whom we can rejoice! The right morality is to seek out and encourage those who delight us, and to fly from the others. Let the wretched, the misshapen, and the degenerate die out. They should not be kept alive at any price."[2] Our fastidious friend must have come across many unlovely sights when serving in the ambulance corps before Metz; we may assume that they did not impress him as a reason for shirking his duty. It may be said that wounded soldiers are frequently strong, healthy men, capable of returning to their work after

[1] *WW.*, XI., pp. 310–11. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 313, 314.

proper treatment. But the same is true of many patients in our civil hospitals whose services would be lost to the community but for modern philanthropy. No hard-and-fast line can be drawn between those cases and the case of those whose continued existence is altogether undesirable. What we know is that the passion of pity, on the whole, subserves race-interests, and that it cannot be kept up at full strength unless, as with other passions, there is enough to overflow and go to waste. It is a question whether Nietzsche himself was not a degenerate; it is certain that he had to give up his work as a professor, owing to ill-health, in a few years; and that his literary work could hardly have been continued without the help of a small retiring pension from the university. Let me add that he had been a singularly devoted teacher, among other things gratuitously preparing students "from the interior of Switzerland" for their examinations in philosophy. In private life his character was gentle, kind, and sympathetic—to a greater extent, indeed, than he personally would have liked it to be—and his attacks on altruism were, perhaps, inspired by a consciousness of the injury it had done his health. We may also attribute to his unfortunate personal experiences the prophecy that hygienics will be a prime interest in the society of the future.[1]

Throughout the second, or scientific period, morality continues a paramount preoccupation. There is no antithesis between increase of knowledge and increase of human welfare; on the

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

contrary, they are mutually subservient. Faith in the supreme utility of science and of its possessors should take the place of faith in mere numbers.[1] But the observations out of which science is built are themselves conditioned by sincerity and rectitude. "Even in the region of sense-perception there are none but moral experiences."[2] "The history of science exhibits the victory of noble impulses; there is much morality concerned in its pursuit."[3] "It is a mistake to estimate philosophers as artists, leaving out of sight their justice and self-control."[4] "Unfortunately we shall never know the best thing about genius, the self-control and self-discipline exercised in bringing its powers into play."[5] "Hurrah for physical science, and a double hurrah for the honesty that forces us to study it!"[6]

As may be gathered from some of the passages just quoted, general utility is the end of moral action. But morality need not therefore be impersonal. On the contrary, we best serve our true advantage by moral action.[7] Benevolence and beneficence make up the good man—but they should begin with himself.[8] The greatest wonders of antique morality, Epictetus for instance, knew nothing about that altruism which is so fashionable nowadays.[9] Nietzsche as a professional Hellenist was fascinated by Greek ethics, and the influence of its masters is shown in more than one reference. Epicurus counts among the greatest of men;[10] we have not advanced beyond him, but his

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

dominion has been infinitely extended.[1] Aristotle is not named; but we find his doctrine of moral habit passionately reasserted as against Luther's doctrine of justification by faith.[2] And it is made a charge against our system of classical education that we are exercised in no single antique virtue as the ancients were exercised in it.[3] As the consolations of Christianity evaporate the consolations of ancient philosophy are revived in new splendour.[4]

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

All this sounds commonplace enough to a reader of Bentham and Mill; just as Descartes and Montesquieu may have sounded commonplace to the readers of Bacon and Locke. And when Nietzsche proclaimed the supremacy of England in

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

philosophy it was probably to English ethics that he referred. Universalistic hedonism is not, I think, anywhere stated in terms, but its elements are freely scattered through his notes. There is, he tells us, no instinct of self-preservation; every action interpreted as evidence of such may be explained by the search for agreeable and the avoidance of disagreeable sensations. Speaking generally, we only wish for objects because they are associated with agreeable states of feeling in ourselves.[1] Men might be estimated by the degree of happiness they are capable of experiencing or communicating.[2] One of the charges brought against "morality" is that it has represented self-delight as offensive, self-torment as acceptable to the deity.[3] On the other hand, culture is an expression of happiness.[4] The joy felt in absorbing new ideas should be carried so far as to outweigh all other kinds of pleasure.[5] Noble and magnanimous natures experience some feelings of pleasure and pain so strongly that the intellect is either silenced or made instrumental to them.[6] Nor is happiness by any means so rare as pessimists would have us believe. The world abounds in good will; and the constant little everyday manifestations of this impulse, taking the form of good humour, friendliness, and unaffected courtesy, contribute enormously to the happiness of life.[7] "It needs a life full of pain and renunciation to teach us that existence is saturated with honey."[8] In short, "there is no life without

[1] *WW.*, XI., pp. 253 and 292.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 367.
[3] P. 263.
[4] P. 316.
[5] P. 403.
[6] *WW.*, V., pp. 39, 40.
[7] *WW.*, II., p. 71.
[8] *WW.*, XI., p. 154.

pleasure; the fight for pleasure is the fight for life."[1] This view does not exclude morality, for each one is called good or evil according to the way in which he carries on the fight; and that depends on the degree and quality of his intellect[2]—a saying elucidated by the remark made elsewhere that no honey is sweeter than the honey of knowledge; so that he who has spent his life in its acquisition first discovers in old age how well he has obeyed the voice of Nature, the Nature that governs all things by pleasure.[3]

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

Assuming happiness, understood as pleasure and the absence of pain, to be desired by all—to be, indeed, the only thing desirable—it would seem to follow that utilitarianism is the only rational method of ethics; and it might have been expected that Nietzsche, speculating as he did under the

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

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

After all, the effort to get rid of a moral law speedily results in its rehabilitation. For, as a means for increasing the number of those happy accidents on which future developments depend, it

[1] *WW.*, IV., pp. 102 *sq.* [2] XI., p. 233.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 238 and 330.

is recommended that we should maintain the utmost variety of conditions under which human beings can exist;[1] and this would surely necessitate a code of social justice to begin with, as Spencer pointed out long ago in *Social Statics*, and as Professor Juvalta, of Pavia, is never weary of insisting on at the present day, although his theory, unlike Spencer's, is penetrated with socialistic ideas.

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

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

Not long after abandoning the cultivation of genius as a universal end, Nietzsche seems to have taken up and substituted for it the idea, so prominent in his last period, of breeding a superior race. Here, again, the Hellenic influence is prominent. In a fragment dating from 1876 the Greeks are quoted as an example of what may be done in the way of intellectual stimulation by the self-consciousness of such a race in the midst of a barbarous population.[4] English science and philosophy, for which so much enthusiasm is expressed, would no

[1] P. 239.
[2] *WW.*, II., pp. 334 *sq.*
[3] *WW.*, XI., p. 387.
[4] P. 33.

doubt act powerfully in the same direction through the doctrine of evolution, which is known to have interested Nietzsche intensely at this time. In this connection much has been made of his debt to Darwin; but, as he never understood the theory of natural selection, it seems more likely that the decisive influence came from Spencer, whose psychology he certainly accepted to the extent of describing knowledge as a nervous modification produced by the action of external objects on our organs of sense, without any co-operation from the mind.[1] Now, Spencer from the beginning was interested in evolution much less as an explanation of the past than as a promise of the future—as a pledge that human life might rise to a far more perfect harmony between organism and environment than any yet attained; and on this side his philosophy would appeal strongly to Nietzsche, as also on its individualistic side, with which we have seen him to be in complete agreement. Indeed, he brings the two into direct association by asking: "Is not every individual an attempt to reach a higher species than man?"[2] It is here, rather than in the youthful worship of genius, which his disgust with Wagner led him to repudiate, that we can lay our finger on the genesis of the superman.

It has been disputed whether the superman was intended by his prophet to stand for a new animal species, or for a new and improved variety of human being, or, finally, for a sporadic type of individual excellence, cropping up occasionally in the existing state of civilisation. So far as the

[1] P. 275. [2] P. 238.

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

Napoleon, in fact, embodied the formidable alternative confronting us at the present day. The human race represents a transitional stage of unstable equilibrium. We must either go back to the brute or on to the superman.[2] And the choice is not doubtful. Our very first article of

[1] *WW.*, VI., p. 133, and VII., p. 337. [2] *WW.*, XII., p. 210.

faith is the duty of not relapsing into a savage and anti-social state.[1] Therefore, the new beings can only be conceived as a multitude; goodness can only be developed among equals.[2]

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

[1] *WW.*, XII., p. 52. [2] P. 210.

in the author's other works, where, as Cassandra says, the oracle looks out not like a bride behind her veil, but like wind-driven waves against a rising sun. And foremost among these is the idea of a new species, a superman to be evolved from man, or, in the still more telling phrase once let fall, a super-race from the race.[1]

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

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

At no time of life did his Hellenism make Nietzsche an admirer of the modern State; and at this period he positively foams at the mouth with

[1] *WW.*, VI., p. 111. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 84.
[3] P. 87. [4] P. 86.

hatred for it. The people and the herd may be fit objects of faith and love; never the State, although it impudently claims to be the people, which is not deceived, but hates it as "a sin against morals and rights." There are many languages of good and evil, but it lies in them all. "All that it says is a lie, and all that it possesses has been stolen." Even those who vanquished the old god fall a prey to the snares of the new idol that promises to give them all if they will worship it; "so it buys the splendour of your virtue and the gaze of your proud eyes." The State must cease to exist before real manhood can begin; much more, before the way to the superman can be prepared.[1]

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

Evidently, however, what Nietzsche most dreads and detests is not the mischief done by the modern State in suppressing individualism and favouring the survival of degenerates, but the fact that as a real, living, visible, attractive unity it enters into formidable competition with the glorified individuality of his imaginary superman. Michelet has pointed out that the giant Gargantua was nothing less than the New Monarchy of the Renaissance; and one has only to think of him as coming into conflict with Cæsar Borgia, whom Nietzsche

[1] Pp. 69-72.

regards as the highest individual product of that age, to see which party would win. Indeed, the Duke of Valentinois, like another and greater Cæsar, was, from his German admirer's point of view, a traitor to the individualistic cause, the great ambition of his life having been to establish the New Monarchy in the Pontifical States, if not, as Machiavelli hoped, over the whole of a reunited Italy. Neither he nor Alcibiades nor any other of the same class has ever been content to "exist beautifully"; nor do they seem inclined to tolerate the existence of any other such paragons by their side.

Here, then, at first starting, we find the idea of the superman afflicted with an immanent self-contradiction in the best Hegelian style. Conceived as an individual, he at once establishes a levelling despotism, thus sublating the very type that he represents. Conceived as a class, he perishes by internecine strife.[1] And close behind this comes a second self-contradiction, afflicting the means proposed, or rather suggested, for bringing the ideal into existence. As already mentioned, they consist in an appeal to moral motives, in the proposal to create a new enthusiasm of humanity, uniting and directing towards a single end all the tremendous forces that now work for a multitude of conflicting ends. Now, this demand assumes the existence in the human race, as a whole, of such passionate self-devotion, combined with such cool, unerring judgment, as no example of has been found in the

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

past. For it must be a devotion capable of sacrificing every other end to the achievement of this one end—an end, too, of which as yet there has been no experience, and an end involving, as no other thing sought after has ever involved, the total disappearance of the race that has brought it about. And the judgment called into play for that purpose must find the means for evolving a new animal species — a task to which human ingenuity, operating on the most passive and plastic materials, has never yet found itself equal. Surely, a race so splendidly endowed with the noblest capacities of intellect, heart, and will as to answer Zarathustra's call would deserve a better fate than such self-annulment, would itself have anticipated the superman, and would require all the running it could make to keep in the same place.

It so happens that we can lay our finger on the initial error whence these monstrous consequences arose. Much as Nietzsche hated Germany, he hated England more; and with the rather discreditable object, I fear, of depreciating England and her great naturalist, he tries to show that without Hegel there would have been no Darwin. For, according to him, the German philosopher, by teaching that specific notions were evolved out of one another, prepared the scientific intellect of Europe to entertain the idea of organic development.[1] Historically there is, of course, no foundation for such a claim. Evolutionism was hereditary in the Darwin family, and goes back to a time before Hegel; while Hegel himself took the idea

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

of development from Schelling, who in turn owed it to the naturalists of his time. What I wish to point out, however, is not the historical error, but the profound misconception of organic evolution that it betrays. Hegel's theory of logical development is determined by the idea that the lower notion suffers from an inherent self-contradiction, in consequence of which it falls to pieces and spontaneously gives birth to the higher notion. With Darwin, on the contrary, the decay and death of the old species are not the antecedent, but the consequence, of its having given birth to the new species, with which it is unable to compete. And this very internecine strife is another point of distinction between the two processes. Hegel's notions only perish in an ideal sense. In the actual life of logic they survive and continue to play a useful part in the economy of thought.

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

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

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

[1] *WW.*, VII., p. 223. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 184.

Throughout his second period Nietzsche, besides being a utilitarian in the wide sense of judging actions by their consequences, had also been a hedonist—that is, he had considered happiness (or pleasure) as a universally desired and absolutely desirable thing, although at the same time as a thing too indefinite to be made a standard for the unification of human life. The desire of domination, on the other hand, is mentioned in a note bearing the date of 1880 as often a symptom of weakness.[1] Within a year we find the first intimation of his final doctrine, that power is the *summum bonum* and love of power the universal motive, in an aphorism setting forth (for the rest without an attempt to demonstrate it) that, whether we give pleasure or pain to others, it is solely for the purpose of satisfying our love of power.[2] A little later still, Zarathustra proclaims power as a new virtue, a new standard of good and evil.[3] It is not so very new, being borrowed, as usual without acknowledgment, from an English philosopher, Hobbes; and besides that Nietzsche, in his later writings, especially in the uncompleted *Wille zur Macht*, assumes that power is what everyone really wants and has always wanted. Everyone—with a single striking exception. "Men do not strive for happiness—only Englishmen";[4] though elsewhere our people are associated, in this contemptible pursuit, with "shopkeepers, Christians, cows, women, and other democrats."[5] Nevertheless, "every healthy morality is dominated by an instinct of life";[6] "an action imposed by the vital

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

instinct is proved to be right by the pleasure it gives";[1] "everything good is instinctive, and therefore easy, necessary, free";[2] "pleasure is a feeling of power; to exclude the emotions is to exclude those conditions which give the feeling of power, and therefore of pleasure at its highest."[3] Herbert Spencer would not have dissented in principle from this statement; but then he would not, like his critic, have distinguished between happiness and pleasure, which two other Englishmen, Wordsworth and Ruskin, would have identified with "vital feelings of delight." Can Nietzsche have been ignorant that the gospel of health, with its accompanying condemnation of the sickly and helpless, had been preached before him in *The Data of Ethics?*

On the other hand, Spencer would have emphatically dissented from such a statement as that "egoism belongs to the essence of the distinguished soul; I mean the immovable belief that other beings must be naturally subject to a being like us, and have to sacrifice themselves to it; a relationship which the distinguished soul accepts as founded on the primary law of things."[4] Nor would he have allowed that the conquest and spoliation of the weaker by the stronger was the very principle of society and of life itself.[5] But he might have fairly challenged the Prussian philosopher to reconcile these crudities with the admonition given elsewhere: "Learn betimes to discard the supposed individual; to discover the errors of the ego; to feel cosmically about the me

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

and thee."[1] Or, again, why should Zarathustra compare unfavourably the vulgar who want to live *gratis* with men like himself, who are always thinking what best thing they can give in exchange for the life they have received, and who condemn the wish to enjoy without giving enjoyment in return?[2]

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

If Nietzsche ever contemplated the idea of evolving a higher animal species than man, he soon gave it up. His last work, *The Anti-Christian,* puts the problem quite clearly, as, not "what is to succeed man?" but—"what kind of man ought to be desired and bred as the more valuable, the more worthy of life, the more certain of a future?"[5] And he proceeds to state, in direct contradiction to Zarathustra, that the desirable type has often presented itself in history, but never

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

as the result of a conscious effort, while the effect of prevalent opinions has long been to repress or extinguish it. Two agencies in particular have hitherto worked with fatal effect in this direction—morality and Christianity. He therefore applies himself with a holy zeal to the destruction of both, his intellect being indeed much better fitted for the work of pulling down than for the work of building up.

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

weakness, occupied the highest place, while the virtues of their betters were disparaged, their rightful claims on the labourers treated as wicked spoliation, and their favoured position assailed with vindictive envy.

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

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

the interest of the masses; a pestilent doctrine which, in company with an equally morbid asceticism, became more or less current in all the later schools of Greek philosophy.

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

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

As we learn from his letters, Nietzsche was in early youth a careful student of Theognis;[2] and his theory of the two moralities, servile and

[1] *WW.*, VII., pp. 224 and 307. [2] *Briefe*, I., p. 2.

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

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

evidence that resentment flourished to the full as much among the hawks as among the lambs.

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

As a young professor at Basel Nietzsche fully accepted Grote's vindication of the Sophists, although he failed to see that a far better case than Grote's might be made out for them as ethical reformers. In his latest phase he peremptorily, and without reason given, goes back on the old view, glorifying them as apostles of brute force.[1] In this connection also he accepts the Melian Dialogue—that masterpiece of tragic irony—as an expression of what Thucydides himself thought about public morality. There is no direct reference to Plato's Gorgias—a wise abstinence; for perhaps it would have involved him in the necessity of finding an answer to the unanswerable Socratic argument against Callicles, the real author of Nietzsche's distinction between gregarious and egregious morality. For, after appealing to natural

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

law in justification of the claim put forward by the superior man to subjugate and despoil the inferior, this cynical aristocrat has to admit that the many, by banding together, may and do gain the upper hand so decisively as to impose their standards on him. Callicles tries to get out of the difficulty by falling back on qualitative distinctions as constituting the right to rule; but this admission readmits moral values into the discussion, with the result that their supremacy over the whole of life has to be conceded.

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

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

Whether his charges have or have not been made out is a question irrelevant to the present

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

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

At this rate, philosophers, whose chief business it is to investigate truth, might be expected to receive the news of their only guarantor's death with some dismay. On the contrary, they show an exultation which, in the circumstances, strikes one as rather indecent. "Our whole heart overflows with gratitude, wonder, and hopeful expectation."[2] Zarathustra is one of this jubilant band; but, then, he sees no connection between theism and intellectual honesty *(Redlichkeit)*; on the contrary, he

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

describes the latter as the latest born among the virtues, and hated, as knowledge also is hated, by those who have God on the brain. "Good," or what we call "goody," people "never tell the truth."[1] A note dating from the same period suggests the rather awkward compromise that we should have no conscience in respect to truth and error, in order that we may be able again to spend life in the service of truth and of the intellectual conscience.[2]

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

[1] *WW.*, VI., pp. 44 and 293.
[2] *WW.*, XII., p. 63.
[3] P. 153.
[4] P. 274 *sq.*
[5] *Leben*, II., p. 775.
[6] *W. z. M.*, p. 120.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 245.

it works—which is an absolute want of intellectual honesty."[1]

On the whole, it would seem as if this extreme regard for veracity were only used as a means for discrediting religion, morality, and the Socratic philosophy. And their defenders might plausibly allege that they only used deception—when they used it—for a good end; that is to say, for an augmentation of vital power. "Everything for the army," as Colonel Henry said. It would have been more consistent, not to say honest, on the part of Nietzsche had he attacked the popular creed simply on the ground that it lowered the vitality of the species. Even on so narrow a basis the attack could not have been worked without an appeal to disinterested motives; in other words, without an appeal to morality. For a selfish religionist might well prefer the gratification of his mystical cravings, and a priest his ambition, to the health of the race. But here also our critic has thrown away his whole case by two most serious admissions. We have first a frank acknowledgment that "there is nothing diseased about the gregarious human being as such; on the contrary, he is of inestimable value, but incapable of self-guidance, and therefore in need of a shepherd, a need perfectly understood by priests."[2] "Petty virtues are needed for petty people";[3] and when the lower strata of the population are decadent "a religion of self-suppression, patience, and mutual help may be of the highest value."[4] Therefore, we "require that gregarious morality should be held absolutely sacred."[5] And,

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

secondly, we find a parallel acknowledgment that Christianity deserves great praise as "the genuine religion of the herd."[1] "The continued existence of the Christian ideal is most desirable. My object in making war on that chlorotic ideal was not to destroy it, but to put an end to its tyranny, and to make room for new and robuster ideals."[2] "Common people are only endurable when they are pious."[3] They are not likely to remain pious long where books like *The Anti-Christian* circulate freely.

In England we have had a good supply of those "robuster ideals," for which the German moralist wishes to find room; nor, by all accounts, are they wanting in America; yet he does not seem to have looked to either country for his models. His enormous self-esteem would have suffered by such a reference. It also affected his conception of the superman, who, in Nietzsche's last writings, no longer figures as a new species destined to succeed and displace the human species, but rather as a superior race, like the Greeks—with himself, one may suppose, as the most conspicuous example of their perfections. At first supermen are thought of, not as ruling over the inferior race, but as living apart from them, "like the gods of Epicurus."[4] But this view was soon found impracticable, and abandoned. Throughout the *Wille zur Macht* nothing is contemplated but a new aristocracy, a ruling race, whose sole business will, however, not be to rule, offering splendid examples of beauty, strength, and intelligence for the delectation of

[1] *WW.*, XIV., p. 336.
[2] *Leben*, II., p. 744.
[3] *WW.*, XII., p. 206.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 211.

themselves and of the lower orders.[1] Owing, presumably, to their wise administration, the labourers are to live as the middle class live now; but the higher caste above them will be distinguished for its abstinence.[2] This *élite* naturally falls into two divisions: a small body of supremely intellectual men performing the highest functions and leading the most perfect life, and, below them, an executive of soldiers and judges to relieve them of the rough work of government; while men of science and the majority of artists will find their appropriate place among the labouring classes.[3]

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

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

[1] *W. z. M.*, p. 414; *Leben*, p. 798.
[2] *WW.*, XII., p. 214.
[3] *WW.*, VIII., pp. 302 *sq.*
[4] *W. z. M.*, pp. 234 and 244; *WW.*, VIII., p. 168.

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

So far there is nothing in this philosophy incompatible with the assumption that great individualities are the highest products of nature, and that their production is the worthiest object of human endeavour. Of course, it always remains open for Socrates, Plato, the present reviewer, or any other wretched decadent, to ask why we should scorn delights and live laborious days in order to promote the evolution of some future Cæsar Borgia. Supposing, however, that we accept the transvaluation of all values to that extent, a remorseless logic will impel us to go further, and make a united Italy, which was Borgia's own ambition, or a united Europe, which, according to Nietzsche, was Napoleon's ambition, or, finally, a united world, the object of our activity. I can quite imagine and sympathise with a valuation that counts human personality as the supreme thing, that says with Heracleitus, "one man is worth ten thousand if he be the best." Only Nietzsche bars himself out

from that valuation by his repeated assurances that personality is an illusion.[1] And it was by no freak of paradox that he took up this position. It was an essential part of his antitheistic polemic. According to him, the ascription of phenomena to a personal cause arises from the fallacious grammatical abstraction of subject and predicate, noun and verb. There is really no such break in the continuous stream of becoming. Nor is theism the only result of this mischievous error. By a still more fatal perversion, gregarious and Christian moralists, in their vindictive hostility to the rich and powerful, coined the false notion of personal responsibility, on the strength of which their oppressors were to be visited with everlasting punishment.[2]

If I may borrow an illustration from Schopenhauer, Nietzsche is like the magician who sent his familiar spirit to draw water, but knew no spell that could stop him, with the result that he and the whole country were drowned. Our modern Callicles has reformed himself, discarding the brutal licentiousness of his prototype, and even adopting the passwords of Plato's *Republic*. But it is all in vain. The terrible Socratic dialectic works on and on to his utter and overwhelming confusion. He appeals to Power, and to Power let him go. He invokes a superman, who will be found in the modern State; that State so decried by Zarathustra as the stronghold of the weak and defenceless. "By value is to be understood the conditions under which complex vital structures

[1] See, among other passages, *W. z. M.*, p. 369.
[2] *WW.*, VII., pp. 327-31.

are maintained and exalted."[1] So says morality also; but above the individual, however gifted, she places the State, and above the State a universal society whose object is the greatest good of all its members; a good which for purposes of convenience may be variously expressed in terms of pleasure, of life, of health, or of power, but in which the good of the parts ultimately coincides and identifies itself with the good of the whole.

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

[1] *Leben*, p. 790. [2] *WW.*, XIV., p. 312.

WHAT IS AGNOSTICISM?

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

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

Thus, even if Professor Huxley had supplied a definition briefly and satisfactorily indicating the position of the school of thought to which he belonged, and if he had steadily held to that

definition through life, the question, "What is now meant by Agnosticism?" must sooner or later have come up for reconsideration. And I will proceed to show, from Huxley's recorded utterances on the subject, that such a definition is, unfortunately, not forthcoming.

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

Hutton was not remarkable for the accuracy of his printed statements; and one might hesitate to make Huxley responsible for such slovenly phraseology as is here put into his mouth, had not the quotation been published during his lifetime, and suffered to pass uncontradicted as recording in a monumental work the exact expression of his opinion. Anyhow, the definition will not hold water. A leak is sprung by the introduction of the qualification "material" affixed to "phenomena." No one knew better than Huxley that there are non-material phenomena also—mental, spiritual, or whatever we are to call them; in short, thought, feeling, and volition. Are we, then, to conclude that an Agnostic may admit the existence

of something "beyond and behind" these? And, if so, what are his reasons for drawing a line of distinction between the two classes of phenomena? Again, limiting ourselves to material phenomena, does an Agnostic, as such, necessarily exclude the atomic theory and the undulatory theory from the domain of knowledge, or does he count the supposed atoms and ether among phenomena? As to the altar at Athens, of course anything may suggest anything else; but one cannot help noting that Huxley went a long step further than the Athenians. They gave practical evidence of their conviction that the god to whom the altar was dedicated existed, although of his attributes they were wholly ignorant. Our Agnostic, on the contrary, does not know, and holds that there is no possibility of knowing, whether a First Cause exists or not. And, what is still more remarkable, Herbert Spencer, the acknowledged chief of the Agnostic school, could not, under this definition, claim to be considered an Agnostic at all. So far from declaring the existence of anything behind material phenomena to be unknown and unknowable, Spencer proclaimed, as our supreme certainty, the existence of "an Unconditioned Reality without beginning or end," from which all phenomena are derived.[1]

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

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

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

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

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

It will be seen that, logically, this definition has not a note in common with that reported by Hutton. There is here no reference to phenomena, material or otherwise, or to a First Cause, or to the unknown and unknowable. The author may well call his principle one "of great antiquity"; the wonder is that he should have gone out of his way to invent for it a new-fangled name—a name, moreover, which does not by its etymology give the slightest hint of its meaning. Huxley had quite enough Greek scholarship to be aware that the word ἄγνωστος in Greek philosophy bears the sense of "unknowable" as well as of "unknown"; and this was just what

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

made the name derived from it so felicitous a designation for the metaphysical theory recently set forth in the introduction to *First Principles*, and what speedily won for it the unanimous acceptance of the educated classes in England. Assuredly it was accepted as designating—to reverse its author's claim—a creed rather than a method, the extreme application of a principle rather than the principle itself.

For that method, for that principle, proclaimed by Huxley in his later days as what Agnosticism really designated, a name already existed, or at least there was a name which, with a couple of explanations, might have been made to fit it exactly. I mean the word "Rationalism," which certainly has the disadvantage of connoting a certain hostility to theology, but a hostility by no means amounting to that complete rejection which Agnosticism has been supposed to imply. I say "disadvantage," not because I am writing as an advocate of theology—whose pretensions I am not now concerned either to uphold or to impugn—but because it seems to me that principles, from which opposite conclusions continue to be drawn with complete sincerity by thinkers of equal ability, ought not to be given names committing their supporters to either side of the controverted issues. Huxley himself seems to have felt that, in proportion as he widened the meaning of the word "Agnostic," he raised it to a new eminence above the disputed dogmas of the hour. "Agnosticism," he assures us, "has no quarrel with scientific theology."[1] What, then, becomes of his own

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

famous epigram, penned only a few months before: "If Mr. Harrison, like most people, means by 'religion' theology, then in my judgment Agnosticism can be said to be a stage in its evolution only as death may be said to be the final stage in the evolution of life."[1] If the Agnostic has no quarrel with the scientific theologian, it is only in the same sense in which we say that the executioner has no quarrel with his victim.

It need hardly be observed that Huxley's rather weak attempt to back out of his earlier and far more characteristic attitude of mortal enmity to all theology, "scientific" or otherwise, remained without influence on the common use of the word originally created to express that attitude. Launched at first starting in a negative direction, it soon received a new impulse in the same sense, from a steadier, and in this instance a more powerful, hand. In truth, its great success as a party name first dates from an essay entitled "An Agnostic's Apology," contributed by Leslie Stephen to the *Fortnightly Review* in June, 1876. In that deliverance of conscience there was a note of poignant experience that riveted attention, and an accent of sincerity that commanded respect. Here was evidently one to whom, at a supreme crisis, the consolations of theology had once more been offered, and who had angrily flung them aside as not merely illusory, but as adding a new sting to the anguish of bereaved affection. For the rest, Leslie Stephen put the Agnostic case in a nutshell. There are limits to the human intelligence, and

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

theology lies outside those limits. Mansel, in his Bampton Lectures on *The Limits of Religious Thought,* had adopted this position, but had used it to screen the mysteries of orthodox Christianity against Rationalistic criticism. The same principles were then taken up and pushed to their logical conclusion by Herbert Spencer, whom Stephen seems to regard, with justice, as the founder of modern English Agnosticism, and whose presentation, I may add, remains the most complete and systematic form of the doctrine. It must be observed, however, that with Spencer, as with Mansel, though not to the same extent, Agnosticism has a positive side, to which Leslie Stephen does not call attention. The object of his "apology" was not, in fact, to give an exhaustive view of the subject, but rather to retort on believers the charge of giving up the attempt to solve the riddles of existence.

To say that man's intelligence has limits is not to say that within those limits it is impotent. To declare that certain problems are insoluble is not to deny that other problems have been solved, and that many more may be attacked with good hope of success. These are truisms, but apparently they are truisms that need to be occasionally restated and enforced. The vulgar are not quick to draw distinctions; and, hearing that Agnosticism had something to do with not knowing, they took it to imply not so much ignorance of the Absolute as absolute ignorance. Richard Hutton, with his usual inaccuracy, translated it into "a sort of know-nothingism"; and Laurence Oliphant makes a very modern young man, in his novel, *Altiora Peto,*

say to the heroine: "We neither of us know anything or believe anything; in other words, we are both Agnostics." So, also, a very recent writer of high philosophical pretensions, Dr. Percy Gardner, in the opening pages of his *Exploratio Evangelica*, seems to use "Agnostic" and "Sceptic" as synonymous terms. What was said of Huxley's definition may be repeated in this connection. There is no need to coin a new word when there is an old word of the same value in general circulation. But the popular confusion may be turned to good account. From one point of view nothing throws a more vivid light on the meaning of Agnosticism than to contrast it with Scepticism. The ancient Sceptics doubted everything, and were at last driven to the pass of doubting that they doubted. This paradox helps us to understand the logical difficulty of their position. The very notion of doubt would be impossible without the correlative notion of certainty to serve as a standard of comparison. But the notion of certainty can be acquired only by the experience of knowledge. It may be said that our certainties have often turned out to be illusory; but that is only because the standard of knowledge has been raised: our very disillusionment proves that we have a standard still. Here is a law which the Agnostic, unlike the Sceptic, has recognised. He claims to possess knowledge within the limits of experience so abundant in quantity and so good in quality that it furnishes sufficient material for an exhaustive analysis, by which he succeeds, at least to his own satisfaction, in determining the nature and conditions of all knowledge—in framing a concept of knowledge in general. Briefly stated,

the result is this: The whole content of consciousness resolves itself into groups of phenomena arranged according to certain laws of resemblance, difference, co-existence, and succession. These groups and their component parts severally become associated with particular signs, generally called names; and a group is said to be known when the order of its components is accurately reproduced by the order of the signs that denote them.

Agnostics contend that something exists independently of phenomena—that is, independently of our states of consciousness—but a something that cannot be known. Their arguments may be conveniently distributed under three heads. First as regards the material world. Modern science leads us to the conception of multitudinous invisible atoms attracting and repelling one another in various ways, or, as some would prefer to state the case, of minute masses moving towards, or away from, one another. But it seems to be generally admitted that when we talk of forces and atoms, or of mass and motion, we are only using convenient fictions for the purpose of making the phenomena amenable to our methods of calculation. Even supposing force and matter, as we conceive them, to exist independently of our conceptions, we should not know what they are in themselves, nor the reason of their behaviour. We cannot get inside them, nor can our analysis extract anything from their mutual relations, but sequences and co-existences, which, for aught we can tell, might have been of an altogether different description. Still less, if possible, can we explain the existence, as a whole, of the material world. It can neither

be conceived as having been there from all eternity, nor as having had a beginning before which there was nothing, nor as having been created out of nothing by an immaterial cause. Finally, our ignorance on these points altogether precludes the question for what purpose the world exists—excludes even the assumption that it has any purpose whatever.

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

Passing from the objective to the subjective sphere, from material to mental phenomena, the limitations to knowledge make themselves still more painfully felt. Experience shows that our only data, the processes of consciousness, are discontinuous. Never was a more unwarrantable dictum than that "The soul always thinks." *I*, at any rate, do not always think; nor am I interested in an assumed something that vicariously performs that office for me in the hours of unconsciousness, and that, to use Fichte's illustration, is no more myself than is a piece of lava in the moon. If, then, we assume an enduring substance as the supporter of thought and feeling, it must have a possible and very frequently an actual existence apart from these manifestations; that is to say, considered in its

absolute self-existence, it must be unconscious, and therefore inconceivable to us. Equally inconceivable is the materialistic theory that thought and feeling are the products of molecular changes in the nervous tissue; and, even were it conceivable, we should, by accepting it, be thrown back on the ultimate impossibility of interpreting physical phenomena in terms of absolute reality. And, as the essence of mind is unknown, so neither is any complete explanation of its processes forthcoming. Our analysis ends with empirical sequences for which no reason can be given. Equally hopeless is the attempt to account for the origin of consciousness in time. So far as the inhabitants of this planet are concerned, we know that consciousness had a beginning; but we know nothing else. That it came out of mechanical movements, or that it was created by another consciousness, or that it was uncaused, seem to be equally inconceivable alternatives. Thus, if there is a reality behind and beyond consciousness, it must be unknowable; but for the existence of such a reality we have the strongest testimony of consciousness itself.

The third argument for Agnosticism is drawn from considerations of a highly metaphysical character, counting, I think, for much less at the present day than in the middle decades of the last century. We used to be told that the Finite implied an Infinite, the Relative an Absolute, the Conditioned an Unconditioned; that we could not have a distinct consciousness of the one without a vague consciousness of the other; that, while knowledge involves the antithesis of subject and object, it also involves their synthesis in a higher

unity. Perhaps these abstractions will not look so alarming if we approach them from a less dialectical point of view. What we know we know by thinking; and to think is to condition, to limit, to bring into relation. The most universal of all relations is that of subject and object, the knower and the known. The subject-matter of knowledge is the whole content of consciousness; and this, as we have already seen, comes to be arranged under various forms which it is the business of the intellect to recognise, some states of consciousness being referred to an external world, and the remainder to our own mind. If by an effort of abstraction we think away the forms of thought, their content does not disappear. There remains an indestructible reality which we cannot conceive (for to conceive would be to condition and relationise), but of which we are vaguely conscious—without which, indeed, the developed consciousness called knowledge would be impossible. Being without relations, this pure existence may be spoken of as absolute; being without limit, it may be spoken of as infinite; being common to object and subject, it may be said to transcend their distinction. That ultimate reality, whose presence and pressure we have already felt before and behind phenomena, now floods the barriers of the outer and inner sense, penetrating and filling the phenomenal sphere itself.

This is the unknown and unknowable that Agnostics confess—at least, all Agnostics of the Spencerian persuasion; and, since Huxley devised a name that so admirably hit off their doctrine, I submit that his restriction of it to a method which

might conceivably lead to quite different results is not justified by the ordinary usages of language, or by the exigencies of scientific phraseology. Indeed, the frank admission, contained in one of his later essays, that he did "not very much care to speak of anything as 'unknowable,'"[1] although he certainly did so speak at the outset of his philosophical career, seems to show that his metaphysical attitude had undergone a change that made the word under discussion no longer the fittest to express it.

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

The group of controversial essays in which Huxley set forth his latest opinions on this question with so much vigour, but, as I have tried to show,

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

with so little precision, was called forth by the angry utterances of some English divines, who seemed to be irritated and dismayed by the general acceptance of a party name which could be applied to their opponents without giving them offence. Judging with perfect accuracy that Agnosticism implied the rejection of Christianity, and being interested in it only to that extent, they declared that Agnostics were, in plain language, infidels, and should without ceremony be branded as such. The demand showed a certain want of urbanity, and still more a want of discrimination. Even granting that the rejection of the Christian faith—or, rather, of all the somewhat discordant creeds clustered together under that appellation—is a deplorable error, it has ceased to be regarded as a crime; and therefore it should not be confounded under the same denomination with what *is* criminal—the violation of a plighted troth. But, waiving the question of good manners and the undesirability to a logical understanding of classing Agnostics with adulterers and fraudulent trustees, there is, perhaps, something to be said for the propriety of countenancing the distinctions set up by Freethinkers among themselves. If all Agnostics are "infidels," all "infidels" are not Agnostics; and some would abjure communion with that particular sect as heartily as any Churchman, nor would they meet with very respectful treatment from its devotees. Carlyle and Francis Newman, Emerson and Theodore Parker, perhaps even James Martineau, certainly Clifford, were all, to the Anglican mind, "infidels"; yet not one of them was an Agnostic. Hegel, who was never

weary of denouncing the current acquiescence in ignorance of things in themselves, used to pass, I think with reason, as a formidable enemy of Christianity; and the English neo-Hegelians may be the next foe with whom orthodoxy will have to reckon. There is, I know, a good deal of coquetry going on just now between the dialectic philosophy and the higher Catholicism;[1] but something of the same sort happened at Berlin before the advent of Strauss and Feuerbach.

As a philosophical system Agnosticism has much that is unobjectionable, or even acceptable, to the religious believer. Cardinal Newman, in defending the reasonableness of transubstantiation, urged that we do not know what matter is in itself; and doubtless he would have avowed the same ignorance about the essence of mind. Of course, no Christian, and, indeed, no theist, will admit that the origin of the world or of our own consciousness is unknown; but if he is candid he will admit that to adduce the will of a divine Creator as a sufficient cause for either is merely to push the difficulty a step further back. That a self-conscious intelligence, with power to make a world out of nothing, should have existed from all eternity is not in itself a proposition of axiomatic evidence, nor intrinsically more conceivable than its contradictory; and nothing that is not a self-evident axiom can be taken as ultimate in philosophy. Without going into the question of origins, the incomprehensibility of God has long been a theological commonplace. Like Huxley, the religious

[1] Written in 1900.

believer may "not much care to talk about the 'Unknowable'" (with or without a capital); but he would hardly refuse to admit that the divine nature, being infinite, can never be fully understood by a finite intelligence. He may appeal to revelation, either the revelation of his own conscience or the revelation given by inspired writers, as affording some certain knowledge of God's will; but, so far, his knowledge of divine things amounts to no more than the knowledge of nature that an Agnostic professes to derive from the study of material and mental phenomena. This also may, without much straining, be called a revelation; and the truth of each revelation is relative, to the extent of being conditioned by the capacity of its recipient. A Christian may plead that to have the same assurance of God's existence that a Spencerian Agnostic has of the existence of an objective world, or of his fellow-men, or, if it comes to that, of his own existence, is a sufficiently solid basis for his Theistic faith. He may, if he chooses, draw out a further parallel between the workings of the Power manifested to us through all existence[1] and the workings of God as manifested in the scheme of redemption.

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

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

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

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

But the modern Agnostic does not find rest, where the younger Newman found it, in the creed of ethical Theism. Starting in early youth from a much more advanced position, and enjoying much greater liberty of thought than was possible in the first half of the last century, he attacks the supreme questions of theology with a more open and a more

active mind. What is of still greater importance, he finds himself supplied, by the advance of positive knowledge, with a new set of ideas—above all, with the idea of evolution.

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

Evolution is not, however, limited to the region of physical phenomena. Under the influence of the new doctrine, mental phenomena also—feeling, volition, and reason—came to be interpreted as part of the vast mechanism by which organisms are adapted to their environment, and as having, like every other part, grown up gradually in response

to the demands of life. How, then, could such obviously relative qualities be legitimately ascribed to the absolute cause or substance of things? Our moral nature in particular, which had long been claimed by religious teachers as a peculiar revelation of the transcendent realities, became an adaptation like any other—a social instinct, a racial heritage, secured by the survival of the fittest. The spiritual experiences confidently appealed to by believers could be explained away by the evolutionist as survivals of the hallucinated states known to occur with far more intensity among primitive men.

Behind the dynamic law of evolution our Middle Victorian inquirer found another and a greater law, more luminous in its evidence, more sweeping in its applicability, more inflexible in the severity of its control—the static law of conservation, the principle that the quantity of energy in the universe remains unaltered and unalterable, without increase or diminution, through all time. This principle enabled him to arrive by a more summary process at the results already detailed. Miracles, which historical criticism had shown to be fictitious, were fictitious because they were impossible—because their performance would involve a creation or a destruction of energy.[1] And the same principle might be applied to the whole range of religious experiences still maintained by natural Theism, including the efficacy of prayer and the very

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

existence of human free-will. Theologians might call this reasoning in a circle. They might say that to assume that the law of conservation held without exception was to assume the very point at issue, whether supernatural intervention was possible or not. Herbert Spencer and his disciples would reply that the conservation of energy, or, as they preferred to call it, the persistence of force, was, like the axioms of geometry, a truth known *à priori*, and verified by the inconceivableness of its contradictory. Thinkers of a more moderate school would be content to argue that a principle found to prevail over the whole field of phenomena accessible to exact observation and experiment showed the highest probability of being true without exception.

Another point remains to be noticed as illustrating the latent hostility between Theism and the law of conservation. I refer to what is known as the order of nature and its implications. The subject was a favourite theme with the Rev. Professor Baden Powell, famous for his epoch-making contribution to *Essays and Reviews,* and, what now seems forgotten, a fervent evolutionist before Darwin. This very liberal divine, while frankly abandoning miracles, insisted on the order of nature, the unbroken supremacy of law, as the one all-sufficient proof that the world was ruled by a personal God. But, according to Herbert Spencer, order and law simply mean that the quantity of matter existing always remains the same, that its properties are constant, and that the variations in the movements of its particles are mutually compensatory—all consequences of the conservation

of energy.[1] What we call the order of nature is merely another expression for that ultimate self-identity of the universe which reason is not needed to explain, for it first makes reasoning possible to us.

It will be observed that, so far, the case has been conducted on behalf of our supposed free inquirer, without any reference to Agnostic principles. His appeal has not been to the new nescience, but to the new science. A point has been now reached where the intervention of Agnosticism can be explained. Left alone on what Carlyle calls the shoreless fountain-ocean of force, to what stars shall we turn for guidance? The position was not new. The philosophers who met round Baron D'Holbach's dinner-table, the English Benthamites, the German materialists, had reached very similar conclusions, and had called them "Atheism." The disciples of Nietzsche would call them so still. With a little ingenuity they could equally well be fitted into the creed of Pantheism more or less openly professed by Goethe and Herder at Weimar, by Schelling and Hegel at Jena, by Coleridge and Wordsworth at Alfoxden. But it so happened that England, in 1860, was under the dominion of the Kantian criticism; not that many students read Kant for themselves, but the chief results of his philosophy had been presented in what, as compared with the original, might be called a popular form by Hamilton and Mansel. Now, it is interesting to note that these two writers, both strong supporters of the received opinions, were particularly earnest opponents of German Pantheism,

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

at that time a great bugbear to the orthodox. Hamilton, for all his boasted learning, was not very deeply read in German philosophy, and his acquaintance with Schelling and Hegel, the latter especially, seems to have been superficial; his attack is directed chiefly against a flashy combination of their theories, put together, with more rhetorical skill than sincerity, by the Parisian sophist, Victor Cousin. Mansel, on the other hand, knew a good deal about Hegel, and seems to have anticipated with singular prescience the future ascendancy of Hegelianism at Oxford, although he probably did not foresee that it would be converted by some professors into a bulwark of Anglican theology. To him Hegel was the master of Strauss and Baur, the author of a method for dissipating dogma into mist; and he turned for salvation, as Hamilton had already turned, to Kant, with whose help Atheism also could be refuted.

To some persons Pantheism and Atheism are indistinguishable; to others they stand for the widest possible contrasts of belief; but it will be generally admitted that on one important point they are agreed. Both alike assume that things in themselves can be known. The philosophy of Atheism is, as a rule, materialistic or monadistic. Mass and motion are intelligible conceptions apart from our consciousness, and from mass and motion all phenomena are derived. The absolute, in Dühring's phrase, is under our feet. In the more modern refinements of the system a certain amount of sensibility is supposed to accompany each material particle or centre of force; and consciousness is explained as resulting from the joint

action of innumerable monads; or, by a still nearer approach to idealism, the elementary sensibilities are conceived as the only true realities, what we call matter being a mere objectivation of feeling. In any case, a plurality of substances is the primary fact beyond which we need not go.

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

Agnosticism regards both attempts, the pluralistic and the monistic, as alike chimerical. It applies the Kantian or Hamiltonian criticism to their logic, and finds it wanting. Not from any lack of moral courage, but from sheer intellectual honesty, does the Agnostic refuse to call himself an Atheist or a Pantheist. In truth, it is against Atheism and Pantheism, rather than against Theism, that the point of his philosophy is turned. As has been already observed, he may have much in common with the Theist, who generally shares his contempt

for dogmatic metaphysics. Of course, he has no mercy on *à priori* attempts to "construct" a personal God; but of these we hear less and less every day. It is true that the *à posteriori* or inductive argument, which leads up from the contemplation of nature to the recognition of divine intelligence and will before and beyond nature, fails to convince him; but his objections to it are based, as I have said, on scientific grounds in the widest sense of the word "scientific," using it so as to include psychology and historical criticism. At the same time, the Spencerian Agnostic admits, or rather contends, that Theism, and, indeed, all forms of ontology, whether monistic or pluralistic, spiritualistic or materialistic, contain a certain measure of truth. He agrees with them in admitting that phenomena are not everything—that they are the index to an absolute reality; but Kant has taught him that this reality is beyond the reach of our knowledge.

If the foregoing analysis is correct, the late Bishop Fraser was not justified in saying that "the Agnostic neither denied nor affirmed God," but "simply put him on one side." If the Bishop meant by "God" what most of his co-religionists mean, then the Agnostic certainly denies the existence of such a being, if only because, like Darwin, he "does not believe that there ever was a revelation"; and the Christian God is essentially self-revealing. If by "God" is meant a Power whence all things proceed, then the Agnostic no more puts him on one side than Spinoza did. Of course, it was open to Bishop Fraser to contend that Spinozism amounts to a denial of God; and, if words are to

retain their ordinary meanings, I am by no means sure that he would not have been right; but such a denial differs widely from the lazily contemptuous attitude implied by the Bishop's phrase.

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

To some minds what a philosopher thinks about

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

debarred. He cannot say, like a confident young friend of mine, "I *know* that the soul is immortal." Not only can he not say it in this life, but in no circumstances conceivable to us could he say it. Supposing his individual consciousness to be prolonged for any length of time, the fatal antithesis of subject and object would still remain, shutting him out from a real knowledge of things in themselves and of the possibilities of a catastrophe that infinite time may contain.

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

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

The Agnostic, however, gives away this immunity from attack when, with Spencer, he exchanges a purely critical for a constructive attitude. It then appears that, in endeavouring at once to reconcile and to supersede the various forms of theology, he has borrowed a principle from each, with the result of putting together a somewhat heterogeneous and unstable edifice. The idea of a necessary antithesis between appearance and reality, of a hidden power which at once produces phenomena and radically differs from them, comes from natural Theism, and repeats the dualism that has always been its reproach in the eyes of philosophy, which, in Emerson's phrase, is essentially centripetal; while the manner in which phenomena are spoken of as manifesting the power behind them sounds like a reminiscence of Christian revelation. When the ultimate reality figures as an infinite and absolute, or, what comes to the same thing, a non-relative existence, a substance for ever extricating itself even in our consciousness from the conditions and limitations of thought, the debt is still more obvious to Pantheism,

to the indestructible tradition of Parmenides and Spinoza. When the unknowable, of which assuredly neither unity nor plurality should be predicated, is habitually spoken of as one, Theism and Pantheism have contributed in equal proportions to that extreme definiteness of statement. Finally, when in the theory of evolution the teleological method is altogether superseded by mechanical causation, we have a procedure running parallel to the atheistic materialism from which Agnostics are most sincerely anxious to dissociate their cause.[1]

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

First of all, we may expect that the conceptual proofs of an infinite and absolute existence beyond consciousness will be given back to the exclusive

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

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

Others, again, may plausibly maintain that to postulate causes of phenomena which certainly exist, and as certainly cannot be known, is a somewhat self-contradictory proceeding, savouring of the old metaphysics, and that a true Agnostic will decline to commit himself one way or the other. He will observe that our notion of causation, whether derived from the sense of muscular effort or from the observation of invariable sequences among phenomena, is essentially subjective, and cannot legitimately receive a transcendental application. When asked how phenomena are to be explained without assuming an external cause, he will answer: "I don't know. Perhaps phenomena as a whole are uncaused, or self-caused, or caused

by something in the future. If I am talking nonsense, it is your fault in asking nonsensical questions about things to which our categories do not apply. Keep your catechism for the Sunday school."

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

I have no great faith in abstract definitions. Experience shows that the best of them are open to exception, and that they have hampered pure speculation with the difficulties of legal draughtsmanship, without the excuse of those practical necessities by which lawyers are hemmed in. But,

for the comfort and relief of those persons who read only the beginning and end of an essay, I conclude with a summary, as short and as exact as I can make it, of the results to which the foregoing exposition has led.

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

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p. 105 – what makes a Hellene (Isocrates).

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

I. Power – (1) Definition & measure (diff. betw. power of [illegible] & person, extent of [illegible] [illegible] – time, ~~extent~~ duration in time).

(2) Conditions of exercise – (Wanting with self, liberty, knowledge).

(3) Evolution of power.

II. P. of Man over Nature: [Civilization]

(1) Man over Nature: Industry.

(2) Mankind over men: Discipline

(3) Intellect over Society ; ?

III. P. of ~~[illegible]~~ Individual

(1) over himself = Force

(2) over others – Manners

(3) over Crowd = Genius

IV. P. of Nation

(1) over self. Progress

(2) over others Hegemony (Influence)

(3) over Crowd = Empire.

V. Concluding. (The Future of Power)