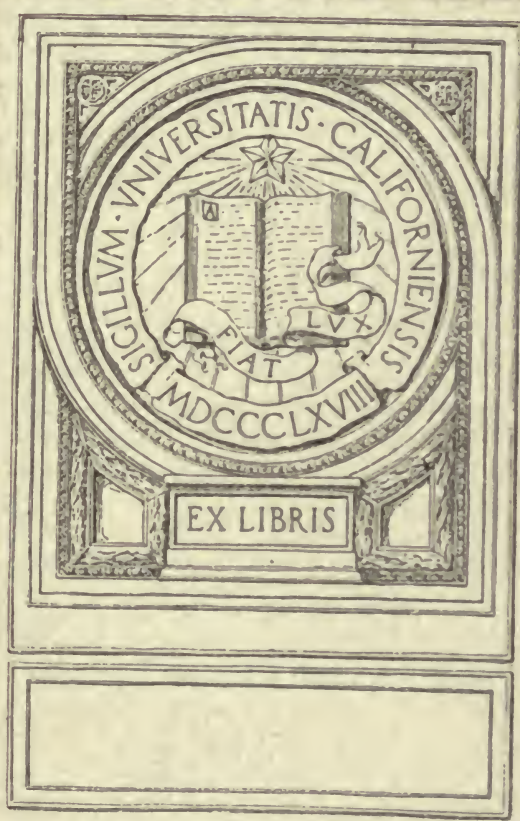


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THE DEVELOPMENT  
FROM KANT TO HEGEL,

WITH CHAPTERS ON

THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION.

BY

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## PREFACE.

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THE First Part of this Essay was originally written in Germany, in the summer of 1880, at the conclusion of my two years' term of study as Hibbert Travelling Scholar. Since the resolution of the Hibbert Trustees to publish the Essay, I have taken the opportunity of re-writing it almost entirely, with the view of offering, as far as possible, a real contribution to the study of German Philosophy in England. The Second Part, on the Philosophy of Religion, has been added at the special request of the Trustees.

In tracing the development of Kantian thought in the hands of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, I have restricted my attention to the fundamental metaphysical position occupied by the respective thinkers. The plan of the Essay made this imperative, and I think it will also be found to conduce to clearness. The many able works on Kant which have recently appeared in English, permitted me to dispense with an elaborate account of his philosophy. I have confined myself, therefore, in the first chapter to a critical statement of results. The apparently disproportionate number of pages devoted to Fichte, may be defended on the ground that the difference between Kant and Fichte is more radical than that between Fichte and his two successors. In Fichte, the

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principle of Idealism is first disengaged from the Kantian thought, and it remains henceforth common ground. I have given, therefore, a pretty full account of the process by which Fichte reached his metaphysical theory, as well as a criticism of the weaknesses peculiar to his form of statement. Fichte has received so little attention in this country in comparison with what has been bestowed on Kant, and even on Hegel, that the sketch may perhaps be of use in the way of focussing his distinctive philosophic position.

In the Second Part, on the contrary, the transition is made directly from Kant to Hegel, without mention of the special views of Fichte and Schelling on the Philosophy of Religion. The treatment of Christianity by Fichte in his later period is, in the main, an anticipation of the Hegelian theory. But, however interesting a Fichtian or a Schellingian Philosophy of Religion might be in a monograph, they are not vital in the interests of the historical development here traced, and a considerable amount of repetition is saved by their omission. I have been at special pains to give a full account of Kant's remarkable book, *Religion within the Limits of Mere Reason*, because neither its historical importance, nor its organic connection with Kant's general scheme of thought, is, as a rule, sufficiently recognized.

# CONTENTS.

## PART I.

### THE METAPHYSICAL GROUNDWORK.

	PAGE
CHAPTER I. RESULTS OF THE KANTIAN CRITIQUE OF KNOWLEDGE . . . . .	1
CHAPTER II. FICHTE . . . . .	15
(1) Fichte's Criticism of Kant . . . . .	17
(2) Dogmatism and Idealism (the theoretical <i>Wissenschaftslehre</i> )	20
(3) Fichte's relation to Kant's Prac- tical Philosophy . . . . .	29
(4) The Practical Ego and the <i>Anstoss</i> as explanation of reality . . . . .	33
(5) General statement and criticism of Fichte's philosophical position . . . . .	38
CHAPTER III. SCHELLING . . . . .	52
(1) The <i>Naturphilosophie</i> . . . . .	53
(2) The Philosophy of Identity . . . . .	59
CHAPTER IV. HEGEL . . . . .	68
(1) His criticism of his predecessors	69
(2) The dialectic method . . . . .	73
(3) Logic, Nature and Spirit . . . . .	76

## PART II.

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION.

	PAGE
INTRODUCTORY . . . . .	91
CHAPTER I. THE KANTIAN PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION	96
(1) The foundation in Ethics . . . . .	96
(2) The 'Religion within the Limits of Mere Reason' . . . . .	108
CHAPTER II. CRITICISM OF THE KANTIAN STANDPOINT AND TRANSITION TO HEGEL . . . . .	133
(1) The distinction of Kant from the <i>Aufklärung</i> . . . . .	133
(2) Criticism of Kant's position . . . . .	138
(3) Outline of the Hegelian Philosophy of Religion . . . . .	145
(4) Concluding remarks . . . . .	165

# PART I.

## THE DEVELOPMENT FROM KANT TO HEGEL.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### KANT.



THOUGH the estimates of what Kant did are various, there is a general agreement among competent authorities that his Critical investigations form a new point of departure in philosophy. People differ in their reading of Kant and in their evaluation of his results. His name is invoked in support of mutually incompatible doctrines, according as stress is laid upon this or the other element of his thought. But at the bottom of all these conflicting opinions lies the conviction that the Kantian system, and whatever claims to be its legitimate out-growth, have a present-day interest and application beyond the historic value which all the systems of the past possess. So much has been written on Kant lately in English, that it would be a thankless labour in me to seek to unravel anew the tangled skein of Critical thought. I have confined myself, therefore, to a general statement of what, in my opinion, are Kant's most valuable results, and what are the inconsistencies that prevent us from regarding his system as final. This will probably be sufficient to suggest to the reader the process of criticism by which my positions have been reached. My present purpose is to show how the question Kant asked himself, and the method he

followed in answering it, expanded under his hands and those of his immediate successors in Germany into a new solution of metaphysical problems. The second part of the essay indicates the bearing of this new solution on the philosophy of religion.

Kant's uniform method in his various investigations cannot be better described than in his own well-worn phrase—an inquiry into the conditions of the possibility of experience. His results are a retrogressive conclusion from the facts of ordinary and scientific experience. What conditions are requisite, in order that the fact of knowledge may be possible? What are the presuppositions which the very notion of ethical action involves? How, or on what conditions, are the feeling of beauty and the idea of organic co-ordination possible? In this way the problems of the three Critiques may be brought together, and the identity of their method perceived. In each case a portion or phase of human experience is analyzed, in order to discover *the conditions of its possibility*. There is no question of demonstrating its actuality. It is useless, for example, to discuss the existence of matter. We all know, or science at least can tell us, what we actually see and feel. The Kantian question is—what notions and existences are necessary to the constitution of the experience, such as we know it? But the transcendental method does not consist, as it has sometimes been said to do, in taking the facts and re-baptizing them as faculties or conditions for the production of themselves. The answer to Kant's question can be neither more nor less than an analysis of experience into its constituent elements. If the analysis is correct and exhaustive, it will embrace a demonstration of the organic interdependence of these

elements. When this is done, the demand for a producing cause will probably be found to be out of place. For experience, viewed as such a unity, no cause can be assigned except itself.

The *Critique of Pure Reason*, to which we at present confine ourselves, is usually, and correctly, described as a contribution to "Erkenntnisstheorie," or Theory of Knowledge. It is of the utmost importance to grasp at the outset the meaning of the term. Otherwise the whole drift and scope of the transcendental method is missed. If Kant was merely trying to show the presence in the individual of certain faculties or aptitudes for the acquirement of knowledge, then we may admit at once the relevancy of Herbert Spencer's proof that their connateness in the individual is the result of the consolidated experiences of his ancestors. But if that was Kant's aim, he ceases to have any distinctive place in philosophy at all, except as the last *à priori* speculator who is worth the pains of slaughtering in public. Kant may be partly to blame for the misconception, by the psychological aspect which he sometimes communicates to his investigation;\* but he was well aware of the difference between the method of the transcendental logic in his hands, and the historical or descriptive procedure of empirical psychology. In discussing the principles of his method, Kant distinguishes rigidly between what he calls the *quid facti* and the *quid*

\* His too free use of words like "Gemüth," and his adherence to the scheme of faculties which he inherited from the Wolffians are partly responsible for this. Still more, perhaps, the separation on which he insisted between the world of knowledge and the world of being. His phraseology is nowhere more misleading than when he is emphasizing the subjective or non-noumenal character of our knowledge. The whole system of reason appears in such passages retracted within the narrow theatre of the individual mind.

*juris*.\* An answer to the former question would imply a comparative observation of all known varieties of cognitive effort. A natural history of the inchoate intelligence of children, of savages, and of non-human animals might be in place here. But its merely probable conclusions would have no bearing, according to Kant, on the strictly necessary results of the transcendental method. The transcendental method is the demonstration, in the case of any conception, that without it knowledge could not exist. It analyzes what is involved in the very notion of rational knowledge. Only such a method can give the required "deduction" or vindication of the necessary place of the conception in reason, and of its *jus* or right to function in the constitution of experience. Kant is continually insisting that this transcendental account of the nature<sup>1</sup> of knowledge, as knowledge (or, as he elsewhere calls it, the logical form of all cognition), is wholly independent of the extent to which the elements of its synthesis are apprehended in this or the other empirical consciousness. He says, in one place, of the idea or empirical consciousness of the Ego—the supreme condition of knowledge—that whether it be clear or obscure "matters not here, no, not even whether it actually exist or no."† The recurring use of the terms "possible" and "capable"‡ is itself an indication how distinctly the perfectly general character of his investigation was impressed upon his mind.

\* See *Werke*, iii. 106 *et seq.* (ed. Hartenstein).

† *Daran liegt hier nichts, ja nicht einmal an der Wirklichkeit desselben. Werke*, iii. 578.

‡ In such expressions as "The 'I think' must be *capable* of accompanying all my ideas" (muss begleiten *können*); or again—"Without the relation to *an at least possible* consciousness (ohne das Verhältniss zu einem wenigstens möglichen Bewusstsein) the appearance could never become for us an object of cognition." *Werke*, iii. 115 and 579.



When the conception of knowledge is submitted to this analysis, Kant discovers "the static and permanent Ego of pure apperception"\* to be the fundamental condition of the possibility of all connected experience. But the Ego, or permanent subject, is static only in the sense that it does not pass with its ideas : it is not static in the sense that we can remain standing by its blank identity. The unity of apperception, as Kant calls it, cannot be rendered intelligible except in reference to an object, whose synthesis it is. Here the peculiar enchainment or involution of conceptions becomes apparent, on which the method relies for its convincing power. The knowing Self, though the first or supreme condition of experience, demands in turn, as the indispensable pre-requisite of its existence, a knowable world to which it is related. It would be irrelevant to carry out the process further here, and to show how the intelligible connection of subject and object, or, in other words, the existence of the intelligible universe, is proved to depend on such principles as those of substantiality, causality, etc. It is enough to have indicated the principle of the demonstration.

Previous philosophy, proceeding on the presupposition of an essential dualism between thought and things, had ended with Hume in scepticism as to the possibility of real knowledge. The result of the Kantian method was to abolish this latent postulate. But Kant himself, in his "refutation" of Hume, proceeded throughout on the same assumption, which, in his case too, brought the same sceptical conclusion in its train. If Kant vindicates against Hume a certain reality for our knowledge, it is still not a knowledge of realities. Man has, on the

\* *Werke*, iii, 581.

Kantian scheme, a thoroughly trustworthy and indefinitely perfectible knowledge of phenomena; but these are only the images of real things distorted in the glass of his own mind. Things in themselves or noumena exist in a world beyond,\* and man has no faculty by which he can penetrate into that region. He cannot abjure the nature of his own thought; he cannot know things otherwise than he does know them. But this way of stating the case inevitably suggests the inquiry whether the Kantian demand to know noumena as something behind, and different from, phenomena, is anything more than the desire to know and not to know a thing at the same time. For, if we merely exchange human thought for some other kind of thought, we are no better off than before as regards a knowledge of realities, seeing that the realities, in being known, must be equally coloured by the nature of this new thought. Unless, therefore, we could escape from thought altogether, that is, know a thing without knowing it, we should never be able to satisfy this fantastic demand for reality.†

But Kant left the philosophic question and its dualistic

\* This is the net result of the Kantian thought, in spite of the passages where Kant refuses to assign to noumena more than a problematical existence. It may be added, however, that Kant opens up a much truer line of thought in his account of the Practical Reason, where he identifies the noumenal world with the sphere of ethical action.

† The boast of Comte that noumena and metaphysic have been banished the world together, is a result of the same habit of thought. Whether it take the form of Comtism, or of Neo-Kantianism, or simply of scientific empiricism, the idea is very prevalent at the present day that the whole activity of metaphysic consists in the futile chase after noumena of the sort described. So far is this from being the case, that the task laid upon metaphysic just now is to deliver men from such noumena altogether. So long as they are merely dubbed unknowable, their oppressive

statement in a very different position from that in which he found them. With Hume the world was reared by the senses and the imagination out of recurrent impressions. That is to say (though Hume disclaims any hypothesis as to the source of the impressions), the mind is throughout passive, and played upon by an external something.\* Kant succeeded in showing that out of mere impressions no knowledge could arise; and established, as the chief factor in knowledge, an active synthesis undertaken by thought. The conceptions by which we express the connection and system of things (*e.g.*, number, substance, cause, etc.) are the different ways in which the central unity of the Ego arranges and binds up the formless manifold of its impressions. These conceptions or categories it is, which constitute the permanent in the universe; and, in transferring them to the subjective side of the account, Kant vindicated for mind the chief function in the creation of the known world. The further we follow Kant in his analysis, the more does the contribution from the side of things, in the shape of impressions, tend to vanish away. But though Kant goes the length of saying that in itself this manifold is "as good as nothing at all for us,"† it never actually disappears. Indeed, it is inevitable, if the question is approached from this side, that there should appear to be a kernel of matter, or a prick of sense, round which all the swathings

shadow remains. Metaphysic must show, and, in Hegel's hands, does show, that they are also contradictions and nonentities, and that in attributing a special and unapproachable reality to the abstractions of our own thought, we are guilty of an error in the last degree grotesque.

\* Which sometimes, owing to Hume's habit of "talking with the vulgar," takes the definite shape of an orange or a table.

† Kant, *Werke*, iii. 574.

of thought are wrapped. But Kant's own example showed that this residuum was a vanishing quantity; and the form in which he presented it—the "Ding-an-sich"—was the first point upon which criticism fastened. This remnant of dualism was speedily discovered to be inconsistent with other, and more fundamental, doctrines of his philosophy; and, whatever may be thought of the possibility of escaping an ultimate dualism, there will hardly be a question that the acuteness of Jacobi, Maimon, and Fichte was fatal to the Kantian method of formulating it.

But Kant's real service to philosophy is not affected by such criticism. It consists, as has been seen, in his discovery of the true nature of knowledge—a discovery which, when fully embraced, raises us above a view which would compound knowledge of so many subjective and so many objective elements. In the *Critique* the discovery of the categories appears, in the first instance, simply as a transference of these conceptions from the nature of things to the nature of the mind—from the objective to the subjective side of the account, as was said above. But gradually a new sense of the terms subjective and objective emerges. Kant's whole industry goes to prove that it is the categories alone which give objectivity and permanence to things; and but a slight extension of his method is required to see that what is true of the things that are thought holds equally of the mind or "the thing that thinks." Thinker and thing are both "as good as nothing at all for us," except as united in knowledge. Philosophy (to put the same thing more scholastically) found it impossible to reconcile the old subject and object, because they were alike empty abstractions, when separated from the organism of knowledge, which is the only whole, and which forms the ultimate objectivity of the

universe. The conceptions of reason are the body of reality, communicating, in one aspect, stability to things; in another aspect, reality to the knowledge of them. What it is important to observe is, that these are two aspects of the same fact, and that, therefore, we must not start, as pre-Kantian philosophy did, with an original separation of two poles, which, *ex vi terminorum*, cannot be known except as united. Kant's permanent achievement was the revolution he effected in men's notions of what constitutes reality, and of the direction in which it is to be sought. By presenting the categories as the knot which binds man and the world together, he taught his successors to seek the reality of the universe in the system of these conceptions, and in the unconditioned thought whose members and instruments they are.

With the adoption of this general position, Idealism becomes independent of the weakness of some of the individual arguments which Kant brings forward against Hume and the Association school. It becomes unimportant for philosophy to insist on the *à priori*, as against the *à posteriori*, origin of conceptions. The conceptions remain the same, though the whole psychology of the Associationists be admitted. Indeed, as regards the individual, or, at least, the race, the conclusion seems plain that all ideas and thoughts, without exception, have been beaten out by the slow process of experience. But the ultimate attainment of these conceptions is itself the best proof that they are involved in the structure of experience, independently of their recognition by this or that individual knower. They are its impersonal rational conditions. In other words, they may be viewed in their own nature as constitutive of the universe, apart from the process by which the individual comes to know them.

The conflict of Kant's dualistic presuppositions with the spirit of his own method is perhaps nowhere better seen than in the Paralogisms of Pure Reason, where he criticizes the doctrines of the Wolffian Rational Psychology. As the line of argument in this section forms a suitable transition to the extension given to the Kantian thought by Fichte, it may be well to concentrate attention upon it for a little. Arguments about the essence of the soul and its necessary immortality confound, Kant says, "the possible *abstraction* from my empirically determined existence with the supposed consciousness of a possible *separate* existence of my thinking self."\* The "I think" is a consciousness which thinks nothing, except as filled by the process of experience. Apart from this filling it is "a completely empty idea," and to speak of its existence out of reference to that process, as a simple, numerically identical and permanent, substance, is to go entirely beyond our record. Such definitions are, indeed, inherently absurd; for they attempt to fix down as a particular object the subject, which, because it is, as Kant elsewhere describes it, "the correlate of all existence,"† can be "cognized only through the thoughts which are its predicates." That is, nothing can be said of the nature of the transcendental subject of knowledge, because it is itself employed in every affirmation, and we cannot, as it were, get round it, to make it an object of observation. The consciousness of myself as an individual, on the other hand, is evolved in the process of experience, and is itself a definite portion of that process. The individual self must be accepted as a fact, but it grounds no inference to anything beyond its present existence. Thus the whole fabric of Rational Psychology falls to the ground.

\* *Werke*, iii. 289.† *Ibid.* iii. 617.

There are two sides to the foregoing argument. From the one point of view, Kant destroys the old Dogmatism irretrievably, by laying his hand on the fallacy of the thinking thing; from the other, he has not quite risen to the height of his own thought. It is true that the transcendental subject, as the instrument of all knowledge, cannot be known as anything apart from the thoughts whose vehicle it is. But it is precisely this attribute of the Self which determines it as an all-containing sphere, or, in Kant's words, as the correlate of all existence; and as soon as this universal character of the Self is firmly grasped, the question as to what lies beyond the circle of knowledge cannot be raised. The bounds of existence and of knowledge are seen to be, in their notion, coincident. Kant, however, treated this aspect of the subject merely as an "inconvenience," which we cannot get over, and destroyed the force of such descriptions of the Self, by separating it on both sides from the world of reality. On the one side, the reality of the things-in-themselves lies behind its phenomenal knowledge; on the other, it is not itself identified with the essence of the thinking person. Kant speaks of the universal form of consciousness as "merely a property (*Beschaffenheit*) of my subject;"\* which is as much as to say that, besides the transcendental Self of knowledge and the phenomenal or empirical consciousness known by that Self, there is a noumenal reality—a substantial  $x$ —behind each phenomenal person. "I-ness" is a property of that noumenal being, so far as it thinks, but its thinking is not its very self. In other words, Kant has not emancipated himself from the dogmatic mode of thought. He still holds to a thinking thing: only he maintains that, for

\* *Werke*, iii. 277.

us, it is incognizable. The demand for some reality to which this universal function of thought shall belong as its "Beschaffenheit," is the exact counterpart of the assumption of things-in-themselves on the further side of knowledge. It is the impossibility of knowing a noumenon, not the inadequacy of a conception like substance to the thinking self, that constitutes, in Kant's eyes, the fatal objection to the old Rational Psychology.

This curious imbroglio of the three selves—the I-in-itself, the "I think" or transcendental subject, and the phenomenal or historic individual—arises simply because Kant was still in bondage, in part, to the thought he was controverting. The idea that there could be a knowledge of things *in themselves*, that is, otherwise than through their predicates, never left him. It was "self-evident" to him, he says, "that a thing in itself is of different nature from the determinations which merely make up its state."\* Hence thought remained to the end with Kant a subjective modification, a mode of representing something which is, in its own nature, prior to thought. It gives the reality neither of thinker nor of thing. It was quite in accordance with this general view that, in the section we have been considering, Kant should treat as the

\* *Werke*, iii. 593. Of course there is a certain truth in saying that a thing (still more, a man) is not adequately expressed in any one of its states, but only in the sum of them; and as an infinite series can never be perfectly summed, it may be said that the phenomenal manifestations of a thing never exhaust its nature, *i.e.*, the thing itself. But nothing is gained by importing the element of time into the question; for all the conditions of the future must be present at any moment, though escaping our notice, perhaps, through defective analysis. The knowledge of any given thing can, in no case, be exhaustive, save to "eyes as piercing as those of God." But, in spite of that, the nature or essence of a thing is simply the sum of its qualities, viewed as a present unity.



poverty of *our* intelligence what is really the prerogative of intelligence as such: *viz.*, that it cannot be bound by its own creatures or instruments, least of all by categories like substance, which are of use only in the exposition of material things.

But Kant is continually, by his very mode of statement, leading us beyond his own point of view. "Self-consciousness," he says, in the first edition of the *Critique*, "is that which is the condition of all unity, and is yet itself unconditioned. It does not so much know *itself through the categories*, as the categories, and, through them, all objects, in absolute unity of apperception, consequently *through itself*."\* These striking phrases suggest at once the true nature of the universal Self, as it was insisted on by his successors, notably by Fichte. The insight into this nature and dignity was used by them to make Kant's system consistent with itself by freeing it from alien presuppositions. The Ding-an-sich had been retained, because thought was supposed to be something peculiar and subjective. But if the transcendental apperception be nothing less than the consciousness of universal thought, then it is evident that the world of knowledge which exists for that thought is not different from the world of reality. The presence of this identical Self in the individual becomes at the same time a sufficient explanation of the fixity and determinateness of external experience, which all acknowledge as independent of their fluctuating states, and which it was one of the functions of the things-in-themselves to account for. The relations of the universal and the individual self—of God and man—are thus visibly changed. They no longer stand outside of one another as, for example, in a theory like Berkeley's,

\* *Werke*, iii. 617. The italics are in the original.

where the rationale of a permanent external world is also sought in God. God no longer smites us, so to speak, across the void; but through consciousness we are born into a system of thought, the same for all intelligence, and unrolled as a knowable world in each individual, through the presence in him of a universal function. Man, the world, and God are not three separate things, as in the Dogmatic systems which Kant criticized and overthrew. Viewed from the speculative standpoint, that is, *from the inside*, they are seen to be parts or moments of one whole. Kant's Copernican metaphor meant, in fact, more than he himself supposed. The comparison virtually asserted that we can overcome the presuppositions of our station as men upon the earth, and view the universe, in adumbration at least, as it appears from a universal or theocentric position.

It was Kant's firm conviction that he had made an end of metaphysic, and substituted for it a doctrine of the limits of human reason. What he had really done was to transform the notion of the science. The barriers which he supposed to stand in the way of human intelligence have been shown to be only the shadows cast by an imperfect logic. On the other hand the undeniable limitations of partial knowledge do not affect the character of our intelligence as such. The identity of all thought in kind is, indeed, something which we only imagine that we ever question. Thus the *concentricity*, if we may so speak, of the creative and the reproductive reason, though denied by Kant, became, as the result of his labours, the starting-point and immanent presupposition of his followers. In destroying the old, Kant had become the founder of a new metaphysic, in which every question is presented to us with a new scope and meaning.

## CHAPTER II.

### FICHTE.

IT is not necessary here to follow step by step the progressive criticism by which the new metaphysic was at last systematically formulated. Where the earlier expositions have been manifestly superseded by the later, the former cease to have more than a historic value. Besides, minor differences ought not to be permitted to obscure a fundamental unanimity. The most detailed examination would only show, what will be readily admitted without it, that Hegel is the summing up and most perfect expression of the general movement of thought known as German Idealism. But, for the sake of making clear the full meaning of the terms which meet us in Hegel, an indication is needed of the line along which they were reached. The peculiar form of statement in which his theory is presented cannot be understood without a review of his historical antecedents. This method has also the advantage of giving us Hegel by bits, and so sparing much laboured exposition when his special contributions to the general system of thought come to be considered. A sketch of the main positions of Fichte and Schelling, so far as these proved historically important, will be sufficient for the present purpose.

Fichte was always ready to maintain that his own system was nothing but "the Kantian doctrine properly understood" — "genuine Criticism consistently carried out."\* But he confessed, at the same time, that he had

\* Fichte's *Sämmtliche Werke*, i. 89 and 469.

first had to discover the *Wissenschaftslehre* in his own fashion, before he was able to find a good and consistent sense in Kant's writings. The disconnected form in which Kant had left his conclusions was utterly repugnant to the systematic mind of his successor, who demanded a philosophy *in one piece* (aus einem Stück), as the only ultimate satisfaction of reason. Accordingly, in the earliest essay in which his advance beyond the form of Kantianism becomes apparent, he concludes by saying that, while the Kantian philosophy in its inner content stands firm as ever, there is still much to do before the materials are marshalled in a well-jointed and irrefragable whole.\* Fichte determined to take the task upon himself; he resolved to bring the different parts of the Kantian theory into harmony, and, if possible, to exhibit the universe as the development of a single principle. To this resolve is attributable the wide difference which exists on the surface between his philosophy and that of Kant, and also the radical difference of philosophic method to which that striking dissimilarity is mainly due. Kant had to seek for his principle or principles, and he proceeded tentatively by an analysis of sphere after sphere of experience. He mined patiently till he had brought to light in each the conditions of its possibility. He believed, of course, that the results of his three Critiques did not conflict with one another; but he did not take much trouble to exhibit their connection, still less to reduce them to a unity of principle. Fichte, on the other hand, started with the acceptance of the principle in which, after patient meditation, he believed that Kant's different investigations

\* *Recension des Aenesidemus, Werke*, i. 25. The work in which he broke ground for his own philosophy (*Ueber den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre*) is devoted to expounding his ideal of system.

centred. He was able, therefore, to dispense with the preliminary analysis, and to begin at once to develop the principle synthetically. At the same time, it would be a misrepresentation of Fichte's procedure to suppose that his starting-point depends for proof, in any external or logical way, on the previous acceptance of Kant's analysis. The principle shines, as he is at pains to show, by its own light, and is therefore above proof; while its actual sufficiency to explain the intelligible world must be evinced by the systematic development of that world from it. Hence while the principle came to him historically in all its significance from Kant, the truth of the starting-point and the adequacy of the system stand on their own basis, independent of any proof from without.

Starting from an analysis of perception, Kant was unable to get rid of dualism, because, in the act of perception, subject and object seem to be brought together out of a previous state of independent existence. "There is no deception in reason," as Fichte truly says; but philosophy must explain the meaning of this appearance—must show how alone it is possible—in a word, deduce it. Perception, we know from Kant, is an act of synthesis. But when perception is so described, the question that naturally arises is—a synthesis of what? The "given" manifold on Kant's theory was an answer to this "what;" and Kant maintained the presence of that element to be indispensable to the possibility of a synthetic act. That may be true; but to say that it is "given" is merely to say that it has been assumed—that no account of it has been offered. If philosophy is to be true to her mission, however, she must deduce the seemingly unintelligible or non-rational from a principle of whose intelligibility there is no doubt. So Fichte reasoned in presence

of the surd of the Kantian philosophy. The derivation of sensation from the impression of a thing-in-itself, which is occasionally suggested or implied by Kant, he considered too great an absurdity to credit him with, except on his own express testimony. "Should he make such a declaration I shall consider the *Critique of Pure Reason* the offspring of the strangest chance rather than the work of a mind."\* It is impossible, according to Fichte, seriously to offer the Ding-an-sich as a *philosophical* explanation of sensation. We have no direct evidence of its existence, nor do we know what we mean by the predication of existence in such a case. We have, in fact, explained  $x$  by  $x$ ; for the Ding-an-sich is merely the duplicate or reflection of our first inexplicable, erected into its own cause. In philosophy this method of explanation is inadmissible; we must start there from a principle whose existence is at once intelligible and self-evident; and deduction consists in proving of any conception or fact, that it is involved in the circle of the conditions of the primary and indemonstrable, but at the same time all-embracing, Fact. In Fichte's own language, everything must "hang firmly in a single ring, which is fastened to nothing, but maintains itself and the whole system by its own power."†

This principle or fact, it need hardly be said, can be no other than the Kantian unity of apperception, or, in simpler terminology, the Ego. Here Fichte found the "single ring" of which he was in quest. Self-consciousness is

\* *Werke*, i. 486. By his avowal of this absurdity (in the *Allgemeine Literaturzeitung*, 1799) Kant reduced himself in the eyes of his successor to "a three-quarters man," and the references to the Kantian system became less frequent.

† *Werke*, i. 56.

what we ultimately mean by existence, and existence is not, in this case, merely problematical. The principle lives in the very act by which its existence is apprehended; here knowledge and existence are one in the fullest and most literal sense. The act of self-realization alone has the *inevitableness* which Fichte desiderates as the distinctive mark of the first principle. It is not, in a strict sense, a fact or thing (*Thatsache*), but a deed—an action and its product in one (*Thathandlung*). Of a *Thatsache*, or objective fact, the reason or cause may always be demanded, but not so of self-consciousness, which is the condition of all facts, and itself unconditioned. The question cannot be asked, because the “I,” in asking, perpetually supplies the answer. There is, in fact, realized in the Ego the seemingly self-contradictory notion of self-creation or *causa sui*. The contradiction exists only while we remain in the sphere of objects or things. As long as we think even of God as an object outside of us, and apart from self-consciousness, the unconditioned necessity of His existence is, as Kant describes it, the abyss of human reason. “We cannot support the thought that a Being whom we regard as the highest among all possible existences, should say to himself, as it were:— ‘I am from eternity to eternity; beside me there is nothing save what exists by my will; but whence then am I?’”\* We cannot support the thought, because we have reduced ourselves to the child’s question—Who made God? God has been reduced to the sphere of things, and there the law of causality inexorably demands the cause of the cause.† But the insupportableness of

\* Kant, *Werke*, iii. 477.

† So much so, that, as Maimon said, nothing can well be more absurd than to seek to prove by causality the existence of an uncaused being.

which Kant complains vanishes from the Absolute Thesis (as Fichte calls it) in which the unity of self-consciousness affirms itself as the necessary pre-condition of intelligible existence.

This brings us face to face with a radical antithesis of philosophical doctrine which is expounded by Fichte with admirable clearness and vigour.\* All systems are classifiable, he maintains, according to their acceptance or non-acceptance of this fundamental principle. Every system which has this insight into the uniqueness of the Ego, and which makes it the principle by which things are to be explained, is Idealistic; every system is Dogmatic, which starts with the existence of things, and, taking the Ego as a thing among things, explains it, in the last instance, as their product. This opposition of Dogmatism and Idealism sums up for Fichte every difference of philosophic thought, and he characteristically refers the speculative difference to a difference of character. "He who is in truth only a product of things will never see himself otherwise; and he will be correct as long as he speaks merely of himself and his compeers. . . The kind of philosophy we choose depends on the kind of men we are; for a philosophical system is not a piece of dead furniture which may be taken up or laid aside at pleasure. It is animated by the spirit of the man who makes it his own."

When Dogmatism starts with the assumption of the existence-in-themselves of things, the first remark to be made is that the Ding-an-sich is not a principle verifiable in experience; for consciousness testifies only to the

\* See especially *Werke*, i. 419-449 (*Erste Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre*) and i. 119-223 (*Grundlage*, end of first part).



existence of things *for it*. The Ding-an-sich is therefore no more than "a fiction which awaits its realization from the success of the system." Should Dogmatism fail to give an intelligible account of experience, the fiction of independent existence with which it set out may be dismissed as unfounded. The necessary failure of the dogmatic construction is soon apparent. Having chosen the sphere of things as its basis of operations, Dogmatism finds itself rigidly confined within that world. It can render intelligible the mechanical action of thing upon thing, but it cannot pass from things to the consciousness of things. Things form, as it were, a single or simple series of causes and effects; but intelligence is, in its very nature, a double series—knowledge of itself, being for itself. When approached thus, intelligence and things lie in two worlds, between which there is no bridge. The causality of the simple series acts only in that series; thing causes thing, but not the idea of a thing. Every attempt to fill up the enormous gap which separates the real from the ideal, turns out, as Fichte says, to be no better than "a few empty words, which may, indeed, be learned by rote and repeated, but which have never conveyed a thought to any man, and never will." It remains, therefore, to try our fortune with the principle of Idealism, and to make the act or fact of self-consciousness our starting-point. Philosophy, as Fichte is never tired of telling us, begins in an act of freedom. The first principle is not a proposition, but a postulate in the geometric sense—a demand made upon a man to perform a certain operation. "Think yourself, construct the notion of yourself, and mark how you do it." The immediate consciousness of ourselves which we possess in this act is what Fichte called intellectual intuition or perception. Much mis-

conception has gathered round the phrase, but there is nothing mystical about the fact which it denotes. Intellectual intuition is simply the perception of self which accompanies all our consciousness—without which, as Fichte says, we cannot move hand or foot, cannot come to bed or board. It is the Kantian unity of apperception—the idea of self-consciousness—which constitutes for Fichte, as has been seen, “the one firm standing-ground for all philosophy.”

But self-consciousness or intelligence must not be treated as itself a thing, a unit, a mind—call it as we may—which has ideas; for in that case there is no vital connection between the nature of intelligence and the form of its experience. Intelligence is degraded into a stage, as it were, over which ideas pass. Its ideas are not its own organic product; they are merely the “things” of Dogmatism under another name, but untransformed. Such an Idealism—Fichte instances the Berkeleian—is still at the dogmatic standpoint, and it is really quite indifferent whether we talk of ideas or of things. The world is still viewed as a mechanically connected series of units, and the passage to a consciousness of the ideas remains as inexplicable as did the passage to a consciousness of things. It is only the ambiguous term “idea” that makes it seem otherwise. If Idealism is to succeed where Dogmatism failed, we must go differently to work. Intelligence, it has been shown, is not a thing but an action—an action which we can repeat at any moment—whose nature, therefore, can be definitely known. It is an action determined by definite laws, and these laws it is our business to discover. The nature of intelligence, as intelligence, has to be analyzed; and whereas Dogmatism failed to derive intelligence from the merely objective, we must

be able to show that the object and, in general, experience as we know it, is deducible from the necessary conditions of intelligence. The genetic deduction of experience is the only proof admissible of the sufficiency of our principle; for, in Fichte's words, so long as we do not exhibit the whole "thing" taking its rise before the eyes of the thinker, Dogmatism is not hunted out of its last lurking-place. Now, experience is very well defined by Fichte as "the system of ideas which are accompanied by the feeling of necessity." This necessity or definite determination is manifestly essential to our idea of experience, and demands explanation. It is, in fact, in a slightly different form, the "given" element of Kant, which Fichte resolved to connect intelligibly with the rest of the system.\* Ordinary dogmatic Idealism either ignores this feature of experience, or refers it, as Berkeley does, to the will of God, who thereby becomes the mere equivalent of the Ding-an-sich. In the Wissenschaftslehre, however, it must be seen to be involved in the notion of intelligence.

The *Grundlage* begins, therefore, by developing the conditions of intelligence, and it soon appears that the Absolute Thesis, or the affirmation by the Ego of its own existence is impossible, except through the Antithesis of a non-Ego, or something which is not Self. The opposition of Ego and non-Ego within intelligence, or, in Fichtian phraseology, the positing in the Absolute Ego of

\* Kant describes the transcendental object on one occasion as "that which prevents our cognitions from happening at random or at our own pleasure, and communicates to them a definite *à priori* determination" (dasjenige . . . was dawider ist, dass unsere Erkenntnisse nicht aufs Gerathewohl oder beliebig, sondern *à priori* auf gewisse Weise bestimmt seien). *Deduction of Categories*, First Edition. *Werke*, iii. 570.

a divisible non-Ego, opposed to a divisible Ego, is the necessary condition of the possibility of intelligence itself. In other words, the distinction of subject and object is traceable to the very nature of self-consciousness; but, for that very reason, it is not an absolute distinction, seeing that the object is posited only *for* the subject. Fichte is at no loss to show that the mutual limitation of Ego and non-Ego, which he deduces in his Third Principle, is of the essence of intelligence. Through it both are something (*Beide sind etwas*); without it neither qualitative distinction nor intelligence would exist; all would be a pure blank, for affirmation is only possible as against the negation of something else. The Thesis, therefore, or act of self-thinking with which we began, was merely an abstraction from the synthesis of opposites by which intelligence exists. Thesis and antithesis are, in truth, not separate acts, but moments of one indivisible act. Even the word act or action is perhaps misleading, for, as Fichte is at pains to explain, he is not dealing with a narrative of what has happened at any time. He does not offer us a cosmogony, or what he derisively terms the biography of a man before his birth. The world exists, and so does its last term, consciousness; this actual—this “*absolut Vorhandene*”—philosophy has to analyze into its ultimate constituent terms. The synthetic presentation of the results of this analysis may have the appearance of an original construction of the universe, and Fichte’s mode of statement labours at times under grave disadvantages. But it must never be forgotten, that what he is endeavouring to expand before us is simply the *notion* or logical nature of intelligence or self-consciousness. The distinctions which intelligence is shown to involve are the conditions or laws of its existence; their momentary separation in

exposition is merely logical and due to the abstraction of the philosopher.\*

The non-Ego or Thing is deduced, therefore, as the limitation set up by the Ego as essential to intelligence. This is the important point to notice in Fichte, in comparing him with those whom he calls Dogmatists. His Ego and non-Ego are not co-ordinated as two independent realities which are inexplicably brought together in perception; all reality, as he says, is in consciousness. This is, according to Fichte, the essence of Critical philosophy. "Critical philosophy sets up an Absolute Ego, as absolutely unconditioned and determinable by nothing higher. . . . On the other hand all philosophy is *Dogmatic*, which equates something with the Ego-in-itself, and places the one over against the other. This occurs in the supposed higher notion of Thing (Ens), which is at the same time set up in a perfectly arbitrary fashion as the highest notion of all. In the Critical system the Thing is that which is posited in the Ego; in the Dogmatic, that in which the Ego is itself posited. Criticism, therefore, is *immanent* because it posits everything in the Ego; Dogmatism is *transcendent* because it passes beyond the Ego."† Or, as Fichte elsewhere puts it: "The essence of transcendental

\* Cf. *Werke*, ii. 398-9.

† *Werke*, i. 119-20. The antithesis here brought to a point is the same which was pointed out before between Dogmatism and Idealism, for "completed Criticism" is identical, for Fichte, with the Idealism of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. It is worth noting that, in the passage which follows, Spinozism is singled out as the typical example of Dogmatism, and, therefore, as the direct antithesis of the *Wissenschaftslehre*; whereas in the "First Introduction" consistent Dogmatism is identified with Materialism. Spinozism cannot fairly be interpreted as Materialism; yet the inconsistency is only apparent. The essential characteristic of Dogmatism emphasized by Fichte in both cases is that it treats

Idealism in general, and of the *Wissenschaftslehre* in particular, consists in this—that the notion of Being is not regarded as first and original, but solely as a deduced, notion.” Action is what the philosopher starts with, and among the necessary actions of the Ego is one which appears, and must appear, as Being. From the standpoint of empirical realism (which is fully justified by philosophy), this Being must remain an independent world of things; but, from the philosophical or transcendental standpoint, it is none the less seen to be merely the necessary action of the Ego.\*

*G. R.*  
 It is necessary here to note exactly where we are. Dogmatism has failed to explain the possibility of knowledge, by reason of its taking the object as an absolute or transcendent Thing. Nevertheless, the existence of an object or non-Ego is admittedly—has, indeed, just been proved to be—essential to the notion of intelligence. The failure teaches, therefore, that, if knowledge is to the Ego, in his own phrase, as “an accident of the world;” and as long as the unity of the world is sought, not in intelligence but in some transcendent substance, the terms in which that substance is described are of comparatively little account. The point of difference is well put by Professor Adamson, when he says that to Dogmatism “the Ego appears as a mechanically determined unit in the sum total of things” (*Fichte*, p. 127, ‘*Philosophical Classics*’). The clearness with which Professor Adamson brings out the fact that the fundamental category of Dogmatism is that of reciprocity or mutual mechanical determination is very instructive. Where the application of this category is thoroughgoing, the result is naturally a system of complete determination not to be distinguished from Fatalism; as Fichte says, “Jeder consequente Dogmatiker ist nothwendig Fatalist.” I may take this opportunity of acknowledging my indebtedness to Professor Adamson’s admirable little book for considerable additional light on the internal connection of Fichte’s thought.

\* Cf. *Werke*, i. 498-9.

exist, there must be no original separation of Ego and non-Ego; the non-Ego must be, as its name indicates, in a strict sense, the other or negative of the Ego, existing only for the Ego. It must be by an act of its own that the Ego assumes the position of apparent determination by an "other," which every instance of knowledge exemplifies. So far we have got; but the essential nature of the Ego, and the reason of its original act, have not been explained. How does the Ego come to oppose a non-Ego to itself, and so to limit its own activity? It is evident that this question must be answered, if the *Wissenschaftslehre* is to be more than a formal analysis of the nature of knowledge. Theoretical *Wissenschaftslehre* is nothing more than such a formal analysis. It deals with the relation of subject and object in knowledge; by developing the forms which that relation assumes, according as it is viewed from the one side or the other, it deduces systematically such categories as reciprocity, causality, substantiality. But the nature of the relation, and the modes of thinking it, are discussed without any reference to the real existence of the terms related. The opposites—subject and object—are, Fichte says, "a mere thought without any reality. . . . Our consciousness is not filled, and there is nothing present in it."\* It has yet to be shown how the poles of the relation can exist and have reality. What, Fichte asks, is the ground of the whole relation? Theoretical *Wissenschaftslehre* cannot tell us, because the opposition and mutual limitation of Ego and non-Ego is the supposition with which it starts. The answer will constitute, it is easy to see, the ultimate foundation both of the system and of the universe whose exposition it professes to be. From Fichte's method of stating the question it is equally

\* *Werke*, i. 224.

evident that knowledge does not constitute, for him, the primary reality. "All knowledge," he says elsewhere, "is only representation or picture, and the demand always arises for something that shall correspond to the picture. This demand no knowledge can satisfy; a system of knowledge is necessarily a system of mere pictures without any reality, meaning, or end (Zweck)."\* But if knowledge is thus contrasted with reality, what is it that has, and alone has, reality, meaning, and worth in Fichte's eyes? If knowledge is, according to the statement above, a mere relation, what is, in its proper nature, the "something that stands in relation?" In it reality must consist, or rather in what Fichte calls the ground of the whole relation—that which, out of its own unity, creates the opposition which constitutes the fundamental form of knowledge.

↳ The necessity of an original unity has been sufficiently set forth in the earlier part of this chapter, and also the fact that this unity need be sought only in the Ego. From the Ego alone it is impossible to abstract. It is that behind which it is impossible to get, and which may therefore be said to exist by an inevitable act of Thesis. As such it receives from Fichte the name of the Absolute Ego, and is distinguished by him from "the Ego as intelligence," that is, from the Ego as it exists in knowledge with a non-Ego opposed to it. The Absolute Ego is the foundation of the system; but in the Absolute Ego, as such, there is as yet no trace of the limitation which a non-Ego involves. Fichte's view of the nature of the Absolute Ego, and the way in which he constructs the world out of its activity, cannot be properly understood without a reference to the Kantian theory.

\* *Werke*, ii. 246.



Fichte's identification of his "intellectual intuition" of the active Ego with the transcendental unity of Kant has been already referred to. But in so far as the Ego so perceived is the Ego of knowledge, the fountain-head of reality has not been reached. It is sufficiently correct to say that Fichte elevated the Kantian unity of self-consciousness into the Absolute Ego, but the grounds of its elevation were not found by him in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant treated self-consciousness simply as the unity to which all human knowledge must be referred; the Ego, for Fichte, is the unity under which all, whether in existence or in knowledge, may be subsumed. The motive of the change was the necessity which Fichte felt of unifying the conceptions of the theoretical and the practical reason, as they appear in Kant. Fichte's philosophical achievement has, indeed, been described, not unfairly, as the discovery of the unity of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Kant, according to his usual method, took up the fact of knowledge and the fact of morality separately. The supreme condition of the one fact he discovered in the unity of apperception; the supreme condition of the other in the categorical imperative. But the relation of the unity of knowledge to the source of the ethical imperative was left obscure, and the organic connection between the two spheres was not worked out. Yet, according to Kant's own language in the Preface to the *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Ethics*, in both spheres "it must after all be one and the same reason, which is at work, only applied differently;" and the demonstration of the unity of speculative and practical reason in a common principle is there desiderated as the result of a completed criticism of pure practical reason.\* In spite of the separateness

\* Kant, *Werke*, iv. 239. Further on, when he is speaking of the

of the two inquiries, indications are not wanting that the Practical Reason is the goal towards which Kant is moving all through the theoretical investigation. It is in the Dialectic that he determines his attitude towards the traditional problems of metaphysic; and we find him there, alike in Psychology, Cosmology, and Theology, pointing onward to the moral reason for a solution of contradictions, and a truer, because a fuller, account of the whole of things. It has been usual with men of science and many others who have professed themselves Kantians, to look upon Kant's moral system as a mere excrescence upon the profound investigations of the famous *Critique*.† But there can be no doubt that, for Kant, the one was a necessary complement of the other. Though, after reaching the Practical Reason, he never returned upon his steps to harmonize his earlier with his later results, yet the connection between the two was clear enough to himself, and he would have been the first to reject the *Critique of Pure Reason*, taken alone, as an utterly inadequate theory of the universe. A position like Lange's, in his *History of Materialism*, which treats the metaphysical presuppositions of the practical reason

Moral Syllogism, Kant says that "such comparisons" (the fact, namely, that the course of moral determination may be syllogistically represented) "justifiably give rise to the expectation of one day arriving at an insight into the unity of the whole pure rational faculty (theoretical as well as practical), and of being able to deduce anything from one principle. Such is the inevitable requirement of human reason, which finds perfect satisfaction only in a completely systematic unity of its cognitions. *Ibid.* v. 95.

† Heine's witty description of Kant's resuscitation of the Deistic corpse for the sake of his poor old serving-man, and out of fear of the police—the farce after the tragedy, as he calls it—is hardly a parody of the current belief in many quarters. See Heine's *Sämmtliche Werke*, v. 204-5 (Zur Geschichte der Religion and Philosophie in Deutschland).

as mere products of the poetic imagination, cannot free itself from the charge of a superficial appreciation of the Kantian thought. It is abundantly clear, of course, that we cannot accept these Postulates in the mechanical and Deistic form in which Kant presents them. But it is quite unallowable to solve the difficulty by lopping off the offending members. The system is a whole, and if it cannot be accepted as it stands, it must be reconstructed from within in such a way that these Postulates or Ideas shall lose their character of appendages, and be transformed into immanent principles of experience in the theoretical, no less than in the practical, sphere. This was substantially what Fichte undertook to do.

In opposition to the view of the relation of the two *Critiques* which has just been repudiated, it would be much more in the spirit of Kant to say that he finds the ultimate explanation of the world in ethics. The term "noumenon," which had been used in the *Critique of Pure Reason* as convertible with the incomprehensible thing-in-itself, is applied in the *Critique of Practical Reason* exclusively to the intelligible world of ethical ends into which the consciousness of duty introduces us. The phenomenality of the world of sense is placed, not in its relation to an incognizable thing behind, but to the world of duty within, which appears, therefore, as the true noumenon, and, in a manner, the final cause of the other.\* Kant says in the Preface to the second *Critique* that the idea of freedom, as demonstrated by an apodictic law of

\* The identification of the ideas, noumenon, and final cause, determines a man's whole philosophical attitude. Expressed generally, it means that the "explanation" of things is to be sought in their *τέλος*—in the perfection of their form—not in their crude and formless time-beginning.

practical reason, "forms the topstone of the whole edifice of a system of pure reason, speculative as well as practical." From this standpoint, his whole laborious investigations appear as a progress towards this conception, in which alone he finds a solution of the riddle of the earth. It was from this standpoint that Fichte started, and his reconstruction of the system was undertaken in the light of this, its last, term. We know from his letters with what lofty joy Fichte entered into the heritage of moral freedom from which he had long fancied himself debarred by his philosophical system. It was natural that the ethical side of the Kantian theory should first impress him, for his inmost personality must have seemed to him reflected in the all-determining activity of the practical Ego. The bracing air of the Kantian ethics infused new vigour into his life.

The universal and indisputable authority which belongs to the categorical imperative is derived by Kant from the principle of the autonomy of the will. Here alone, and not in any heteronomous or material determinant, can we find the ground of obligation; Kant calls it "the sole principle of morality."\* We are self-legislative, and we cannot escape from our own law. The law "springs from our will as intelligence, accordingly from our true or proper self;"† and a will whose content is rationality must be recognized as the law of his proper self, not only by the individual who enunciates it, but by every rational being. Fichte, coming upon expressions like these, was fain to inquire into the nature of this "proper" and universally legislating self. He hardly needed to advance beyond the letter of Kant's language to assert that absolute and

\* Kant, *Werke*, iv. 288.

† *Ibid.* p. 308.

*The Metaphysical Ground Work.*

universal obligation implied an absolute and universal self as the source of the law. The individuals are the bearers of this self which lays upon them the duty of realizing it increasingly from day to day. The connection of this self with the world of knowledge was the next point to be more precisely determined; and here the harmonizing of the speculative and the practical reason in a common principle, which Kant had desiderated, could only mean for Fichte the deduction of the one from the other. Nor was there any doubt in his mind as to which was the most fundamental function of the two. Freedom and activity, rather than intelligence, we have seen to be the epithets by which he described the essential nature of the Ego. He based his belief in the reality of his own self-consciousness solely on the presence within us of the moral law, on the immediate feeling of moral destiny. "Only through this medium of the moral law do I perceive *myself*."\* The supremacy which Kant had accorded to the practical reason was taken, therefore, by Fichte in a much more literal and exclusive sense than it had borne to the elder philosopher. The activity of the practical Ego became the sole principle by which the existence of the intelligible world was to be explained.

But morality, as we know it, is strife or effort; practice—to use a term whose associations are more general—is the continuous surmounting of obstacles. These are met by the Ego as something foreign. They do not belong, of

\* Nur durch dieses Medium des Sittengesetzes erkenne ich *mich*. *Werke*, i. 466, where "the belief in the reality" of the intellectual intuition is placed upon this foundation. Cf. also the *Bestimmung des Menschen* (*Werke*, ii. 244 *et seq.*) where self-consciousness, as more than a momentary reflex of passing states, is similarly made to depend on the "belief" or "immediate feeling" of the ethical consciousness.

right, to its own nature; for the original notion of the Ego is absolute self-position, which re-appears in the mandate of absolute self-determination which morality lays down. Whence, then, come the obstacles that fret and impede the activity of the Ego? Or, since the opposition which the Ego experiences may be generalized as the non-Ego, how does the Ego come to find a non-Ego opposed to it? Here at last we come to the explanation which Fichte is prepared to offer of Kant's "given" element. There is no inclination in Fichte, it need hardly be said, to under-rate the reality of the opposition. The strenuousness, almost fierceness, of the struggle to overcome it is sufficient evidence that it is no sham or agreeable delusion. But that for which Kant had found it necessary to call in a *Ding-an-sich* is deduced by Fichte as a necessity of the moral consciousness. Without opposition, the Ego would have no object on which to exercise its activity; no effort, no consciousness, no moral life would be possible. The non-Ego, therefore (and with it the duality of consciousness), is set up by the Absolute Ego as a means for the realization of its own existence as practical. But when we inquire into the "how" of this procedure, the answer will probably be regarded as not free from considerable difficulties. The pure activity of the Ego is merely self-position, or, in Fichte's phrase, an activity that returns upon itself. As such, however, it may be metaphorically described as "a mathematical self-constitutive point, in which no direction, indeed nothing at all, can be distinguished." But by reflection we can distinguish in such an Ego between a centrifugal and a centripetal direction; the essential centripetal motion of return upon self presupposes, in fact, a centrifugal direction of activity from which the return is made. "So far

as the Ego reflects," Fichte says, "the direction of its activity is centripetal; so far as it is that which is reflected upon, the direction of its activity is centrifugal, and that to infinity." But in an Ego for which these two directions are absolutely one, there would be no distinction of subject and object, and consequently no self-consciousness.\* Where the Ego is "all in all," it is "for that very reason nothing." If, however, the outgoing activity of the Ego receive a shock or *Anstoss* at any point, then it will, as it were, be driven back upon itself; its infinity will no longer be actual but potential—an idea to be realized, a duty, an *Aufgabe*. After the *Anstoss* the Ego may be said to exist *realiter* as an infinite striving (Streben), in which of course the notion of a counter-striving is involved.

An *Anstoss* or shock of opposition of this nature is the explanation Fichte gives of the non-Ego or of the finitude of human consciousness. That it takes place as a fact, he says, cannot by any possibility be deduced from the Ego; but it certainly may be proved that it must take place, *if* an actual consciousness is to be possible. To the finite spirit its obstructed activity appears as feeling, which, when it comes to reflect upon it, it necessarily refers to the causation of an external object. The whole process of reflection by which the "original feeling" is transformed for the empirical Ego into a world of things may be traced with precision. The element of feeling and its consequences constitute the essence of finitude; and the neglect of this original feeling leads, according to Fichte, "to a baseless trans-

\* Fichte applies this to the self-consciousness of God, or, as he elsewhere calls it, "the unthinkable idea of Deity" (i. 254). The impossibility of distinguishing consciousness from its object in such an idea makes it, he says, "inexplicable and incomprehensible for all finite reason."

endent Idealism and an incomplete philosophy which fails to explain the merely sensible predicates of objects." Only in this original feeling is reality, whether of the Ego or of the non-Ego, given to me as a fact; and though I may deduce limitation in general as condition of the possibility of self-consciousness, I am absolutely precluded from deducing the particularity of the limitation in which consists my existence as *this* individual. To do so would be, as it were, to annihilate my own existence. At the same time, from the speculative standpoint, I am able to recognize that the existence of the apparently hostile reality is explicable in the last resort only by reference to the finite Ego itself; it exists "for it as a necessary noumenon." This is, according to Fichte, the circle in which the finite spirit is enclosed—a circle whose bounds may be expanded to infinity, but which can never be overstepped.\*

Such is Fichte's famous theory of the *Anstoss* as the origin of the limitation which appears in sense-affection. As has just been seen, it is not deducible in any other way than as a necessary means towards the existence of self-consciousness and the moral faculty. It is more a metaphorical way of formulating the fact of limitation than, in the strict sense, an explanation. But, taking the theory in the meantime without further comment, we have now before us the essential outlines of what Fichte called his "practical" Idealism. "Our Idealism," he says, "is not dogmatic but practical, that is, it determines

\* In giving an account of this abstruse and somewhat entangled speculation, I have kept more than usually close to Fichte's own form of statement, only endeavouring to bring his utterances together into clear sequence. The quotations in the last two paragraphs are from the practical part of the *Grundlage* and from the Second Introduction (*Werke*, i. pp. 246-328 and 453-518).



not what is, but what ought to be.”\* “If the Wissenschaftslehre is asked for a metaphysic, as a supposed science of things-in-themselves, it must refer to its practical section. This alone speaks of an original reality; and if the Wissenschaftslehre should be asked how things-in-themselves are constituted, the answer must be: As we have to make them.”† “Original reality,” therefore, is not anything, in the vulgar sense, existent: it is a task, a duty, an ideal. This brings out very well the foundation of the system, but it evidently calls for a slight re-statement of the nature of the Absolute Ego, which formed our apparent starting-point. We have found, as we proceeded, that there is no self-consciousness in the Absolute Ego as such, indeed nothing distinguishable at all. Reality comes in with the opposition and the *Streben* which is its result. And it ought to be remarked that it is not the Absolute, but the practical and limited, Ego that strives; if it be said that it is the impediment offered to the striving of the Absolute Ego that is the rationale of the non-Ego, this is not true save by a certain license of speech, which induces us to transfer to the Absolute Ego an assertion true “only of a future relation,” that is, after the Ego shall have become limited. Of the Absolute Ego in itself—that is, regarded as in some way the cause of finite Egos—no assertion can be made. Criticism is compelled to say that it is not an Ego at all; and its absolute barrenness of predicates makes the assertion and the denial of its so-called existence completely identical propositions. The edge of this criticism cannot be turned as long as the Absolute Ego is regarded as a separate fact and, in some sort, the antecedent cause

\* *Werke*, i. 156.

† *Ibid.* i. 286. “So wie wir sie machen sollen.”

of finite intelligences. As such, it is a mere abstraction from the reality of these intelligences; "it is everything," Fichte says, "and it is nothing." But his exposition has led him to a point from which the relation of the Absolute and the finite Ego appears in a truer light. There is no need to sever the Absolute Ego from the striving consciousness, which is our sole real datum. It is present in this consciousness as "the idea of our absolute existence,"\* and, as such, forms the motive or driving power of the whole struggle. "The Ego demands that it should embrace all reality and fill infinity. At the bottom of this demand there lies necessarily the idea of the absolutely posited, infinite Ego; and this is the *Absolute Ego* of which we have spoken."† In this sense, undoubtedly, the Absolute Ego may be said to be the ground or first cause of the phenomenon; but the Ego is then not the Ego as fact, but the "Idea of the Ego," which exists only as an Ideal to be realized. To return to Fichte's phrase, his Idealism does not teach us what is, but what is to be. The Idea is an eternal "Thou shalt" or *Sollen*, that lies at the root of man's existence, impelling him onwards to a never-ending task. The completion of the task would mean that the Ego had subdued all things to itself, and was able to view them as determinations of its own existence. But the Idea is, in its very nature, unrealizable, because the extinction of opposition which complete realization implies would signify the cessation of the strife on which consciousness and, with it, morality depend.

The two extremes of Fichte's thought are thus the

\* *Werke*, i. 278. "Ursprüngliche Idee unseres absoluten Seins."

† *Ibid.* i. 277.

“pure Ego” with which he starts and the Idea of the Ego or the “Ego as intelligence” which he holds up as an ideal of our effort. Between these extremes the Ego is practical, and its practical activity represents to Fichte the reality of the world. At the end of the Second Introduction to the *Wissenschaftslehre*, Fichte distinguishes sharply and instructively between these two poles of his thought.\* In the former—the Ego as intellectual perception—lies merely “the form of Egoity;” the latter, which he here calls the Ego as Idea, subsumes “the complete matter of Egoity” in the shape of a world which is known as completely rational. He adds emphatically that the latter is *only Idea* and will never be actual. An infinite progress of approximation is what is laid upon us; the impossibility of its completion forms indeed, as he says elsewhere, the foundation of our belief in immortality. The difference between Fichte’s earlier and later philosophy, and between himself and Hegel, lies largely, I venture to think, in the attitude which he takes up here towards this Idea. It is another way of saying the same thing to say that it lies in the exclusively practical cast of his early Idealism. An Idealism which is merely practical looks at things only from one side—from the side, namely, of every-day life and struggling growth. Certainly, as Fichte says, the Idea will never be actual in the sense of being realized by any individual Ego. But to submit this practical position as a solution of the speculative question is to ignore the radical distinction of the two spheres. Only in a practical reference has the projection of the Idea into the future any meaning. Metaphysically, or in the idea of any whole, considerations of time have no place. Every stage of a

\* *Werke*, i. 515-6.

development implies the perfect form or idea which is being developed, and to make the idea posterior to its forms is totally to invert the speculative point of view. The question of the "existence" or reality of the Idea becomes, therefore, in a manner irrelevant. There is no moment at which we can, as it were, lay our hands upon it, and say, "here it is realized;" for the very simple reason that only definite portions—manageable bits—of experience can be so treated. The Idea, on the contrary, is the perfect or completed form of experience as such; it is simply the notion of experience *thought out*. Practically, then, the universe may be viewed as a process in which the Idea is brokenly and dimly realized; but speculatively the rationale of all process must be presented "in a moment of time"—as it were, in crystalline rest. Both sides are necessary to a complete view of experience, and it is absurd to speak of the one as real and the other as merely ideal. The Idea is the ultimate formula to which the whole process of experience points for its solution. Its reality is sufficiently proved by the fact that no part of experience can be explained—explained to the bottom and all round—save by reference to this Idea of the whole; this is what everything runs itself out to. Moreover, as Fichte would tell us, the Idea of which he speaks is not a subjective or arbitrary creation: it is a necessary Idea, lying at the root of our existence as intelligent beings. It is the Idea, as we have seen, which sets on foot and inspires the pursuit of itself. Which, then, is most real—the Idea or that which it creates?

Fichte's attitude towards the Idea, as it has been sketched, is the necessary consequence of the exclusive value which he attached to action and morality, and that

again bears on it the very impress of Fichte's own character. His favourite saying that the cast of a man's philosophy depends on the kind of man he is, was never more fully verified than in his own case. The unconditional supremacy which he accords to the practical over the theoretical sphere; the representation of the practical—of the universe, therefore, in its last terms—as an eternal *Sollen* or the pursuit of an ought-to-be that never is; these are but the speculative transcript of Fichte's life of unwearied effort. There is the same strain of moral intensity in both. But the transcript contains also, it must be said, the essential one-sidedness of the original. The theoretic joy of knowledge for its own sake, which seemed to Aristotle the mark of Godhead, the absolute satisfaction of art, and the peace and reconciliation of religion are alike absent from this view of the world; and when every allowance has been made for the importance of conduct, the theory must be pronounced insufficient. It is impossible to make existence hang in this way on something not yet existent, and, from its nature, never to be existent.

The perception of this on Fichte's part was the motive of the later transformation which his system underwent. It is not necessary to consider that transformation in detail; it is sufficient to say that the change was, in the main, the result of a deeper analysis of the religious consciousness. Religion had been summarily identified with "joyful right-doing," but the source of the joy, or, in other words, the differentia of the moral and the religious consciousness, had been somewhat lightly passed over. The theological controversy in which he became involved at Jena gave a new direction to his meditations; and in the comparative quiet which followed his removal to Berlin,

he was largely occupied in attempting to provide from his philosophy an adequate theory of religion. The modification which resulted was probably due also to the desire to popularize his philosophy and make it preachable by accommodating its expression to the language of current conceptions. Fichte's was essentially a preacher-nature, and unless philosophic conceptions could reach the larger world and renovate the spirit of the age, they were, in his eyes, comparatively worthless. But the change was more than a translation into popular phraseology, and so far as we are at present concerned with it, the difference of standpoint consists in the fact that morality is now regarded simply as a stage on the way to Religion and to Science (*Wissenschaft par excellence* or "completed truth").\* Religion or "the blessed life" is a life founded on the consciousness of that, as present and already realized, which to morality is always looming in the future. The religious man, according to Fichte, is he who is aware of his own unity with the source of all life, and who finds, therefore, his own will in the divine will through which alone anything real can be accomplished. And as this will cannot fail of fulfilment, "labour and effort have vanished for him." The progressiveness, and consequent incompleteness, of the fulfilment in the world is a necessary incident of the reflective understanding, which spreads out unity into multiplicity and eternity into time. For humanity and its future he may still, therefore, be said to labour and to hope (in this respect the divine consciousness within him only intensifies his activity); but the process is already beyond the stage of belief or effort in his own life. "He has God ever-present, living within him." That is to say, the indi-

\* *Werke*, v. 542 ("Anweisung zum seligen Leben").

viduals are not the first, and the End something outside of them to be striven after. The End is prior to the individuals, and realizes itself through them, either with their will or in spite of it. The power which sets up the End provides for its fulfilment; or rather, from the absolute point of view, in being set up it is already fulfilled. The End is expressible religiously as the Will of God, with which the individuals are to reconcile themselves. They are "blessed" so far as they live in this self-fulfilling Will. But, to be perfect, religion must be enlightened by knowledge. The highest stage of all is "Wissenschaft," in which we get the theory of that which in religion exists as a fact of the inner life. "Science" comprehends or sees through all the lower stages (sense, legality, morality and religion). It offers an intelligible account of the relation of the divine Unity to its manifestation in a world of finite intelligences, and takes rank accordingly as "completed truth."

The extreme similarity of this position to the Hegelian account of religion and of its relation to philosophy as "Absolutes Wissen," hardly needs to be pointed out. But there is another side to Fichte's later philosophy, which is so alien to the Hegelian Idealism as to have led many to characterize this phase of his speculation as nothing more than a mystically expressed Spinozism. God, as has been seen, is now cause as well as goal, and, as cause, He is perfect in Himself. We are no longer put off with infrequent references to the "idea of Deity," as unrealizable and even unthinkable; we hear now of "God," and He is treated as the source from which reality proceeds. But God is so much cause or source that He is separated anew from His manifestation, and becomes, in effect, something transcendent—a "Being"

whose essence knowledge serves not to reveal but to hide. This criticism points, therefore, to a real weakness, and if we look back at the doctrine of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, we shall find, I think, that it was inherent in the Fichtian thought from the beginning.

Attention has been called to Fichte's laborious efforts to explain the origin of self-consciousness. They culminated in the theory of the *Anstoss*. Any plausibility or conceivability which this theory may have seemed to possess, depended on the Absolute Ego's being taken as something prior to self-consciousness and the distinction of subject and object. As has been already pointed out, however, it is absurd to speak of this *prius* as an Ego; it is, according to Fichte's admissions, predicateless, and the phrases which he employs to describe its action are those which would naturally be used of a blind force. It would be going too far to affirm that, in the works of the Jena period, Fichte treats the Absolute Ego as the antecedent cause of finite intelligences, from which they are derived by some mechanical—or mechanically conceivable—process. But he certainly distinguishes imperfectly between what may be called a teleological and a mechanical explanation of self-consciousness. A teleological explanation accepts self-consciousness as the ultimate fact, and lays out its necessary conditions (analyzes its nature); a mechanical explanation is not content unless it see self-consciousness arising out of prior elements. Fichte wavers between the two, and often, I think, conveys the impression that his explanation is a real construction in the latter sense. He repudiates this idea when distinctly formulated, but it is nevertheless subtly present with him, and colours his whole method of statement. The subsequent development of his thought confirms one in



the belief that this is so. In the semi-popular *Bestimmung des Menschen* (1800) he speaks of the Absolute Ego, in very questionable phraseology, as "that which is neither subject nor object, but which is the ground of both, and that out of which both come into being;" and again as "the incomprehensible One," that "separates itself into these two."\* The distinction between this "incomprehensible One" and the Ego, as the form of intelligence, was soon to become radical. For the Ego in this aspect he had already substituted the term Reason (Vernunft) with the view of avoiding the reproach of Subjectivism or Solipsism. In a new form which he gave to the Wissenschaftslehre in 1801, he substituted for both the expression, "Absolutes Wissen;" but the Absolute itself he placed above and beyond all knowledge (jenseits alles Wissens) and therefore beyond the reach of Wissenschaftslehre, which is merely a doctrine of knowledge.† To this position he henceforth remained true. In his later works he talks of the Absolute or God as "Being" (Sein) lying behind all knowledge, and therefore in its essence inaccessible to intelligence. Knowledge is like a prism, which breaks up the colourless light of the divine nature; it has for its object the world of multiplicity which is thus created, but it cannot look back into the colourless unity of the source from which the light streams. This is the metaphor to which all Fichte's later philosophy is reducible, and this predicateless Being can hardly be otherwise regarded than as a direct sublation of the principles of immanent

\* *Werke*, ii. 225.

† "Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre aus dem Jahre 1801," which remained unpublished till after his death. See *Werke*, ii. 3-163.

Criticism which he made it—and rightly made it—his chief philosophical merit to have established. It may be said that the separation and transcendency are more apparent than real, inasmuch as the reference to knowledge is always retained. But it is, to say the least, a misleading position, and contributes not a little to the mysticism which hangs round the later philosophy.

The explanation seems to be that Fichte was still under the dominion of the metaphysic which believes that a thing is an unknowable something behind all its qualities, and that to every phenomenon there corresponds an inscrutable noumenon. This, as we saw, was one of the considerations which led Kant to his assumption of things-in-themselves. Instead of the phenomenon being the appearance of the noumenon, the showing forth of the essence, the very knowledge of the phenomenal is held to disqualify us for knowing the noumenal. Fichte cleared away all such noumena by making the non-Ego dependent on the Ego; but in the act of so doing he erected the Ego itself into an incognizable noumenon, which soon detached itself, in turn, from the Ego of knowledge. Until, however, we see that the manifestation of a thing in quality and action *is* the thing, all our speculation must remain abortive. The twin categories are inseparable, but they do not represent two different realities. The "thing" is the complete synthesis of qualities which are never exhausted by us in knowledge. The noumenon is always, therefore, a fuller knowledge as yet unreached by us, and so each category has its own validity and function. But it is not an unattainable reality, and to exalt this useful distinction of thought into a barrier which thought is unable to surmount is simply to fall down and worship our own abstractions. A philosophy

which remains entangled in this opposition must inevitably end in the paradox that the real is what cannot be known. Fichte brings the absurdity of this metaphysic to a somewhat extreme point in the assertion that man's inability to know God is in reality his inability to know himself. "He does not see himself as he really is ; his seeing can never reach to his proper being."\*

We have now criticized, on the one side, the exclusive attention to morality, which led Fichte to deny reality to the Idea, and, on the other side, his tendency to seek a transcendent ground of the intelligent Ego. These seem to me the chief weaknesses of the Fichtian scheme, and so far as his later philosophy escapes the former only by giving full rein to the latter, the change cannot receive more than a qualified approval. Fichte's statement leaves too much ground for the criticism which ranks his Absolute with the Spinozistic Substance and similar doctrines. At the same time, it is possible to avoid laying stress on this feature of the later philosophy, and in that case it may be said to present us, in a popular and philosophically imperfect form, with many of the distinctive positions of what, in a liberal sense, is known as Hegelianism. The truth in regard to Fichte seems to be well expressed by his son and editor when he says that Fichte's achievement was to "awaken the peculiar intuition of transcendental Idealism," namely, the ultimate reference of all reality to self-consciousness. The intuition, however, was destined to take definite and permanent shape in other hands. There never was a school of Fichtians. The absence of "the fixed letter" in his writings, on which Fichte prided himself, contributed to this result.

\* Anweisung zum seligen Leben. *Werke*, v. 543.

“My theory,” he says, “may be presented in an infinite variety of ways. Everyone will be compelled to think it differently in order to think it for himself.” It was natural, then, that most of the re-thinkers drifted away from the distinctively Fichtian method of statement. Fichte himself was never contented with his exposition; hence the persistent way in which he returned to the charge, labouring by increased clearness of style and method to force his doctrine on his contemporaries. In describing his writings as all bearing more or less the character of lectures, Professor Adamson hits off at once their strength and their weakness.\* They are admirably clear, but they do not suggest reflection. Everything is *said out* to the last word, out of consideration for an audience of whose stupidity the speaker is profoundly convinced; and at the end Fichte is never quite sure whether he has succeeded in making himself intelligible. Accordingly, instead of pursuing his own meditations further, he begins again at the beginning, and expounds the whole afresh from a slightly different point of view. Caroline Schlegel described him somewhat maliciously as throwing his doctrine at people’s feet like a sack of wool, and lifting it only to throw it again. Philosophy owes very much, of course, to this persistent repetition on Fichte’s part; nevertheless it begets the not unjustifiable feeling that, after a time, we get no further under his guidance.

> It is mainly, as will be seen, in his more effective working out of the principle of Idealism, and in his more catholic notion of experience, that Hegel has the advantage over the author of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Idealism is evidently not complete as a system, unless the presence

\* *Fichte*, p. 46 (Blackwood’s *Philosophical Classics*).

and the progress of reason be vindicated throughout the length and breadth of experience. But Fichte's early position made him indifferent to the proof that reason *is*; his assertion only ran that it *is to be*. Experience, therefore, as such, has no interest for him; and the sole application which he made of his principles was in the spheres of jurisprudence and ethics, where the ought-to-be predominates. References to nature and to history are characteristically absent from the earlier works. It was on these sides that the Fichtian Idealism required to be supplemented, and this was done, in the domain of nature by Schelling, in the domain of history, still more brilliantly and surefootedly, by Hegel. Without the vindication of rational conceptions as working themselves out in these spheres, the transformation of practical into absolute Idealism would have been impossible; and Hegel found it possible solely in virtue of his laborious and faithful study of experience in all its forms. Fichte, on the contrary, seemed to imagine that, having got the supreme principle in the Ego, he would be able to deduce from it all the particulars without more ado. It is, of course, impossible to supply this deduction except in the most general terms; and the consequence is, as we have seen, that we get little more that is vital from the *Wissenschaftslehre* than the enunciation of the general principle. Deduction, in short, is arbitrary and unconvincing, so long as it is an exercise of subjective ingenuity; its value depends altogether on the extent and the profundity of the preliminary study which it represents. It is vain to suppose that the specific nature of reason can be learned otherwise than by study of the existent Fact. Hegel boasts that his deductions represent "the march of the object itself." This is not always the case; but where it is true, it is so simply because

he has first buried himself in the object. The evolution may appear to be completely *à priori*, but its different conceptions and principles are connected by Hegel for no other reason than because the study of facts has revealed to him the bond that unites them. It would be more correct to say that in this way the true meaning of *à priori* emerges, when it is found to be identical with the ripest results of so-called *à posteriori* research. The object of philosophy is the completed system of experience, and the object remains the same whether it be regarded *in ordine ad universum*, as a self-developing system, or *in ordine ad individuum*, as material painfully gathered and pieced together. Completeness alone is necessary to exhibit the identity.\*

Fichte's importance as the founder of German Idealism, and the light thrown by a critical examination of his system on the subsequent course of Idealistic thought, are sufficient justification of the seemingly disproportionate space which has been here devoted to him. His historical mission was to give clear and forcible expression to the fundamental position of Idealism—the necessary reference of all existence to self-consciousness. This position was what he disentangled from the incongruities with which Kant had left it encumbered, and he preached it with an almost truculent intensity of conviction. The meaning of a fact is its existence for a subject, and its function in respect of the subject exhausts its significance: this implicit bond of subject and object—turning out, as it does, to mean their comprehension within

\* Fichte says: "Das *à priori* und das *à posteriori* ist für einen vollständigen Idealismus gar nicht zweierlei, sondern ganz einerlei; es wird nur von zwei Seiten betrachtet, and ist lediglich durch die Art unterschieden, wie man dazu kommt. *Werke*, i. 447.

one reason—he demonstrated effectively as the duality in unity by which the world subsists. But the principle of this rational unity is grasped by Fichte with a rigidity which somehow makes it incapable of development. The Ego with its identity, implicit or realized, of subject and object, is certainly the one notion which resumes the whole process of experience. To appreciate its full significance, however, we must be introduced as well to the whole hierarchy of notions for which it, as it were, finds room within itself. To some extent, this is supplied to us in the *Grundlage*; but Fichte's general tendency is to dash at once at the central position, forgetting that, in that case, it must remain in abstract isolation. Conquered in this fashion at the outset, the Ego is the mere *form* of intelligence, apart from the world of rational relations in which it finds its content. And, once separated from the intelligible world and its conceptions, the Ego, as we have seen, is no better an abstraction than any other. It is not enough to prove that all existence must be existence for an Ego; the form of egoity is barren, unless the inherent rationality of the matter be proved, which grounds the possibility of its entering into a rational consciousness. What is wanted is a more detailed account of the nature of the rational development which the universe of nature and of man is maintained to be. The conceptions which guide and constitute that development have to be explicated, brought into connection, and elucidated, before we can say that our Idealism is more than an abstract position or an aspiration. Only when self-consciousness or spirit appears as the complex unity to which all those conceptions lead, does it lose its formal character, and become, as it were, the monogram of the whole riches of reason.

## CHAPTER III.

## SCHELLING.

THE criticism with which Schelling and Hegel relegated the Wissenschaftslehre to the rank of a historical and superseded system consisted, in a general form, in accusing its Idealism of being essentially subjective in character. They did not, of course, mean by that to endorse the popular misconception of his system, as a scheme of psychological Idealism which reduced the universe to the forth-puttings of Herr Fichte's self-assertive Ego. Egoity and individuality, Fichte insists, are two entirely different ideas; and, as he says in his *Answer to Professor Reinhold*, his whole system turns on "the assertion in and with the individual of the absolute totality as such."\* Nevertheless, even apart from the obvious disadvantages of a misleading terminology, Fichte's method of summing up philosophy soon began to appear narrow and strained to his young disciple, Schelling. In spite of his recognition of "the absolute totality," Fichte, with his exclusively ethical interest, saw the sole realization of the Absolute Ego in the consciousness of the finite individual. He passes at a stride from the perfect indefiniteness of the one to the factual existence of the other, connecting them, as we have seen, by an arbitrary pictorial hypothesis (the *Anstoss*). The function of Nature on such a theory is merely to serve as the necessary limit of the finite consciousness. Inasmuch, therefore, as the existence of Nature, independently of the individuals which are, in a sense, her children, does

\* Fichte, *Werke*, ii. 505.



not seem to be provided for, the theory lays itself open to the charge of undue subjectivity. It was the meagreness of Fichte's treatment of Nature that impelled Schelling to what he was fond of calling his "Durchbruch zur Realität." Nature will not be dismissed simply as *not-I*. Only so long as attention is restricted to the practical sphere, can it be deemed a sufficient account of Nature to say that it is the "obstacle" (even though the obstacle be eventually converted into the "material" or means) of the Ego's realization. An obstacle, whose distinction it is to be *not* Ego, must always appear alien to intelligence; Nature, on the contrary, is herself a magazine of intelligible forms, and demands to be treated as such. She refuses to be stuffed into consciousness in the lump, as it were, merely to prevent the latter from being a blank. It appeared, therefore, to Schelling a truer Idealism to work out the intelligible system of Nature, exhibiting thereby its essential oneness with the intelligent nature of the Ego.

Schelling began his philosophical career at the age of twenty as an ardent Fichtian. The little book which he published at that early period\* proved him to have as firm a grasp of the principle of the Ego as Fichte himself. Two years later the *Ideas towards a Philosophy of Nature* appeared, and from that time the breach between the two philosophers—extending, unhappily, to their personal relations—went on widening. Schelling's philosophy ran through a number of phases, but his name is peculiarly associated with the *Naturphilosophie*. This is the typical achievement in virtue of which he forms a link in our historic sequence. The dominating idea of the *Naturphilosophie* may be said to be the exhibi-

\* *Vom Ich als Princip der Philosophie* (1795).

tion of Nature as the process of intelligence towards consciousness. Nature is more than the dead antithesis of conscious thought. It is not definable merely as *not-Ego*; it is also *Ego*. According to Fichte's formula, "the *Ego* is everything," that is, all-inclusive; but that is true, Schelling adds, only because "everything=*the Ego*."\* That is to say, all natural things and beings exhibit intelligence in their structure; they are each "a visible analogon of the mind."† Nature is the *prius* in time of the individual intelligence—the ground out of which it springs. How could it give rise to the conscious intelligence, if it were not originally identical with what we regard as intelligent in ourselves? "Nature," for the *Naturphilosophie*, "is to be visible intelligence, and intelligence invisible Nature."‡

If Fichte in philosophizing set out from the results of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, then Schelling, it has been said, took the *Critique of Judgment* as his starting-point. It was the life of organic beings that first suggested to him this general notion of Nature. An organism is a self-producing whole, in which notion and existence are absolutely fused. It exists as an object, and yet its existence is that of a self-shaping intelligence; it is an idea which realizes itself. The organic aspect of Nature was simply passed over in Fichte's philosophy. But a philosophy evidently cannot be all-inclusive, if no room is found in its idea of Nature for Nature's most striking phenomenon. Generalization speedily shows that what has been observed in the organism is the root-idea of universal Nature; its products are intelligible, yet produced without consciousness. If we regard Nature as

\* Schelling's *Sämmtliche Werke*, i., iv. 109.

† *Ibid.* i., ii. 222.

‡ *Ibid.* i., ii. 56.

a dead *product* ; if, for example, we transfer the intelligence to a consciousness apart from Nature, impressing order and design upon it, we destroy, Schelling says, the notion of a Nature altogether. According to its essential notion, he maintains, Nature is, in all its parts, living or self-producing—productivity and product in one. Empirical science deals only with the separate products—with the objects of nature, or with nature as object ; *Naturphilosophie* treats of the inner life that drives the whole—of Nature as productivity or as subject.\* To Nature in this sense Schelling applied at one time the unfortunate phrase, soul of the world (*Weltseele*). Grossly unscientific as the expression sounds, he meant by it simply “Nature as the unity of active forces.” Nature so regarded is identity of productivity and product ; it is *causa sui* as the Ego was, or, in other words, Nature too is subject-object.

*Naturphilosophie* next proceeds to arrange the realm of unconscious intelligence in an ascending series, which shall bridge the gulf between the lowest of Nature’s formations and the fully equipped organism in which self-consciousness at last emerges. ( Inadequate material, a fondness for analogy, and a boundless enthusiasm, led Schelling and his followers into the wildest vagaries in working out the details of this scheme.) But the physical speculators of to-day have no reason to look on the movement with such contempt as they sometimes express ; in outline their own conception of the universe is the same. “Matter,” says Schelling, in words that remind one of Professor Tyndall, “is the universal seed-corn of the universe, in which is wrapped up everything that unfolds

\* Cf. *Einleitung zum Entwurf eines Systems der Naturphilosophie*, Werke, i., iii. 275 and *passim*.

itself in the later development.”\* But Schelling sees, of course, that this matter is itself already an ideal principle. As the continual product of temporarily-balanced forces, it is a symbol or first form of the Ego. Summed up shortly, the characteristics of *Naturphilosophie* may be set down as a dynamic view of Nature, and an application of the principle of development in the widest sense. Its errors in detail do not affect our present purpose; when philosophy usurps the function of science, such errors and vagaries are inevitable. Philosophy has only to establish the general principle of intelligence in Nature; the working out of the principle must always be left to men of science.

Fichte, in his later works, accused Schelling of leading men back into the mire of Dogmatism from which he had so carefully washed philosophy. The wide-spread mania for speculating about Nature, to the exclusion of the more distinctively philosophical disciplines, lent colour to the accusation. Nevertheless, it rests on a misapprehension of what Schelling intended to do,† and depends for its justification on isolating the *Naturphilosophie* from the rest of his system of thought. The “Nature” from which Fichte delivered speculation was a thing-in-itself out of all relation to intelligence. It was something which, on the one hand, could not be brought within the sphere of knowledge, and from which, on the other hand, there could be no passage to the conscious intelligence.

\* *Werke*, i., ii. 223.

† Fichte, however, was referring quite as much to the general habit of thought generated by these speculations as to the strictly philosophical question; and certainly there was visible among those he criticized a declension from his own strenuous ethical and religious Idealism. This appeared to him as a relapse into Dogmatism, or the stage of dependence on the sense-world.

Fichte's accusation would have been true, if Schelling had returned to the assertion of such a nonentity. On the contrary, he denied the title of such a "thing" to be called a "Nature" at all. But a Nature which sprang into existence with the individual consciousness was, in his eyes, just as little, in any proper sense, a "Nature." What Schelling did, or attempted to do, was to take Nature as we know it, and to exhibit it as, in reality, a function of intelligence, pointing through all the gradations of its varied forms towards its necessary goal in self-consciousness. Instead, therefore, of being two things, which cannot be brought together except by a disingenuous ingenuity exerted on one of the terms, Nature and personality become members of one great organism of intelligence. The principles of a true Idealism are really more effectually conserved by such a view, unless we interpret the Fichtian philosophy as simply an attempt to prove that Nature has no existence save in the "minds" of conscious persons. But such a supposition would narrow philosophy to an unworthy issue. Quite apart from the charge of contradicting common-sense, psychological Idealism begs the whole philosophical question in its enormous assumption of a variety of separate minds, receiving impressions or having ideas. Idealism in its great historic representatives—Plato and Aristotle in the ancient world, Schelling and Hegel in the modern—has dealt hardly at all with the question of the existence or the non-existence of matter, as it is phrased, about which the "philosopher" of the popular imagination is supposed to be continually exercising himself. Probably not one of those mentioned has, when pressed on the subject, a perfectly satisfactory theory to offer of the nature of the "existence" which

belongs to the so-called material system, which at once unites and separates individual intelligences. Perhaps it may be said that to explain it entirely would be to explain it away, and so to annihilate the condition of our own individuality.\* At all events this is not the question which engrosses those who may be considered typical Idealists. What they have seen and what they labour to delineate is, that the real existence of the material system is comprised in the intelligible forms of which it is the vehicle (the surd that remains being merely an abstraction incident to our position as incomplete intelligences); and that consequently its *ratio essendi*,—the ultimate *ratio* of all *essendi*—is to be found in a system of intelligence within which both Nature and man may be embraced.

Fichte stumbled probably over the expression “unconscious intelligence,” which Schelling often uses to describe Nature. And certainly, if it be taken as equal to unconscious consciousness, it is no better than any other contradiction in terms. But to do so implies putting upon the Fichtian “Ego” or “pure consciousness” the narrow interpretation just adverted to. It implies also that in the Ego we place all the emphasis on the consciousness—the feeling of self, as it might be called—and none upon the rationality or intelligible content of the self that is revealed in consciousness. Schelling’s answer to Fichte might run upon the lines indicated at the end of the last chapter. He would fully admit that when we view the universe statically, so to speak,—as an eternal fact—and ask for the ultimate formula in which it may be summed up and understood, the only possible answer of Idealism since Kant must be expressed in terms of self-conscious-

\* Cf. what was said above pp. 35-6.

ness, as absolute knowledge or spirit. But he would add that, though self-consciousness is the highest form of reason or thought, yet it is, in itself, only the form. It is its rational content alone that gives value to self-consciousness; so that, in this sense, the thoughts are the true self. Philosophy must proceed, therefore, from the abstract fact presented by Fichte, to unfold the riches of intelligence as exhibited in the forms of Nature and—as Hegel added—of history. In short, intelligence may be resumed in a single fact, but it is also spread out into a whole procession of ideal forms. The elucidation and concatenation of these forms became the business of Schelling and Hegel. The forms exist side by side, and the existence of the more rudimentary does not prejudice or imperil the richer developments.\* The vindication of each is that it is a stage in an ideal history, and that no one stage is complete, or indeed possible, without all the rest. But the temporary independence which we seem to bestow upon this or the other stage in discussing it, never means for a moment its isolation from the organism of which it is a member.

This leads us by a direct road to Hegel, but our appreciation of the Hegelian position will gain in precision by a glance at the next step which Schelling took by way of

\* Though Spinoza was speaking in quite a different connection, his language in reply to the question, why God did not limit himself to the creation of perfect forms, has a certain analogy with this position. It belongs to the Divine nature, he says, to create all possible grades of perfection. “Nihil aliud respondeo, quam: quia ei non defuit materia ad omnia ex summo nimirum ad infimum perfectionis gradum creanda; vel magis proprie loquendo, quia ipsius naturae leges adeo amplae fuerunt, ut sufficerent ad omnia quae ab aliquo infinito intellectu concipi possunt producenda. *Ethica*, i. Appendix.

rounding off his metaphysical system. The advance was made in the unfinished articles entitled, somewhat ambitiously, *Darstellung meines Systems* (1801).\* To these the author repeatedly referred in later years as the only authentic exposition of his philosophy. This phase of Schellingian speculation is widely known, by name at least, as the *Identitätsphilosophie* or Philosophy of Identity. Schelling, according to his own expression, had broken through to reality, and vindicated Nature as a work of reason. The *Naturphilosophie* had become in his hands a discipline co-ordinate in importance with the *Transcendental Idealism* (1800), which formed his own development of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. The science of Nature and the science of consciousness are, as it were, variations of the same theme; and the *Darstellung*, as he tells the reader in announcing its appearance, is to present "the system itself which formed the groundwork of those different expositions." Philosophy, as "the absolute science," or the science of the absolute, must rise above these "one-sided" manifestations of intelligence to view it in its own nature. Hence Schelling begins his *Darstellung* with the following definition: "By reason I mean absolute reason, or reason so far as it is thought as total indifference of the subjective and objective." By this abstraction, he adds, reason becomes "the true In-itself (an-sich), which coincides precisely with the indifference-point of subjective and objective." Reason is the Absolute, as soon as it is thought as here determined, and the nature of reason is identity with itself. This absolute identity, then, is (not the cause of the universe, but) the universe itself. The absolute identity cannot know itself

\* See *Werke*, i., iv. 105-213, where the quotations that follow may be found.



save by setting itself as subject and object. Nevertheless there is no opposition between subject and object as to their essence ; the difference is not qualitative but quantitative, in that the identity is set, in the first instance, with a preponderance of subjectivity, in the second, with a preponderance of objectivity. Thus the force which gives vent to itself in the mass of matter is the same as that which finds expression in the world of mind ; only, in the one case, the real is in the ascendant, in the other, the ideal. The quantitative difference of subject and object, so far as it exists, is the ground of finitude. The apparent separation from the absolute identity, which constitutes the individuality of things, is, however, the "arbitrary" work of reflection or imagination.\* No individual thing exists in its own right, but all merely as modes or "potences" of the absolute identity. The absolute identity exists only under the form of all potences.

The approximation to Spinozistic thought, which is apparent in many of these sentences, is still more striking in the first fifty propositions of the original which they summarize. Schelling refers to the approximation in his preface, and emphasizes it further by adopting for his exposition the quasi-geometrical method of the "Ethics." In the main, too, the same criticism is applicable to both. There is the same fundamental truth, and the same perpetual crossing of two conflicting lines of thought, marring its expression. The unity of the world in God is the truth of Spinozism. The manifold life of the world ought, therefore, to be recognized as the continual energizing of the divine nature. But, by his application of the principle, "Omnis

\* It does not exist "an-sich, oder in Ansehung der absoluten Totalität." It exists only "in Ansehung des einzelnen Seins."

determinatio est negatio," Spinoza was driven to regard all finite differences as a species of Maya or delusion. The philosophic view of the universe could be attained, he said, only by effacing all determinateness; and, accordingly, the God of the system is formless Substance. The life and variety of the universe are quenched in its blank identity. Schelling's terminology is in advance of Spinoza's, but his result is very similar. His Absolute is called Reason; but, in its true nature, he says, reason must be taken as the indifference-point of subjective and objective. "Could we perceive everything that is from the point of view of the totality" (*sub specie aeternitatis*, as Spinoza would have said), "we should observe in the whole a perfect quantitative equilibrium of subjectivity and objectivity—nothing, therefore, but pure identity, in which nothing is distinguishable."\* *Pure identity, in which nothing is distinguishable*—this is the ultimate at which every philosophy must arrive that insists on determining God apart from His manifestation. It is, in fact, the same fallacy of the thing-in-itself, which we traced in Kant and Fichte, that is at work in Spinoza and Schelling. There is the same impossible separation of the An-sich and the appearance, which degrades the latter to something arbitrary, subjective, delusive. The idea that a subject is more than the sum of its predicates must inevitably lead us to embark on those transcendent speculations which have made philosophy to many a by-word and a reproach. This was speedily to be verified in Schelling's case. The only Absolute is an Absolute whose realization is demonstrable in the process of the world. Any other turns to the dust and ashes of unknowability within our grasp.

\* *Werke*, i., iv. 127. *Darstellung*, prop. 30.

It is of no avail that Schelling describes the Absolute as reason, if he proceeds to speak of it as predicateless identity. To adapt a phrase of Haym's, Schelling forgot over the absoluteness of reason the rationality of the Absolute; its rationality is no more heard of as soon as it is raised to the rank of the Absolute. To tell us that the Absolute is Identity—that is, identical with itself—does not, taken alone, throw much light on the nature of that which is thus identical. Nor does it help us greatly to say that the Absolute is that which is identical in subject and object. For this “quantitative” difference, we have seen, does not exist “in respect of the totality;” and Schelling describes the identity as total indifference, which he interprets as entire absence of any reference to the distinction.\* Hegel, on the other hand, is in earnest with Schelling's opening assertion that the Absolute is reason or thought; and he proceeds to show that, just because it is reason, it is no blank identity, but possesses an elaborate structure of its own. The structure of reason may, in a sense, according to Hegel, be examined apart from the opposition of subjective and objective; but that opposition is not, as it is always tending to become in Schelling, indifferent or extraneous to the nature of reason. It is only through the opposition—namely, in spirit that overcomes it—that the Absolute *exists*, or is actual. Hence, too, the Identity, which, with Schelling, was a “pure” or blank identity, acquires a new meaning in Hegel as the presence of thought to itself in its object.

Again, it must be said, in spite of Schelling's energetic protest against this criticism, that he too often in the *Darstellung* treats subjectivity and objectivity as if they were two measurable forces that annihilate one another, or two ingredients that can be mixed like wine and water. At

\* *Werke*, i., vi. 22-4.

all events, on the best interpretation that can be put upon his language, it cannot be denied that the *Identitätsphilosophie* treats subject and object as two parallel developments of equal importance and value. In this Schelling lost sight of the truth that lay at the bottom of Fichte's exclusive attention to the subjective Ego. Hegel renewed the perception that the subject, according to its absolute notion, includes the object in itself. Subject and object do not, therefore, run alongside of one another, but, at all points, the subject, as he phrases it, overlaps.\* Nature, as the "negative" of thought, has its indefeasible place in the system, and no attempt is made to undervalue its importance and relative independence. But the point to be observed is, that we do not remain standing with Nature on the one side and consciousness on the other; there is a development *through* Nature *to* consciousness. The crown, therefore, of the whole development—its ideal end and its real presupposition—is conscious spirit, in which alone is to be recognized the real existence of the Absolute. In Schelling, on the contrary, there is no reality even about the manifestation of the Absolute in the twin series of ascending potences, which he offers as a substitute for this development. The real existence of the Absolute is something out of all reference to this differentiation. What interest is there, then, in the progress, if every step takes us further away from "the true In-itself"—the pure identity of the intellectual intuition?

It is true, Schelling does not go quite as far as this in the *Darstellung*, which represents, as I have said, the conflict of two opposite theories. But he was not long in pushing to its legitimate consequences the line of thought

\* "Uebergreifen" is one of the words he uses to express the relation.

I have been endeavouring to expose. In a little tractate called *Philosophy and Religion*, published in 1804, he asserts broadly that the existence of the universe is non-essential to the Absolute, its relation to the latter being that of a mere accident.\* Its ground lies, not in the Absolute, but in the original assertion by the Ego of its independence. This inexplicable and timeless act is the original sin or primal fall of the spirit, which we expiate in the cycles of time-existence. "Egoity is the universal principle of finitude," and in it is reached the point of extremest distance from God. But when the aphelion is reached and passed, the movement towards the perihelion begins. All effort should be directed towards the attainment of "the great intention of the universe and its history;" this is "none other than completed reconciliation and reabsorption in the Absolute." The extreme similarity of much of this to the speculations of Von Hartmann will not fail to be remarked. For if egoity is sin, then "the universe and its history" is purely evil and fatuous, and had better never have been; the "Unconscious" is the rest which all things seek. The *Philosophie des Unbewussten* is, indeed, the lineal descendant of Schelling's later philosophizing; and the connection between the two becomes still plainer, if we extend our consideration to the "positive" philosophy, to which Schelling turned after Hegel's death.† The chief aim of positive philosophy is to supplement Hegel's account of the rationality of the universe, by an explanation of why there

\* Ein blosses Accidens . . . ausserwesentlich für das Absolute. Cf. *Werke*, i., vi. 41-2.

† Cf. a very acute and interesting *brochure* by Von Hartmann, entitled *Schelling's positive Philosophie als Einheit von Hegel und Schopenhauer*.

should be a universe or a system of reason at all. Hegel tells us the *quod sit*: Schelling wishes to supply an answer to the *quid sit* as well. The more Schelling occupied himself with the question of the "why," the more he lost himself in the mazes of theosophy. This is the natural end of every attempt to get behind the "what is," and to explain existence, as it were, by something which shall be before existence. All that can be asked of philosophy is, by the help of the most complete analysis, to present a reasonable synthesis of the world as we find it. The difference between a true and a false philosophy is, that a false philosophy fixes its eyes on a part only of the material submitted to it, and would explain the whole, therefore, by a principle which is adequate merely to one of its parts or stages; a true philosophy, on the other hand, is one which 'sees life steadily, and sees it whole'—whose principle, therefore, embraces in its evolution every phase of the actual.

With the divorce of Schelling's speculations from the actual, they ceased to affect, to any great extent, the general history of philosophy. After the year 1804 or 1806, Schelling became more and more of a private speculator, while the thread of world-historical philosophy was taken up by Hegel. It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that the line of thought which has just been traced is the only one in Schelling. There is a truer one running through the *Darstellung*. Subject and object, though, on the first view, the products of subjective limitation and delusion, turn out to be the necessary condition of the existence of the Absolute. "The Absolute," he says, "is only under the form of subject-objectivity." "The absolute identity exists only under the form of all potences." This is substantially what has

been indicated as the Hegelian position, only not fully formulated, and perpetually crossed by the other line of thought. Schelling's essentially artistic temperament unfitted him for what his sterner colleague called "the labour of the notion." He possessed both the strength and the weakness of the artist-nature. The glamour of his style,\* and the rich glimpses that seem to foreshadow so much, are his poetic inheritance. But he was so susceptible of the varying aspects of things, that the one chased the other with bewildering rapidity, and he had no time to crystallize them into a definite form. He made his studies, too, before the public, and signalized each new departure by a new volume. Hegel, on the contrary, thought long and carefully before he published at all. He proceeded laboriously and tentatively, boring in every province of knowledge, till he seemed to himself to have found a principle of universal application. The test of the principle came before its public trial; but, once possessed of it, he advanced confidently to the solution of every problem. There was no more wavering as to the sufficiency of his principle, and just as little shrinking from the labour of application.

\* A comparison of the styles of the four philosophers we are considering is not without interest. Kant is tiresomely verbose, heaping distinction on distinction, and yet never sure that he has made his meaning plain. There is an unmistakable vigour about Fichte's style. He can be eloquent, and his sentences are rapped down with the brilliance of good rhetoric. But it is a dry light, and in the end leaves an impression of hardness. Hegel's sentences are wrung from him by the labour of the spirit. They are weighty utterances, full of the antithesis of the Notion, and they stick fast in the memory. The phrasing and the figures are often powerful. But Schelling alone presents that combination of lucidity and softness which is the mark of a really good style. It may be too poetical for the best prose, but it is neither laboured nor abrupt; and the reader floats along the sentences with a genuine emotion of pleasure.

## CHAPTER IV.

## HEGEL.

THOUGH the interest of development does not attach to Hegel, the material published in the *Life* by Rosenkranz enables us to form some idea of the way by which he reached his results. The most striking feature of his preliminary training is the profound study which he undertook of the genius of Christianity. It would almost seem as if his system took its rise in the gigantic idea of reconciling the Christian spirit with Hellenic ideals, and of fusing both in the practical life of the modern world. *A Life of Christ* and a *Critique of Positive Religion* are among the manuscript remains of his Switzerland residence. As house-tutor there and in Frankfurt, his studies were theological and historical rather than philosophical. He was five years older than Schelling; yet we find him taking up the serious study of Kant after Schelling was already famous. He may almost be said to have turned to philosophy as a means of formulating the ideas he had formed of the course of collective history, and especially of the development of the religious consciousness, which rightly seemed to him the bearer of all human culture.

In the first connected form which he gave to his thoughts—in Frankfurt between 1797 and 1800—there may be seen already struggling to light all the most marked peculiarities of the finished system, *e.g.*, the appearance of Logic as a co-ordinate discipline with Nature and Spirit, the dialectic method, and the determination of the Absolute as Subject or Spirit. The years



at Jena, when he did yeoman's service for Schelling, produced a series of essays and critiques, in which, sinking his peculiar views in those of his more famous friend, he defined in clear and sharp outline the position of their common philosophy towards the systems of Kant, Fichte, Jacobi, and lesser contemporaries. He was probably the first to open Schelling's eyes to the real difference between his system and that of Fichte. After Schelling's departure from Jena, we may fancy Hegel watching with dissatisfaction the brilliant but nebulous speculations of his friend, and the extravagance and intellectual frivolity of the minor men in the domain of *Naturphilosophie*. His deep-seated aversion to all this formless speculation was uttered to the world at last in the famous Preface to the *Phaenomenologie des Geistes* (1807). There is a bitterness of passion about the weighted sentences, that marks it as an outburst of long pent-up irritation.

"It is not difficult to see," he begins, as soon as he has got under way, "that our time is a time of birth and transition to a new period. . . . But the notion of the whole which we have reached, is as far from being the whole itself, as a building is from being finished when its foundation is laid. . . . There is wanting both the extended application and the specification of its nature; there is wanting still more the development of form.\* He thus signified that there was reserved for him the task of erecting the edifice of reason on the foundation that had been laid. The youthful enthusiasm for the new principle, "which proceeded straight, without further serious toil to the enjoyment of the Idea," was excusable, as he said ten years later, only on account of the core

\* *Phaenomenologie*, Vorrede. *Werke*, ii. 10-11. For what follows see the Vorrede *passim*.

of truth which it contained. "But these rockets are not the empyrean. True thoughts and scientific insight are not to be gained except in the labour of the notion." This labour of explication is necessary, if we are properly to know the nature of our principle. Without it, the connection which is established between the Absolute and the known world is perfectly external, and reduces itself to a monotonous formalism. We merely take the material as it is offered to us, bring it under "the one motionless form of the knowing Subject," and imagine we have thereby given an account of it. This procedure (for the original of which Fichte no doubt sat) leaves things exactly as they were; it is like dipping them into a colourless medium. Nor is Schelling's Absolute any better; and the elaborate parallelism between subjectivity and objectivity—worked out to such instructive lengths as "understanding is electricity" or "the animal is nitrogen"—becomes as unbearable as the repetition of a conjurer's trick when the secret is learned. The parallelism does not tell us what either the one or the other is. Schelling's method of launching the Absolute upon the reader in the first sentence, like a shot from a pistol, is radically fallacious, and can lead to nothing better than the unity of undifferentiated substance. His Absolute is, indeed, no better than the night in which all cows are black. The True is not an "immediate" or "original" unity, as on Schelling's scheme, but an "identity that restores itself," and everything depends, according to Hegel, on grasping and expressing the Absolute or the True "not as Substance, but equally as Subject." This insight puts an end to the notion of a formless essence; there is no essence without its form, and the Absolute exists as the system of forms in which

Subject develops itself. For Subject is essentially the becoming of itself (Sichselbstwerden), and the system or process of this development is the True or the Whole. Only as the *result* of the whole process—or rather, as “the result together with its becoming”—is the Absolute known as it is in truth. Hence Spirit alone, as the summation of the development, is the real. It is the result, and it is at the same time the beginning, because the real beginning is the End or final cause (Zweck).

Harsh as they may seem, there is yet substantial justice in Hegel’s criticisms of his predecessors. The principle of Idealism appears alike in Fichte and Schelling without deduction; it is, as Hegel says, shot out of a pistol. Hence it is not fruitful in their hands. Fichte confined himself for the most part to firing off the pistol demonstratively at short intervals; and Schelling’s constructions, though dipped in the dye of the Absolute, have, according to Hegel, little or no organic connection with his principle. Genial glances into nature and history are not enough; taken alone, they lead to arbitrary theorizing. The labour of the notion is required to weld them together into a system, which shall penetrate reality by its presence at every point. The difference between Schelling and Hegel is brought to a point in the idea of the Absolute as *result*. Their relation has often been compared to that of Plato and Aristotle, and for various reasons. The comparison holds in this respect among others, that Schelling, like Plato, sought continually to explain the beginning of things, while Hegel, like Aristotle, looked to the End—the final form and perfection of things. Schelling’s Absolute became, under his hands, a formless *prius* from which formed existence emerged, but which contained in itself no *raison d’être* of that variety of

form. In Hegel all trace of a mechanical causality between the Absolute and the world disappears; as a *prius*, he sees that the Absolute is a mere name or sound. The only sense in which philosophy can talk of a "cause" of the world, is the sense in which the Idea of the whole may be called the cause of any of the parts. The cause to which we must ultimately turn in the case of any development is the inner Idea which shines through each of the stages more or less dimly, and to the full realization of which all the stages seem, as it were, to be pressing on. This Idea is nearly akin to the Aristotlelian τέλος or the perfected ἐνέργεια. It is in the τέλος or end 'to which the whole creation moves,' that the true explanation of its apparent beginning and subsequent course is, according to Hegel, to be sought. The ἐνέργεια, as Aristotle can tell us, is always prior in thought to the δύναμις; for it is only as the δύναμις of the ἐνέργεια, that the δύναμις is named. It is true that, when these notions are applied to isolated and partial cases of development within experience, it is still found necessary to distinguish between a prior in thought and a prior in fact. But in an all-embracing Whole, such as the Absolute by its very notion is, the distinction as necessarily falls away. Priority and posteriority in time is a notion which has validity only when employed within experience by those who stand themselves within the process; used of experience as a totality, or by one who can see the whole process, it is completely devoid of meaning. "The universe," as Fichte says, "is an organic whole, no part of which can exist without the existence of all the rest; it cannot have come gradually into being, but must have been there complete at any period when it existed at all."\*

\* Fichte, *Werke*, ii. 399.

unscientific understanding imagines, in studying the rational articulation of the universe, that it is listening to a narrative or story, that is merely "because it cannot understand anything but stories." In the Absolute, therefore, as such, there is no history; notion and existence are necessarily identical.

Hegel did more, however, than criticize the shortcomings of others; he took upon himself the task he had indicated, namely, the working out of the principle of Fichte and Schelling—the exhibition of "the True as system." The task is, in one sense, not difficult, he says, if we will simply follow out with self-denying fidelity the natural dialectic which is to be observed alike in the processes of nature and history, and in every conception of ordinary thought. The "dialectic method," to which we are here introduced, is Hegel's interpretation of the triple movement, hinted at in the Kantian table of the categories,\* and already employed methodically by Fichte in his construction by means of Thesis, Antithesis, and Synthesis. To Hegel this method presented itself—when stated most simply and concisely—as the systematic recognition of the fact that there is no positive without a nega-

\* Kant, it is hardly necessary to remark, calls attention to the fact that the number of categories in each class is always three, and that the third category in each triad arises from the combination of the second with the first (e.g., plurality as unity is totality, reality with negation adhering to it is limitation). In the Introduction to the *Critique of Judgment* he again calls attention to "the almost universal trichotomy of his divisions in pure philosophy," and defends it as springing from the nature of the subject. See *Werke*, v. 203. In the Preface to the *Phaenomenology*, Hegel speaks of the Kantian triplicity as being, when raised to its absolute significance, "the true form in its true matter." But he adds that Kant stumbled upon it by instinct; he did not comprehend its true scope, and so it remained for him dead.

tive, and that the negative is yet only the path along which thought passes to a fuller positive. The "tremendous power of the negative," by which Hegel's imagination was profoundly affected, appears in nature as change, disintegration, passing away and death. For speculation, it is the function that breaks up the simplest unity of thought, by introducing into it distinctions that prove it to contain its opposite. The true speculative method consists in allowing this function free play; we must not flee from its action, but still less must we succumb to the negative. It must be looked in the face, and thereby it is conquered, and yields up to us a new positive, which combines in a fuller truth both the first assertion and the contradiction which the one-sided apprehension of it called forth. The true and final positive justifies its claim to be regarded as such, by allowing room within itself for all the subordinate negations. Thus, to begin with the simplest example, the notion of pure, *i.e.*, of changeless and self-identical Being lands itself in utter contradiction, and thought is seemingly paralyzed, till it reaches a (temporary) solution of its difficulty in the notion of existence as a ceaseless process of coming into being and passing away—that is, as Becoming. Taken more generally, the simple positive from which we start is the stage of sensuous thought. To the child, and to all moments of unreflecting thought, an apple, for example, is just an apple; and that seems to represent a fact sufficiently simple and complete in itself. But reflection supervenes upon the immediacy of sense-apprehension, and brings distinctions into the apparently simple; it isolates the different qualities and aspects of things, and, by the terms in which it crystallizes them, fixes them in opposition to one another. This opposition it is the task of speculative philosophy to overcome; it

must "bring fluidity into these hard and fast thoughts," and exhibit, along with their differences, the connections by which they organize themselves into one whole. In so doing, it is the third and final stage. The ultimate form of the negative—"das Negative überhaupt," as Hegel calls it—is the difference which exists in consciousness between the Ego and its object. But this is overcome in the notion of the Subject that in all things knows only itself—in Spirit that sees in the world of actuality only the course of its own development, or "the kingdom which it has reared for itself in its own element."

To this "æther" of absolute knowledge the *Phaenomenology* is intended to be the introduction. Starting with ordinary sensuous thought, it leads it out of itself by means of its lurking contradictions; and by the same latent dialectic we are driven on from stage to stage, till we find that there is no resting-place for the sole of our foot save in the absolute standpoint already indicated. Moreover, the progress of the particular individual towards the consciousness of this goal resumes in its stages the slower progress of "the universal individual" of history. The *Phaenomenology* is, therefore, at the same time, the outlined record of the advance of human thought throughout "the prodigious labour of the world's history." In point of fact the parallelism, though undoubted, is not always clearly drawn in the *Phaenomenology*. Hegel spoke of the book in after years as his voyage of discovery; and though it is, in some respects, the most suggestive of all his works, yet it certainly contains the defects as well as the merits of a first treatment. The very richness of the material prevents its being thoroughly mastered; and the sudden transitions from the discussion of states and processes of the individual consciousness

to the characterization of historic systems and phases of sentiment, have a confusing effect. As a book, however, it does not concern us further here; for Hegel intimates that, when "the element of knowledge" is reached, and the opposition of thought and being overcome, we may proceed at once to the consideration of the conceptions of thought, as such, apart from the opposition of consciousness and its object. Existence and thought are, in this element, only two different sides from which the same rational content may be regarded. The system of rational conceptions constitutes what he calls here, roundly, "Logic or speculative philosophy."\*

The movement or concatenation of these thoughts appears in the *Logic* without any reference to a Subject for or in which they exist. This has been to many a stone of stumbling, inasmuch as it seems to imply the existence of thoughts without a thinker. But the objection rests on a materialistic notion of thoughts as so many thing-like existences in a "mind." It is certainly possible to examine the nature of thought in itself—the ideas of which it consists—without reference to any consciousness in which the conceptions are retained. Every time we read or speak or think, we treat thought in this way as something absolute, and overlook the reference to consciousness. The scientific interest and value of conceptions is wholly independent of such a reference. No doubt, anyone is at liberty to place alongside of the development of the Hegelian Logic a conscious subject to be its bearer. But the addition is in a manner idle, seeing that it does not affect the nature of the develop-

\* As supplementing the sketch of the Hegelian position which follows, I may be allowed to refer to an article on Hegel contributed by me to *Mind*, for October, 1881.



ment at all, but only serves as a permanent mirror in which it is reflected. The insistence on such an addition is a phase of what Hegel calls pictorial thought. Science sees the true subject in the system of its predicates, and its object is to examine these thoughts for what they are in themselves, and to determine their relations to one another. Hence "the empty Ego" is sunk, as Hegel says, in the development of its own substance, till it reappears at the end, no longer empty but filled, in the notion of the Absolute Idea. In claiming to demonstrate the necessity of this notion, the *Logic* may fairly claim to offer a more effectual vindication of the rights of the Subject than is contained in the noisy lip-service of many other systems.

It is important to remark the 'return to Kant' which Hegel effected in making the *Logic* the centre of his philosophy. The relations of his system to the systems of Fichte and Schelling have been already considered; but the impulse to the construction of the *Logic* came to him direct from Kant. Kant also subordinates the Ego, as the mere "vehicle" of conceptions, to the conceptions of which it is the vehicle; and in the table of categories he attempts an enumeration and arrangement of these conceptions. The analysis of the content of universal thought which Hegel presents in his *Logic* is nothing but the Kantian list of categories, amended, completed, unified, with a thousand interconnections, and without Kant's presuppositions about the subjectivity of the scheme of thought thus unfolded. Hegel, in Kantian language, has merely taken rational experience to pieces, and places before us its complete conditions in systematic form; he begins with the simplest, and proceeds to the most complex, of the conceptions which we use every day

in naming our own thought and action, and the life of things around us. That the unity of rational experience is identical with the ultimate synthesis of things, goes in Hegel, of course, without saying. It is his inheritance from his predecessors, and it would be gratuitous to recapitulate here the steps by which it was reached from the platform of Kantianism. For the rest, the fresh affiliation to Kant, with the revived emphasis upon the *content* of thought, was in all respects salutary; for the current philosophizing about the Ego and the non-Ego, the Real and the Ideal, and the Absolute, threatened to degenerate into a game with counters, on which the signature of reason was getting more and more worn away.\*

But though the antecedents of the *Logic* are plain enough to the historical student, its aspect was different to Hegel's contemporaries, who beheld it flung down before them in all the completeness of its articulation from "Being" to the "Absolute Idea." The end returned upon the beginning, like a serpent that takes its tail into its mouth; but the relation of the whole chain of conceptions to experience was thrown into the background. It appeared to assume nothing, to rest upon nothing; the whole seemed a Melchisedek-birth out of pure nonentity. The complete articulation of the conceptions was taken to denote a process of self-creation; and the most extraordinary ideas got abroad as to the nature of what Hegel had done, and the results likely to follow from his achievement. The "Method" became

\* For this Fichte and Schelling, as we have seen, were partly to blame; the lesser men were still more in fault. Fichte says, speaking of those who had taken up his terminology: "Das leidige Geschwätz von Ich und Nicht-Ich hat mich herzlich schlecht erbaut."

the rage all over Germany, and the misguided enthusiasm of many of its friends was even more deplorable than the confused blows showered by alarmed assailants. To read many accounts, the primal day of creation—the process, rather, of the divine self-creation—would seem to have been lived over again, moment by moment, in the brain of the Nürnberg schoolmaster—and all by the help of his new and magical method. There may have been a certain justification for these misconceptions in the striking figurative language which Hegel was in the habit of employing to illuminate his favourite positions. He speaks of the *Logic*, for instance, as “the exposition of God, as He is in His eternal essence before the creation of nature and a single human spirit.” In a sense, of course, this is perfectly true and unobjectionable; but it is to be feared that such utterances have hindered his acceptance, from his own day till now, by those who pride themselves on being, before all things, men of fact and experience. This is the very ecstasy of metaphysic, they murmur, and pass on with a melancholy but self-complacent smile. This is unfortunate for themselves; it is at the same time a severe retribution for the transitory *éclat* which Hegel gained by such phrases in his lifetime. Those, however, who have taken the trouble to penetrate further into the system, know that the most portentous-looking phrases generally cover the most innocent meaning. Hegel possessed at times a rare capacity for wielding the language of *Vorstellung*, *i.e.*, of figurative and pictorial thought; but few have distinguished it more rigidly from the language of the *Begriff*, *i.e.*, of philosophical, or, in the highest sense, scientific statement. He was particularly fond of the phraseology of the religious *Vorstellung*,

as a means of philosophical illustration, and considered, for reasons which will be afterwards apparent, that he had a right to use it. But an unprejudiced student need not confound the one mode of statement with the other. Phrases like the one quoted above admit of an exegesis, which does not, in any sense, lift us off the solid floor of experience. Hegel is explaining and justifying his abstraction of the thought-content of the *Logic* from the concrete domains of nature and spirit. He is justifying the consideration of these pure conceptions apart alike from the sensuous phenomena of the material world, and from the conscious life of the individual who uses them. These conceptions are, to Hegel, the firm foundation, as it were, of the two other spheres; hence the supreme importance, in his eyes, of knowing to the very core what they are, and how they are connected with one another. They are neither more nor less than the matter of intelligence, or, in more Hegelian language, the essence or In-itself of reason. This is the plain and perfectly unpretending meaning of the phrase alluded to.

It is important in approaching the Hegelian philosophy, and especially the *Logic*, to divest oneself of extravagant expectations. There is nothing magical or mystical about it. The notions with which the *Logic* deals, form, as everyone admits, part and parcel of the apparatus of everyday thought. The 'development' or genetic explanation which Hegel gives us of them, is simply their *systematic placing*. That is, they are exhibited in their connection with the conceptions to which they are most nearly allied, and emphasis is laid (to use Hegelian language) on the transitions by which the one passes into the other. (Hegel's aim in the *Logic* is to show that reason, in the whole range of its conceptions, is an

organism. All the notions or categories of thought, in other words, are inseparably linked one to another; so that we inevitably fall into error, if we lean upon one or another exclusively for the explanation of experience. Contradiction and one-sided assertion are the lot of every thinker who has not grasped the immanent connection, or, as Hegel calls it, the immanent movement and evolution of the notions.\* The universe, or sum of all phenomena, can be mastered, if it is to be mastered at all, only by one who is willing to allow to all the categories their rights by turns—who knows their relative value, and who applies them, therefore, to their appropriate spheres. Such knowledge is necessary to ensure us against the common error of trying to work with the more meagre and imperfect, where the richer and more complex alone suffice. The distinctive character of the method of connection or evolution has already been pointed out. Fix on any conception you please, and Hegel promises to show that it contains the negation of itself. You imagined that you had a simple notion, an undoubted positive; and you find it suddenly transformed under your hands into a negative. But Hegel does not remain in contradiction, or in Scepticism, as this dialectical suspense is called when it appears historically. The Janus-like nature of each conception is taken by him simply as a proof that it cannot stand by itself; we must advance to a fuller expression of truth, in which room may be found for both the conflicting aspects of reality. Once embarked upon this process, we find that we cannot pause till the consciousness of Spirit is reached. Spirit,

\* The conceptions, viewed in this evolution, are called by Hegel "notions;" and the systems of all notions is the Notion—the *Begriff*.

as the union of self and not-self, is, in a manner, the sum and expression of all the previous contradictions. But, borne thus, they are overcome; and Spirit, or concrete Self-consciousness, becomes the solution we are in quest of. It is not without reason, however, that Hegel speaks of the 'labour' of the notion. It sounds at first as if all must be plain sailing as soon as we are launched, seeing that every advance is made by the application of a stereotyped formula. But no judgment could be more mistaken. Hegel did not simply adopt his method from his predecessors, nor did it come to him like the image that dropped from heaven. Years of grim toil in every department of human knowledge were needed to convince him that he had really lighted upon a principle of universal application. It was the profound acquaintance thus gained with the whole course of speculative thought and of universal history, that supplied him with the material for the exhibition of the method in action. A method or formula would lead to nothing but a barren repetition of itself, unless it were fed from the looms of fact. The method of the Logic is as much analytic as synthetic; in Hegel's own words, it is nothing, unless "we bring the *Begriff* and the whole nature of thought with us."

The prominence given to the Logic is typical of the Hegelian philosophy, as distinguished from the theories of Fichte and Schelling. To the analysis there undertaken is due, in the main, the greater firmness and solidity of the Hegelian thought. But, according to the structure of the system, the Logic is only the first of an ideal triad, in which Nature and Spirit are the second and the third. After having examined the conceptions in their naked essence, we turn to see them swung round, as it were, and presented to us objectively in Nature,

which is called the negative or "other" of reason. From Nature, again, we pass into the element of self-consciousness, in which is worked out that "restored identity" of Spirit, where all strangeness vanishes from an "other" in which reason sees reflected nothing but its own features. (The nature of the relation existing between the members of this triad has been a frequent source of misconception to students of Hegel. The besetting sin of ordinary thought, against which Hegel carries on an unceasing polemic, is Abstraction. Abstraction, as Hegel uses the term, is the tendency to take the parts of anything out of relation to the whole, and to substantiate them in that character as *res completæ*. It is at work here as elsewhere. To such a habit of mind Logic naturally appears as one fact, Nature as another, and Spirit as a third. But for the refutation of this idea, it is sufficient to remember that there is no fact at all till Spirit is reached, and that it is only with reference to the life of Spirit that we can speak either of the logical conceptions or of Nature.) Hegel often reminds the reader that the Absolute *exists* only as Spirit, so that Spirit is the beginning as well as the end of his system. "Completed Self-consciousness" is, in short, Hegel's Absolute—his one Fact—and the stages which appear to lead up to it are nothing but relatively imperfect, and mutually complementary, ways of regarding its existence. Hegel's aim is not to prove the existence of the Absolute, still less to show how it comes into being, but to illuminate the nature of its life. The evolution described in the Logic, Nature, and Spirit of the *Encyclopædia* is not, therefore, in any sense, factual; it is an ideal analysis, or an ideal construction, as we like to take it, of something which exists as a fact, *viz.*, Self-consciousness. Self-

consciousness is the supreme example of resolved contradiction, or the unity of opposites, on which the method was originally founded. But the opposites are discernible only as sides of the unity; and just as the Fichtian Thesis and Antithesis had a merely ideal existence in reference to the Synthesis (partial or complete) which communicated reality to both, so Logic and Nature are similarly abstractions from the only real whole or Synthesis. In this aspect, Hegel suggestively calls the Logic "the kingdom of shades," as if to hint that it is but the ghost of reality. It is probably more conducive to sober thinking to present it habitually in this way (as the ghost or abstraction of a factual universe), rather than in the *à priori* fashion which suits the Hegelian method.

Nevertheless, the Hegelian mode of statement has its advantages, if it is not misconstrued. We have seen how the Logic is introduced in the *Phaenomenology*. Every cloud of difference interposed between subject and object melts away from the transparent aether of absolute knowledge; and the two sides collapse, as it were, in the identical reason that forms their content. This gives us the system of pure thought, as it is developed in the *Logic*. Stress is laid with advantage on the system of conceptions, as the element of unity in the world—that which, in Hegel's language, "shuts us together with things." The very nature of this chain of abstractions precludes, at the same time, any temptation to regard it as a real *prius* of the world, such as existed in the case of the Fichtian Thesis and the Schellingian Absolute. It is easy enough to imagine or believe in the "existence" of something which is, by definition, without predicates; but it is more difficult to understand what separate existence can be attributed to a list of abstract



notions. An additional barrier is thus put in the way of transcendent speculation. There is no reality to which we can turn save that of Spirit, as immanent End or Idea. Then, as for what is said of the system of thought-determinations as passing over or projecting itself into Nature; metaphor apart, these phrases merely mean that that system is, as everyone can see, in its very notion, an abstraction. The conceptions give the element of identity in subject and object, without the element of difference; and in determining them as pure thought, we are implicitly relating them to that which is not pure thought, or which seems to be non-rational. They call, therefore, for their complement and opposite. The same thing may be put teleologically from the side of Spirit; for, as Fichte has sufficiently proved, the idea of its life involves the notion of an opposition or otherness, out of which its identity is perpetually disengaged and restored. When presented under the form of a logical evolution, it is plain that the first appearance of the 'other' must be as *pure* otherness, or as, in all respects, the opposite of what thought is. The further progress of the evolution then consists in the assertion of intelligence in its opposite, till, in Spirit, as such, the otherness disappears in identity—but, this time, in a "restored" or concrete identity. This is the course followed in the Hegelian exposition; and it may be said to have the merit of throwing into clear light the essential nature of Spirit, and of preparing us the better to appreciate its life, through the contrast with the preliminary incompleteness of pure thought and of Nature.

Such, then, is the outline of the Hegelian philosophy, considered as a rounded system of metaphysic. The way in which it has been approached from the systems

that preceded it, has familiarized us with the general atmosphere of thought in which it moves, and has consequently enabled us to dispense with much detail, except on the points which differentiate Hegel from Fichte and Schelling. This method of presentment may possibly, however, have led to an over-emphasis of these points. Notwithstanding the somewhat elaborate criticism to which the statements of Fichte and Schelling have been subjected, it is certain that a reader, meeting without comment an account of the three systems, would be more struck by their substantial unanimity than by minor differences of execution. Indeed, anyone so minded might put together a statement out of Fichte, still more out of Schelling, which would seem to anticipate all the results of Hegel. Doubtless this is due, to some extent, to the fact that we read the propositions of Fichte and Schelling in the light which Hegel has provided.\* At the same time, the identity of tenor and of general result is not to be under-estimated. When Fichte had dug out of Kant his great principle of the unconditionedness—or, better, the self-conditionedness—of thought, the fundamental conception of Idealism was won. Neither Schelling nor Hegel relinquished Fichte's position; they merely broadened the sense in which it must be taken, and transformed his mode of statement, where it seemed to them inadequate or misleading. That these modifications were not unimportant, and that Hegel's statement is the ripest and most accurate, I have tried in the foregoing pages to show. If a tendency is to be judged by its results, then the special formulas and methods of Fichte and Schelling may be held condemned

\* Cf. Dr. Hutchison Stirling's remarks in this connection. *Secret of Hegel*, i. 27.

by the semi-relapse of both these philosophers into a species of transcendent mysticism. Nevertheless, the point of view from which the philosophical problem is approached, is the same in all these systems. It may be said to consist in the perception that, since the aim of every philosophy is to exhibit the universe as a rationally connected system, the principle of philosophy, as such, must be reason or thought. The supremacy and all-inclusiveness of thought is, in a way, as much the necessary presupposition, as the conclusion, of their systems. All three were dowered in no ordinary measure with 'the confidence of reason in itself,' which forbids it ever to recognize an ultimate obstacle, or to give up the hope of completely rationalizing the universe, and so presenting, what Fichte called, a philosophy in one piece. To many this confidence seems presumption. But it ought to be remembered, that it is possible to present the idea of 'absolute knowledge' as the necessary completion of the philosophical edifice, without making personal claims to the possession of omniscience. It is possible to see what is involved in the terms under our hands, without being able to realize it for ourselves more than partially. And the point to be seized is, that between knowledge and omniscience the difference is only one of degree. Knowledge, as such, is the Absolute; or, more correctly, the Absolute is knowledge formulated in all its implications. The philosophy of Hegel, in its triple movement, is essentially a translation into universal terms of the return upon self which every instance of knowledge exemplifies. Beyond this circle we cannot step; and, accordingly, the life of the world appears crystallized in Hegel as the visible evolution of such a corporate self or "universal individual." He has striven

to present the universe simply and solely as the process of intelligence. As far as actual realization goes, the system may be patched and imperfect here and there. He may have been foiled occasionally by refractory matter, and his reading of the process may be at times incorrect. But, at least, he may fairly claim that he has laid down the lines on which a complete explanation must move. The schema he offers may be worked out better, but that its outline must remain the same is guaranteed by the nature of intelligence. If it is not possible for the finite individual to transport himself wholly to the specular mount, from which Spirit gains 'clear prospect o'er its being's whole,' still philosophy, in the Hegelian sense, is the insight that this standpoint alone represents speculative truth—the insight, in other words, that this Idea is, in the *ordo ad universum*, the eternally Real.

PART II.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION.



## PART II.

### THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION.

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#### INTRODUCTORY.

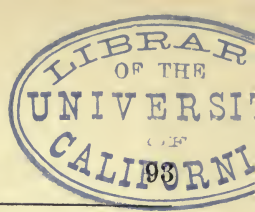
PHILOSOPHY, as metaphysic, is occupied in determining with increasing accuracy the definitions and the mutual relations of the three great objects of thought—God, the World, and Man. Religion, in its current acceptation, implies a certain theory of the nature of at least two of these—God and man—and their relation to one another. Philosophy and religion are, therefore, and have always been, most intimately connected. From another point of view, again, religion, considered as a subjective manifestation, is so universal a mark of human culture, when it advances above the lowest stages, that it cannot be left unnoticed by any philosophy which pretends to give an exhaustive account of man and his relation to the system of which he forms a part. Every epoch of culture has derived its specific form and colour from its relation to certain religious ideas; difference of civilization means, in the main, difference of religious training. In these circumstances, it is perhaps not too much to say that the capacity of a philosophy to find room for religion in its scheme of things, becomes no unfair gauge of the adequacy or inadequacy of the system in question.

In Christian times, the relations of philosophy and religion have been mainly determined by the attitude of reason towards the churchly doctrine of revelation. Three

relations of the human reason to the things of God are possible.

(1) It may be said that the content of theology is matter communicated by God in an extraordinary fashion—truths otherwise unattainable, and on which it is beyond the competency of reason to sit in judgment. We have thus two spheres arbitrarily separated. As regards their mutual relation, theology is at first supreme and law-giving; reason, as the handmaiden of faith, is occupied solely in applying the premises which it receives from the hand of theology. These are the Middle Ages, the Ages of Faith. Then we have the relation of indifference, typically represented by a man like Bacon. When Bacon, in his circumnavigation of the intellectual globe, comes to *theologia sacra*, he steers clear of the subject with the remark:—"If we proceed to treat of it, we must leave the bark of human reason and pass into the ship of the Church." Divinity, he says elsewhere, "is founded upon the *placets* of God." "In such there can be no use of absolute reason. We see it familiarly in games of wit, as chess or the like. The draughts and first laws of the game are positive . . . and not examinable by reason." The position is, in words, the same as that of the Middle Ages, but it is formulated in a different interest; the irreverent comparison is significant of the secular spirit that characterized Bacon and, in a measure, the whole Elizabethan generation. But the relation of indifference, or of mock subservience (as it is found in Bayle), is necessarily transient; it merely marks the end of the period of unnatural separation. In the long run, reason claims the whole man. It is in virtue of his reason that he is the subject of a revelation; and he is continually being asked to exercise his reason upon parts of the revelation, even





*The Philosophy of Religion.*

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by those who most strenuously maintain the severance of the two spheres. It is only because there is a certain reason and fitness in the conceptions of revealed religion, that he has ever made them his own, and that he continues to use them, and to find in them some kind of meaning and edification. The external relation of reason to religious truth cannot, therefore, continue; nor can the encroachments of reason be stemmed by temporary distinctions between the *unnatural* and the *supernatural*.

(2) A natural movement of revulsion carries reason into assuming an extreme or purely negative attitude towards revealed religion, such as we find exemplified in the current of thought which prevailed during last century. The dry light of the understanding has here usurped all the ground to itself; and the explanation of the rise of positive religions is sought in the hypothesis of deceit, ambition, and priestcraft. Religion is identified with morality *plus* an intellectual adherence to certain dogmas of current philosophy—the existence of God and the immortality of the soul—which are dignified with the title of Natural Religion. But it was impossible that this dry rationalism should survive the moving of the deeper springs of feeling, that marked the close of the century. The first revival of a sense of historic probability showed the untenable nature of an hypothesis, which derived man's greatest onward impulse from a hotbed of corruption and deceit. But to overcome the abstract opposition of reason and revelation, a philosophy was needed which should give a wider scope to reason, and a more inward meaning to revelation.

(3) This is the third position, as occupied by the best thinkers of the nineteenth century. It cannot be attained without the abandonment of the mechanical philosophy,

and the unhistorical criticism, of the preceding age. So long as the Deistic view of God, and of His relations to the world and history, held the field, a revelation necessarily meant simply an interference *ab extra* with the established order of things. Deism does not perceive that, by separating God from the world and man, it really makes Him finite, by setting up alongside of Him a sphere to which His relations are transient and accidental. The philosopher to whom the individual self and the sensible world form the first reality, gradually comes to think of this otiose Deity as a more or less ornamental appendage to the scheme of things. In France, the century ended in Atheism; and in cosmopolitan circles in England and Germany, the belief in God had become little more than a form of words. But if Individualism is provably untenable, all this will be changed. If man himself be inexplicable, save as sharing in the wider life of a universal reason; and if the process of history be realized (in an intimate sense, and not with a mere formal acknowledgment) as the exponent of a divine purpose; then revelation denotes no longer an interference with the natural course of that development, but becomes the normal method of expressing the relation of the immanent spirit of God to the children of men at great crises of their fate. The relation is never broken, the inspiration is never withdrawn; but there are times at which its nearness is more particularly felt. To these the religious sense of mankind, not without a true instinct, tends to restrict the term revelation; and such a turning-point is, for us, the advent of Christianity.

It was Lessing who first flung this fertile idea into the soil of modern thought, where it was destined soon to bear fruit an hundredfold. In spite of his own imperfect

statement (in the *Education of the Human Race* and elsewhere), he may be said to have founded the Philosophy of Religion, in the sense in which it is now understood. Lessing and Kant stand together in Germany, closing the old age and opening the new. Every epoch-making mind has two sides. Like Janns, it looks two ways; one face is turned to the past, the other to the future. No one can read Kant intelligently without perceiving two tendencies that strive for the mastery. In Lessing the conflict between the old and the new is still more painful, and communicates an element of unrest to his whole life. When he is brought in contact with the manuscripts of Reimarus, the unmitigated representative of the eighteenth century, he is driven by a kind of revulsion to elaborate grounds for the defence of the idea of revelation, and even of certain dogmas of the Christian faith. But it was after all a *tour de force*; and when he was left alone, without the stimulus of opposition, he was apt to become once more a man of the Enlightenment like those around him. But he never attained their self-complacency. In his life-time he gained only the distrust of both parties; now we can sympathize with his struggles, and recognize in him the pioneer of a new time. This indication of his position and influence must be enough in a sketch like the present, which does not aim at going beyond the limits fixed by the two names, Kant and Hegel. We pass, therefore, without further preface, to consider the treatment which religion receives at the hands of Kant.

## CHAPTER I.

## THE KANTIAN PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION.

THE foundation of the Kantian philosophy in ethics has been already pointed out. This being so, it is naturally only in connection with Kant's ethical theory that his Philosophy of Religion can be understood. The immediate consciousness of the moral law introduces us to a world of realities, from which, according to Kant, the categories and forms of our own thought exclude us in the sensible sphere. It is quite possible to accept the gist of Kant's position here, and at the same time to hold that we know all the reality of the sensible world that there is to know. There is no need to adopt Kant's mystification about things in themselves, as different from the things that are known; but he is right in saying that the world of sense is not noumenal, if by noumenon be understood the notion of that which can be an end-in-itself. The sensible world is essentially phenomenon; it exists for reason and as a means to rational consciousness. If it were possible to think of Nature out of that reference, it would be seen to be destitute of anything that could fairly be deemed to confer permanent value upon it. Its forms might flit for ever across the inane, without the suggestion of any end which they were there to realize, and which reason must pronounce as worthy, in its own self, of being realized. Without such an end-in-itself, existence is, literally, to the speculative mind a vain show. Philosophy may be intelligibly defined, from this point of view, as the search for the supreme end, which shall serve, as it were, to *justify* existence—something in the contem-

plation of which a rational being may find complete and permanent satisfaction, and to the advancement of which he may unquestioningly subordinate his individual efforts. The phenomenalness of the sensible world may be taken to mean simply that it does not supply to reason such an end. All the forms of its life are ends only in a relative sense; they have their true end outside of themselves. It is evident that, in this sense, there can be no more than one noumenon. The notion of end-in-itself implies that whatever is so designated receives its title because all other ends, relatively so-called, hold their significance in fee from it, and because there is nothing beyond itself with which it can be compared, or to which it can be subordinated. The idea of a plurality of ends-in-themselves may, at most, be employed, with a certain laxity, as indicating the variety of aims which are reduced to unity in the one central conception. Nor can there be any doubt where this one noumenon is to be found; reason or the rational being alone does not require to go outside of itself to seek its end. If it did, we should be embarked upon a hopeless *progressus in infinitum*, and must despair of any answer to the question—what is good in itself—what is *the good*? But reason is self-centred, and fixes its own end. Even in such a *progressus*, the objects of pursuit would be, to all eternity, such as reason dictated to itself as worthy of attainment. Sooner or later the acknowledgment is forced from us, that reason must itself be dominant in all its ends, and that it is impossible to cast off this sway. For reason, in other words, the supreme end, of which all the rest are only specific determinations, must be the realization of its own nature. Reason, therefore, or the rational being, as rational, is the sole noumenon or end-in-itself.

This may be described, without misrepresentation, as the permanent result of the Kantian Ethics; and it is essentially, from another side, the same as the result of the Critique of Knowledge. Just as the source of the categories cannot be brought under the categories, so the source of all ends cannot itself be subordinated to any of the ends it sets up. The pure Ego cannot be compassed by any of its lower forms; "it must be thought through itself and all other things through it." So here the ultimate, satisfying good of reason must be reason itself. In both cases, the subject is recognized as raised above the sphere of things—as determining, not determined. Man bears in his own person the last principle of explanation, whether in a theoretical or in a practical regard. The value of Kant's result, however, depends on the interpretation put upon reason, and on the relation in which reason is supposed to stand to the worlds of knowledge and action. The fruitfulness of the principle is impaired, in Kant's own system, by the purely formal or abstract way in which it is taken. This makes it impossible for him to deduce either a real world, or a concrete system of duties. In the pure reason, the unity of apperception remains a form into which matter is poured from another source; in ethics, similarly, the result must be an imperative that commands nothing in particular, unless reason is seen to have creatively specified itself in the historical life and institutions of the world.

Kant's ethical position, however, must be put in a clearer light, to be properly understood. "An intelligence," he says, "has this prerogative over all other beings, that he fixes his end for himself."\* Nature is

\* *Werke*, iv. 285. "Die vernünftige Natur" is Kant's phrase here.

governed by mechanical, chemical and biological laws, which it fulfils without knowing them. The animal has its ends fixed for it by recurring instinct, and, of itself, it does not move out of the beaten circle of these natural impulses. The mark of a rational being is that it is raised above the government of a succession of impulses. Intelligence consists in the power of realizing mentally a general law or principle, and will is the power of determining action accordingly. By the possession of these twin faculties, man is differentiated from the brute. Will, freedom, personality in its most intimate sense, are all contained in the initial self-determination. It introduces us, in short, to the knowledge of good and evil, and makes us the subjects of another legislation, quite different from the natural. Intelligence has not been given to man merely to enable him to satisfy his animal desires more copiously and exquisitely; happiness is, in fact, far more effectually secured under the guidance of instinct than under that of reason. The possession of reason intimates another and a higher purpose to be realized in human life. With the transference of the reins from the hands of nature to our own, comes also the responsibility for the course of the driving. A beast fulfils its instincts, and is blameless; man, enlightened by consciousness, often abuses them. It is of the essence of reason to generate the conception of "ought." Morality is founded on this unique conception; and a moral or an immoral life becomes at once possible, according as we do, or do not, make its "objective law" the subjective law or determinator of our will. The relation between the law which reason lays down, and our subjective freedom to follow the law or to swerve from it, is the subject-matter of morality; the idea of

obligation which the relation contains, is formulated by Kant in the Categorical Imperative.\*

In accordance with his usual custom, Kant proceeds to consider how such a command is possible—whence it derives its indisputable authority. He finds the explanation in a view of reason such as has been already indicated. The law is binding upon all rational beings, because it is reason's own law. The aspect of the law as a command—expressing necessitation—is due to the fact that we are not purely rational. We have a sensitive nature, and are swayed by sensitive determinants; hence our will is not holy, or in perfect conformity to the law. Nevertheless, it is not a foreign yoke that is imposed upon us; we are subject to our own legislation. Man as noumenon, or purely rational being, gives the law; man as phenomenon receives it. This is the principle of the Autonomy of the Will, by which Kant may be said to have solved the question of obligation. As long as the authority imposing the law is separated from the consciousness to which it appeals, its right to command may be called in question. The law must be such in its conception that every man may be, as it were, thrust back on himself, so as to recognize in it his own law. The moral *Sollen* is his necessary

\* It is important to remark that the Categorical Imperative is simply the scientific formulation of the universal recognition, in some shape or other, of an "ought" and an "ought-not;" to which is added, in the Kantian Ethics, an account of the conditions under which alone such a universally binding command is possible. The history of the evolution of the conception of right, with its meaning always gaining in purity and complexity, is, therefore, quite beside the question investigated by Kant. The possibility of the occurrence of a moral action, and, consequently, the possibility of Ethics as a science, depends on the existence of such a notion, whether the form it assumes be adequate or not.



*Wollen* as member of an intelligible world, that is, as a will capable of abstracting from the particular determinants of sense. The notion of such an absolute law is plainly, from another side, the same notion as that of an absolute End by which all action must be conditioned. The authority of the law springs, on this view, from the fact that it enjoins the realization of what we recognize as our permanent and essential self. The position is, in ethics, the same as that of the self-conditionedness of thought in speculation. The End which intelligence fixes for itself cannot be, Kant says, a material end to be achieved; for in that case the will would be determined by something beyond itself. It must be an independent end (*ein selbstständiger Zweck*); and "this can be nothing else than the Subject of all ends itself."\* Or, as he says elsewhere, "humanity, as objective End, ought to form, as law, the supreme limiting condition of all subjective ends."†

Such, then, is the foundation, and probably the most valuable part, of Kant's ethical construction. The Categorical Imperative, or the pure form of universally obligatory law, is "the sole fact of pure reason."‡ The rationale of the possibility of such a command is found in the idea of reason or the rational will as self-legislative, and so laying down a law which every rational being must recognize. In the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Ethics*, Kant talks of deducing from this single Imperative "all the imperatives of duty." It cannot be said, however, that he has succeeded in connecting his scheme of duties with his central principle. If he had

\* *Werke*, iv. 285. In the idea of a good will we must abstract, he says, "von allem zu bewirkenden Zwecke."

† *Ibid.* iv. 279.

‡ *Ibid.* v. 33, Das einzige Factum der reinen Vernunft.

paid more attention to the idea of reason as End, and so the source of the matter as well as the form of its action, it might have been possible to bring the particular and the universal more effectively together. But this would have meant virtually that reconsideration of the nature of the universal Self and its relations to the world, which we everywhere miss in Kant, and which even in his ethical scheme remains fragmentary. The disjunction of the universal Self from the phenomenal world—in this instance, from the historical world of institutions and customs—is the source of the formalism which succeeding critics have so copiously blamed in the Kantian Ethics. The notion of End remains for Kant strictly convertible with the pure form of law. Hence he describes it, in the passages quoted above, as “limiting” condition—as an End which “must be thought negatively, that is, counter to which we must not act.” This is quite of a piece with his unsatisfactory method of exemplifying his formula by taking up particular laws empirically, and testing them by comparison with its limiting condition. An absolute End, however, cannot be reached by abstracting from all real ends; it can be got at only by showing all real ends to be included in one conception. And if the notion of a universal or noumenal Self is to acquire positive content, it must not be separated from the reason that is in the world. Apart from the definite forms of that development, the Self is no more than an abstract point of unity. It was the impossibility of finding a real End in his abstract notion of the rational Self, that made Kant round off his ethical system with a conception of the *summum bonum* which is essentially ~~Ex~~dæmonistic in character.

† It was through the implications of the Categorical Im-

perative that Kant reached the completed theory of the world, which he found denied him in the theoretical reason. These implications are what he called the Postulates of the Practical Reason; and they correspond to the three Ideas which he designates in the *Critique of Pure Reason* as the proper object of metaphysical inquiry—God, Freedom and Immortality. The noumenal, and therefore unending, existence of the soul; the possibility of a reconciliation between the idea of free causation and the completely determined series of conditions demanded by reason in accounting for a phenomenon; and the reality of the idea of God,—are the questions treated by Kant in the Dialectic under the heads of Psychology, Cosmology and Theology respectively. In the field of pure reason, the Idea of the Ego as noumenal unity, and the Idea of God as “the supreme and necessary unity on which all empirical reality is based,” are simply points of view (Gesichtspunkte), by which reason introduces unity of system into its experiences. They are “regulative principles” or “formal rules” in the process of organizing experience; we proceed *as if* all the phenomena of the internal sense were unified in one unchanging subject, and *as if* all phenomena, subjective and objective, were grounded in “one all-embracing Being as their supreme and all-sufficient cause.” Similarly, we proceed in Cosmology according to the regulative Idea of the World as an infinite series of necessary causation; but the possibility is still left open of the existence of an intelligible or noumenal freedom alongside of this phenomenal determination, should such a conception be imperatively demanded on other grounds. The demand comes from the side of Ethics. Freedom, Immortality, and the Existence of God are involved, Kant maintains, in the

unconditional Imperative of the moral law. They are the conditions requisite for the observance of its command; and they lose, therefore—at least, so far as the practical reason is concerned—their merely regulative character. They become objects of rational belief (*Vernunftglaube*). It is true that, just because the Postulates are reached on ethical grounds, they are not to be treated as theoretical dogmata. “Moral theology,” he says, “is only of immanent use, namely with reference to the fulfilment of our destiny here in the world.” Indeed, to treat the Postulates as scientific facts would be to try to defeat the very object of reason in leaving us in this comparative twilight; it would make a disinterested moral will impossible. But none the less does this “moral belief” or “moral certainty” represent Kant’s definitive notion of the intelligible unity of the world.

The first of the Postulates to be deduced is that of Freedom. It is treated, indeed, by Kant less as a Postulate than as a fact; he calls it the one Idea of pure reason whose object is a fact to be reckoned among *scibilia*.\* It is immediately deducible from the primary fact of the moral law. The Imperative is an absolute “Thou shalt;” and, in such a case, if the command is not to be quite meaningless, “We can, because we ought.” Morality and Freedom thus reciprocally condition one another; the moral law is the *ratio cognoscendi* of Freedom, while Freedom is the *ratio essendi*, or the condition of the possibility, of the moral law. Hence, in spite of the inevitable determination of every event in the phenomenal sphere by antecedent events, Kant maintains the perfect freedom of the will, in each case of action, to choose between obedience and disobedience

\* *Werke*, v. 483.

to the law. Phenomenal antecedents can furnish no excuse for disobedience, for time does not enter into the conception of the immediate relation which exists between the will and the moral law. Though all a man's past actions have been bad, yet every fresh act of volition is an absolutely new beginning, in which he has a perfectly free choice between good and evil. He is conscious that he might have annulled the whole evil past, and acted morally, even while the actual immoral action which results is seen to flow with strict necessity from his phenomenal character, as revealed in his previous actions.\* The second Postulate is the Immortality of

\* It is no part of my present purpose to trace the difficulties in which Kant's conception of Freedom involves him. By way of explaining the last statement, Kant says:—"A rational being may rightly say of every illegal act he perpetrates, that he could have left it undone, although, as phenomenon, it is sufficiently determined by the past, and so far infallibly necessary; for the act, with all the past that determines it, belongs to a single phenomenal character with which he endows himself (einem einzigen Phänomen seines Charakters, den er sich selbst verschafft), and by force of which he imputes to himself, as a cause independent of every sensuous determinant, the causality of those phenomena." Similarly Kant speaks of the empirical character as the "sensuous schema" of the intelligible. It seems from such passages as if, in each individual action, the agent were simply re-affirming the original act by which he took that intelligible character to himself. This is how the matter appears when it is thought out by Schelling. Freedom is placed in an original "timeless" act, which contains the seeds of all determination in itself. The letter of Kant leads directly to such a theory, as well as to the further application of the same idea by Schopenhauer to his doctrine of a blind or unconscious Will. Taken as science, Kant's theory of intelligible freedom seems to me untenable. There is no such separation between the phenomenal and the noumenal as he supposes, and if man is not free phenomenally, he is not free at all. In separating the *man* from his "character"—intelligible or phenomenal—an unwarrantable abstraction is involved; Kant seems to be in quest

the Soul. The law demands complete conformity with itself; it is to be the sole determinator of the will. In a being sensitive as well as rational, this conformity is never more than partial. Nevertheless, whatever the Imperative demands must be possible; if a holy will is not possible in humanity as a present achievement, it must be realizable under the form of an infinite progress or continual approximation to the idea of holiness. In this way the ethical Imperative guarantees to us an immortality in which to work out its behest. But the mere subjection of the will to the form of law represents only one side of our nature. Man has a phenomenal or sensitive nature, which cannot and ought not to be wholly left out of account. Subject to the supreme condition of conformity to the moral law—worthiness—man, as a sensitive being, asks for Happiness, and figures to himself the *summum bonum* as the combination of Virtue with Happiness. Now the moral law simply commands the sacrifice of all subjective desires or inclinations when duty calls; it does not provide for the making good to the man of the possible, and even probable, loss of happiness which of the phantasmal freedom which is supposed to consist in the absence of determination by motives. The error of the Determinists from which this idea is the recoil, involves an equal abstraction of the man from his thoughts, and interprets the relation between the two as an instance of the mechanical causality which exists between two things in nature. The point to be grasped in the controversy is that a man and his motives are one, and that, consequently, he is in every instance self-determined. In reference to the Kantian position, it may be said that, inasmuch as the moral law is a permanent motive recognizable as his "proper self," a rational being must in every act acknowledge his "responsibility" to follow after, if haply he may attain to, this idea of his destiny. The presence of this moral ideal in man as man, and its infinitely regenerative power in breaking the yoke of the past, are all the facts that I can see to be contained in Kant's statements.

he may sustain. There is thus a breach between the consciousness of moral integrity and the happiness which consists in the satisfaction of ineradicable and harmless subjective desires. The consciousness of rectitude is in itself bare; it is only by a figure of speech that the possession of the *mens conscia sibi recti* can be identified with perfect happiness. Worthiness to be happy is, of course, in an ethical legislation the first requisite; but the perfect moral world for whose realization man works, and in whose ultimate existence he believes, is one in which Happiness shall be the necessary consequence of moral desert.\* This proportionality, however, is not realized in the present state of separation between the ethical will of the individual and the sway of mechanical causality in nature. The causal determination of nature by our will is regulated, as to the measure of its success, "not by the moral disposition of the will, but by the knowledge of the laws of nature and the physical power of using them in furtherance of our aims."† The ultimate equation of the two sides, which reason in its practical function declares to be a "moral necessity," is impossible without presupposing the existence of God, as an Author of nature, whose causality is regulated by a regard to the moral disposition of His creatures. This, then, is the third and final Postulate, which completes the edifice of Kant's Ethical Theology. In other words, the idea of a perfect ethical legislation, which is contained in the Categorical Imperative, carries with it the idea of an

\* Happiness (*Glückseligkeit*), it may be noted, is defined by Kant as "the satisfaction of all our inclinations (*Neigungen*); extensively, as regards their multiplicity; intensively, as regards their degree; and protensively, as regards their duration." *Werke*, iii. 532.

† *Ibid.* v. 119.

ultimate harmony between the sensible sphere and the practical ends of reason. The moral law, though in itself without promise of Happiness, imposes upon us the realization of this highest good as "the last object of all conduct." But the actual attainment of this object or end is impossible without the independent existence of the idea in God, as the union of moral perfection with perfect blessedness. God, as "the highest original Good," is to Kant the cause of the ultimate adjustment of perfect happiness to perfect virtue in the world, and so the necessary condition of the *summum bonum*.\*

Erdmann points out that all the three *Critiques* close with Ethico-theology, or the system of rational belief contained in the Postulates of the moral reason. It is Kant's substitute for the Rational Theology or dogmatic metaphysic of the schools which he demolished. It is in the last analysis a system of ethical teleology, and it represents, as already remarked, Kant's final notion of the unity and government of the world. Criticism may be deferred till after consideration of the Kantian Philosophy of Religion, which stands in the most intimate connection with the ethical scheme just developed.

Kant has not left us to gather his Philosophy of Religion inferentially from stray references. He has

\* Kant distinguishes between the existence of God, as the highest "independent" or "original" Good—and the *summum bonum* as "the highest possible Good in a world," or "the deduced highest Good." Cf. *Werke*, iii. 535, v. 135, 138. Speculatively, the distinction may be said to be, in one aspect, the same as that already drawn between the Idea as real and the same Idea as a process of realization in time. But the two are not connected in this intimate way by Kant. God is simply cause, and, as such, remains a pure abstraction or *deus ex machina*.



expounded his view of the necessary content of true religion in a separate work, which, from the place it occupies in the development of the German *Religionsphilosophie*, has a fair claim to rank, in importance, alongside of the three *Critiques*. This is the *Religion within the Limits of Mere Reason*.\* The exposition of the doctrines of true or absolute religion necessarily implies an account of the relation in which the different positive religions of the world stand to this pure religious truth. Kant's view of the function of positive religion, and his interpretation, in this connection, of the leading Christian doctrines form, indeed, the most interesting and important part of the book. The language in which he expresses his ethico-religious positions is moulded throughout by a reference to the scheme of doctrines which the Christian Church has founded upon its sacred writings.

In the Preface, Kant indicates the relation which he conceives to exist between religion and morality. Morality, he says, leads necessarily to religion, the point of contact between the two being the notion of the *summum bonum*, and of the moral Ruler who realizes it. We have seen that the End must not determine the will. Nevertheless, there can be no ethical action without the notion of some result flowing from our rectitude; and, in a completed theory of the issues of life, such as religion uniformly professes to give, the notion of the End or final cause of all things necessarily comes to the front.† The content of philosophical theology and of ethics is,

\* *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft. Werke*, vi. 95-301.

† This ethical Idea is here called broadly the "Endzweck aller Dinge," and Kant presents it as the only means of combining the reference to end which is the basis of freedom with a teleo-

in fact, the same ; but the latter deals with the ethical consciousness, as such, and its foundation in the Categorical Imperative ; the former—religion, as intellectually formulated in philosophical theology—presupposes this consciousness, and concentrates its attention on the metaphysical implications of morality, as the practical reason reveals them in its Postulates. However, in spite of this difference of attitude, the whole aim of “religion proper,” according to Kant, is moral or practical, and this must never be lost sight of in expounding it. We know nothing of the nature of God, for example, except so far as His attributes (and His actions) bear upon our conduct. Kant’s religion, therefore, is his ethic writ large ; but it is morality not so much from the point of view of the individual consciousness, as of the divine ethical system of which the individual recognizes himself to be a part. This recognition, with all that it may be found to imply, constitutes the distinctive mark of the religious, as opposed to the purely ethical, consciousness ; so that Kant’s theory of religion is often summed up—correctly, perhaps, but somewhat baldly—in the statement that religion is the recognition and discharge of duty as the will of God.

The *first* section of the book places Kant at once in striking opposition to the easy-going optimism characteristic of the eighteenth century, and of the general movement known as the Illumination or Enlightenment. It is entitled—“Of the indwelling of the evil principle side by side with the good, or on the radical evil in human

logical view of Nature. It is characteristic of Kant that, two pages further on, he treats the necessity of the idea as a species of condescension to the “unavoidable limitations of man and his faculty of practical reason.”

nature." Kant begins by balancing against one another two opposing theories of human nature and history. The first asserts that the world lies in wickedness, and is going from bad to worse; the second—which he calls the "heroic"—sees in the course of history a continuous amelioration, due to the natural development of the healthy instinct of humanity. Kant proposes to mediate between these conflicting hypotheses, by showing that man is by nature partly good and partly bad. First, he explains what he means by his terms. A man's moral quality depends, as Aristotle can tell us, not on the quality of his actions taken in themselves, but on the nature of the intentions which may be reasonably inferred from the actions. In the Kantian phraseology, a man is bad when the maxims according to which he guides his conduct are bad. Now the cause of evil, if the man is to be responsible for it (and responsibility belongs to the very notion of moral evil), must lie in the man himself. In saying that a man is bad *by nature*, therefore, there can be no talk of shifting the blame from man's own shoulders, and laying it upon some inevitable bias. In discussing moral questions we never leave the ground of freedom. The cause of the evil must lie in the free adoption of a fundamental maxim or principle of volition. The ground or motive of such a choice remains of course inexplicable, for we cannot go back upon a free act. But the point to be borne in mind is, that the bias, if it should be proved to exist, must be first communicated to the will by an act of freedom. At the same time, if the adoption of a certain maxim as an underlying principle of ethical choice is found to be a universal characteristic of mankind, the ground of the adoption of this maxim—and, with it, the good or evil that it may contain—may

fairly be said to be innate in human nature. It is innate in the sense that the will must be conceived to have given itself this bias before any opportunity arises for employing its freedom within experience. This "first subjective ground" may, therefore, be called by the more familiar term "disposition" (*Gesinnung*); and, though itself freely adopted, it must plainly have determining influence upon the whole series of our actions in time.

Should the disposition of humanity as such, therefore, exhibit a "propensity to evil" (*Hang zum Bösen*), that propensity would deserve to be called natural, even though it must be held to consist, as has been explained, and as Kant repeats, simply "in the subjective ground of the possibility of deviation from the maxims of the moral law." The deflection of the will from the law must be due to the fact that the will has taken to itself another maxim, which runs directly counter to the primary maxim of implicit obedience; and this causes a permanent incapacity to make the moral law the consistent maxim of conduct—an incapacity which may fitly be called, Kant says, in the phraseology of Scripture, "the evil heart." Now the adoption of this evil heart has been described as our own act; yet it has been as emphatically declared to precede all acts. The word "act," therefore, must be taken here in two different senses; and Kant proceeds to explain that the origin of the propensity to evil, as the formal condition of all the immoral acts of experience, must be an "intelligible act, cognizable only through reason without any condition of time." It is just as impossible to assign a cause for this corruption of the supreme maxim of volition, as for any fundamental property of our nature; but it may fairly be called, again in the language of the Church, an act of original sin (*peccatum originarium*).

The question of the origin of evil in the human heart is manifestly not a question of origin in time ; time has nothing to do with the notion of the will or of a moral change. It is, indeed, a contradiction in terms to seek for the cause in time of a free action, in the same way as search is made for the cause of an event in nature. The cause of an ethical change must be ethical, and must lie, accordingly, simply and solely in the will itself. The question is confined, therefore, to the rational origin (*Vernunftursprung*) of the morally bad. That is to say, the existence of evil is taken simply as a fact, without any reference to time ; and what is sought is the rational bond necessary for the thought-connection of this state of the human will with the normal (and therefore logically prior) state of complete conformity to the moral law. Ethically, the passage from the one state to the other, as taking place within the will, must necessarily appear as an immediate transition. Man is viewed as passing directly from a state of innocence to the commission of a morally bad action ; and, from the ethical standpoint, every instance of the morally bad is such a lapse. The moral law judges every action as an *original* use of freedom, and finds no excuse for a man in the evil of his past, even though it may have become to him, as we say, a second nature. This "intelligible" departure from the perfect law is represented in Scripture as the Fall of man. As a strictly ethical fact, it is independent of considerations of time ; it may be conceived as taking place in every immoral act, or, as universally characteristic of humanity, it may be conceived as taking place once for all. "In Adam all have sinned." The account in Genesis, when stripped of its narrative form, agrees, according to Kant, in all particulars with the ethical

analysis. Even in the detail of the serpent, as a spirit tempting humanity to sin, we may see expressed the ultimate inexplicability of the origin of evil in a creature whose original nature is good.

Kant thus, in mediating between the two views of human nature mentioned at the outset, asserts the existence of a radical evil in man. The presence of evil consists in the fact that man, though conscious of an obligatory law, has yet adopted as maxim of conduct the occasional deviation from the same. Its ground is not to be sought in the sensitive nature of man, and the natural impulses of which that is the root. These have in themselves no direct connection with evil, and we are moreover not responsible for their existence in us.\* Nor can it be found in a corruption of the ethically legislative reason. Such a corruption would reduce man to a completely devilish condition. No man, however, can completely throw off allegiance to the moral law; it belongs to his essence, and refuses to be silenced. The solution of the problem of evil must be sought in the relation between the rational and the sensitive nature of man. The moral law would rule absolutely in his conduct, were it not that the sensitive nature (in itself harmless) supplies him with other and non-moral incitements to action. The evil heart consists in the reversal of the ethical order of precedence which subsists between these two classes of motives. The man who subordinates the pure motive of ethical obedience to "the motives of inclination"—which may be grouped under the general name of Happiness—

\* It is not with flesh and blood, as Kant says, that we have to fight, but against principalities and powers; that is, according to his exegesis, against the unseen might of a maxim that infects all our willing.

is, in his intelligible character, bad, even though his empirical character, as it appears in his actions, may be blameless. The tacit adoption of a maxim of occasional deviation from the law in the interest of personal desires, is the root of all evil. "This evil is radical, because it corrupts the ground of all maxims. Moreover, as natural propensity, it cannot be eradicated; for that could only be done by means of good maxims, and inasmuch as the supreme subjective ground of all maxims is *ex hypothesi* corrupt, their adoption becomes impossible."\*

"Nevertheless," Kant continues, "it must be possible to gain the mastery over it, seeing that it is found in man as a freely acting being." This is the question which next emerges. How is a man who is thus by nature evil to make himself good? Whatever a man is morally, or is to become, must be his own work; yet how can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit? It is something that passes our power of comprehension; but it must be possible, for the moral law commands its performance. The tree, happily, is not wholly corrupt; otherwise the task would be impossible. The moral law remains with us, and the susceptibility to ethical ideas which it implies is indestructible. What has to be done is to restore the law to the place of supremacy among motives of action which rightfully belongs to it. But the restoration, as we have seen, cannot be effected by any gradual process of amelioration. The supreme subjective ground of all maxims must be changed, or, in other words, the man must be renewed in the spirit of his mind. The passage from corruption to purity of moral maxim implies a revolution as radical as that of the

\* *Werke*, vi. 131.

original act of sin ; by a single unalterable resolve, the man must undo what was then done. The subject who has effected this revolution within himself, is ethically a new creature, and is accepted before God from that moment as good and well-pleasing in His sight. The change is likened in Scripture to a change of heart or a new birth. From such a point moral education must set out ; for all possibility of progress lies in the fundamental, if often only half-acknowledged, principle of action which is then adopted. It is vain to enforce upon a man the performance of special duties, so long as he is not, as it were, born again ; the ground slips like sand from under our feet. Insight into the possibility of this restoration is no more attainable here than in any other case where the moral imperative seems to conflict with the determination of events by their antecedents. But that does not affect its real possibility. The principle of the natural depravity of the human will is not to be used dogmatically, so as to exclude the possibility of a regeneration. Its ethical function is simply to forewarn us that all is not right as things stand—that the state of nature, though it may often appear very harmless, is yet, from the point of view of ethics, bad. A dogmatic assertion of the futility of effort would, on the contrary, nip the moral life in the bud. In any case, even though the change of heart should be impossible without “higher co-operation,” all true religion teaches that only he who has done all that is in his power—he who has not buried his talent—will be the subject of this divine grace. “It is not necessary, therefore, for anyone to know what God does for his salvation ; it *is* essential for him to know what he himself has to do, in order to become worthy of this assistance.”



The struggle between the original good in man, as represented by the moral law, and his present evil disposition, forms the subject of the *second* section of the book. Kant entitles it "Of the struggle of the good principle with the evil for the dominion over man." The Christian Scriptures represent "this intelligible moral relation" of two principles in man as persons or powers outside of him, contending for the exclusive sovereignty over him. The evil spirit appears, in virtue of the Fall, as the prince of this world. But in the midst of the kingdom of darkness, the Jewish theocracy stood as a memorial of "the indefeasible right of the first proprietor." Among the Jewish people in the fulness of time appeared a Person who, according to the belief of his followers, announced himself as true man, and yet, at the same time, as one whose original innocence was unaffected by the compact which the rest of mankind had made, in the person of its first forefather, with the evil principle. "The prince of this world . . . hath nothing in me." By a resolute resistance to temptation, he declared war to the death against the evil principle and all its works. In its physical aspect, the strife could not end otherwise than in the death of him who thus attacked a kingdom in arms. But his death is itself the culminating "presentment of the good principle, that is, of humanity in its moral perfection, as example for the imitation of everyone." The kingdom of darkness exists still, but its power was broken by the example of that death. "To them that believe in his name," that is, Kant interprets, to those who, upborne by his example, realize in themselves the same triumph over the assaults of evil, the transgressions of the past have no longer any terror. A new life has begun within them, and the

fetters of the old have been struck off. Power has been given them to become the sons of God.

According to Kant, we have only to strip this account of its "mystic husk," in order to recognize in it an ethical content valid and obligatory for all time. It remains, then, to see his interpretation of its "spirit and rational meaning." In the first place, without any disparagement of its possible historical truth, the narrative form disappears, as such, in a statement of moral relations. "The good principle did not descend merely at a certain time, but from the origin of the human race it has descended from heaven in invisible fashion upon humanity." Of this the presence of a perfectly holy moral ideal in man alongside of his sensitive nature is sufficient proof. Humanity—or, more widely, rational existence—in its moral perfection, Kant here declares without reservation to be the only thing that can make a world the object of the divine decree and the End of creation. This Idea of a perfect humanity was in the beginning with God, and through it, or for the sake of its realization, all things were made that were made. It is, in short, the only begotten Son in whom God is well pleased. To this ideal and prototype of humanity it is our duty to raise ourselves; and for this the Idea itself gives us strength, being present within us, as if it had descended from heaven. There is no objection to saying that the ideal is necessarily personified by us in a man, such as is represented in the Gospel history; but, in a practical regard, the reality of the idea is independent of its exemplification. The prototype of an example must always be sought in our own reason. "Its presence there," Kant adds, "is in itself sufficiently incomprehensible, without supposing it hypostatized besides in a particular man." At

the same time, such a divinely-minded Teacher, if he did appear, would be able to speak of himself with truth, as if the ideal of the good were actually manifested by him; for he would speak, in such expressions, only of the spirit which ruled his actions. It is of the 'mind' which was in Christ Jesus, and which ought also to be in us, that account must be taken. The spirit of such a life—that is to say, ideal humanity, whether realized in a definite individual or not—is a complete satisfaction, in the eyes of supreme justice, for all men at all times and in all worlds. By identifying ourselves with this perfect mind, we put away our old heart, and purify the ground of our maxims. It is true, the law says: "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect," and the distance that separates us from conformity to the perfect will of God is infinite; so that, in act, this ideal righteousness remains unattainable. But the morally purified disposition, as the germ from which all good is to develop itself, is accepted in lieu of the deed by God, who is the searcher of hearts, and who views the infinite progress of the moral life at once as a completed whole. The righteousness of the perfect Man is imputed to us, and covers our shortcomings.

The reconciliation of this with the principles of divine justice presents certain difficulties, however, which lead Kant to go into the theory in greater detail. The new heart is accepted before God as the earnest of an unresting progress in good, which He is pleased to regard as equivalent to that perfect righteousness to which, in his heart, the man clings. But even though the man contracts no new debts after his change of heart, yet, from the point of view of justice, the old remain unpaid. In avoiding offence for the future, he does no more than

his duty, and the doing of his duty to all eternity will yield no surplus of merit to weigh against the sins of his former life. The evil heart or disposition which he has cast off, contained in itself, like a corrupt fountain, an infinity of transgressions, and calls, therefore, for an infinite punishment. The debt of sin, too, is the most personal of all obligations, and must in every case be paid by the sinner himself. Yet one who has laid hold on the good in the way described cannot be the subject of the wrath of God. How is this punishment to be borne by the man, consistently with the complete forgiveness of sin which accompanies repentance and the new heart? The answer is found by Kant in an analysis of the notion of the moral change that has taken place. The fundamental principle of the man's action, it must be noted, is changed, so that he is actually, in an ethical sense, *a new man*. Though he is physically the same person, yet, in the eye of a divine Judge, he is another. In the language of Scripture, the change consists in putting off the old man and his deeds, and putting on the new. The sacrifice which this implies—crucifying the flesh—and the sufferings which are the inevitable lot of humanity in this life (and which the old man might fitly have regarded, from the religious point of view, as the punishment of his disobedience), are cheerfully assumed and borne by the new man, not unwillingly as the wrath of an angry God, but in a spirit of perfect obedience. The pure mind of the Son of God present within him bears, as his substitute, the penalty of his past sins, redeems him by suffering and death, and finally appears as his advocate before the Judge. Or, if the idea be personified, it may be said that the Son of God himself does all this. The only difference between the two forms of expression is, that when we

adopt the personified form, the death which the new man dies daily, appears as a death suffered once for all by the representative of mankind. In this way, then, the claims of justice are satisfied; for the substitutionary office undertaken by the new man is something over and above the mere punctual discharge of his duty. At the same time, it is by an act of grace that this merit is reckoned to our account, inasmuch as the ideal of a morally perfect humanity exists in us as yet only as a set purpose of heart.

This imperfect, or merely germinal, character of the good within him need not, however, disturb unduly the man who has undergone this saving change. He must not permit himself to be tormented by a continual fear of backsliding; he must preserve the due mean between over-confidence and a cowardly distrust of the sincerity of his repentance. His steadfastness and continuous progress in the past form his only standard for judging of the probabilities of the future. The man, therefore, who can say, on an honest review of his actions, that his repentance has stood proof, sees before him the prospect of an endless future of the same happy progress. On the contrary, he who has always fallen back into evil, or sunk from bad to worse, has the outlook into an equally endless future of wretchedness. The attraction of the one view—Heaven—gives calmness and strength to the former; the horror of the other view—Hell—serves to rouse the conscience of the latter to stem the evil, so far as that may yet be.\* Certainty of the unchangeable

\* Kant emphasizes here, it will be observed, the ethical advantages of the popular conception of an eternal state of happiness or misery in another life. On the other hand, he points out, in a long note, the disadvantages of the same conception when taught

nature of our disposition is not possible to man, nor would it, if attainable, be morally beneficial; but a good and pure disposition begets a confidence in its own permanency, and acts thus as a Paraclete or comforter, when our stumblings might cause us grave anxiety.

The first two sections of the book thus contain a statement of the main doctrines of ethical religion, together with an identification of this creed with the leading dogmas of Calvinistic Christianity. Kant's method is first to evolve the ethical position, and then, by means of an allegorical interpretation of the Christian records, to exhibit its radical identity with this or the other doctrine of the Church. It hardly needs to be pointed out, however, that his statement of ethical truth would never have assumed the form it does in this book, but for the fact that he found this scheme of doctrine already elaborated, and, so to speak, in possession of the field. This is particularly obvious in regard to the laborious attempt, just considered, to give an ethical interpretation of the doctrines of Substitution and the Perseverance of the Saints. Throughout, it may be said, the real

dogmatically. It is the same with the doctrine that the reckoning of each man's deeds is closed inexorably at the end of the present life. The doctrine, he says, is one of evident practical utility. It is eminently calculated to impress on men the importance of present repentance and well-doing. But the assertion of its dogmatic truth is just as little within the province of human reason as in the former case. "In short," he concludes, "if we limited our judgment to regulative principles of practical application, instead of extending it to constitutive principles of the knowledge of supersensible objects, it would stand better in very many particulars with human wisdom; and a supposed knowledge of what we at bottom know nothing about, would not breed a groundless *finesse* of reasoning, that gleams bright for a while, but turns in the end to the bane of morality." See *Werke*, vi. 164-6.

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start is made from the dogma, which is then allegorized, with more or less success, into an ethical truth. The whole constitutes an attempt to extract a moral and purely rational meaning from a generally accepted interpretation of the Christian documents.\* This, as will presently appear, is of the essence of Kant's position towards a positive religion which is received by us as a heritage from the past. The two remaining sections of the book are devoted to defining the relation of positive and publicly established creeds to the moral faith, or, more particularly, the function of the former in the service of the latter.

The *third* section passes from consideration of the moral conflict within the individual to the definitive triumph of the good principle, which cannot be realized except in an ethical community, in which the purpose of the individual shall no longer be undermined, as at present, by

\* In addition to the doctrines already involved in the preceding account, it may be well, for the sake of completeness, to state Kant's interpretation of the Trinity. The doctrine represents for him the union of holiness, benevolence and justice in the Divine nature; and the contemplation of God in this triple capacity (as law-giver, governor and judge) is useful, he contends, in a moral view, as forcing us always to consider any one attribute as limited and conditioned by the others. It prevents us from regarding Him either as an earthly despot, ruling according to his mere good pleasure, or as a Being weakly indulgent to entreaty that has not its basis in moral reformation. The service we render Him is thus cleared of the anthropomorphic elements that so readily cling to it. Kant compares this triplicity in the notion of God with the separation of the legislative, executive and judicial functions in the notion of the State. This circumstance seems to him to account for the occurrence of the idea in so many religions. It ought to be added, however, that hints towards a more vital notion of the Trinity are contained in what has been already said of the Idea of humanity as the true Son of God.

the influence of his fellows. Such a commonwealth, all the members of which are governed by the same laws of virtue, is, in its very idea, universal and all-embracing; its foundation would be "the foundation of a Kingdom of God upon earth."\* Its necessity is obvious. The isolation and cross-purposes of the ethical 'state of nature' permit individuals, even with the best intentions, to act as if they were 'instruments of evil;' it is the duty, therefore, of everyone to abandon that state, and become a member of an ethical community. This union is necessary for the complete triumph of the good, and accordingly it is incumbent upon everyone who aims at this triumph in himself and others. This idea of an ethical commonwealth is identical with the idea of a people of God, by whom the laws of virtue are viewed as proceeding from a Lawgiver who is perfect holiness, and who searches the hearts of His subjects, so that the inmost secrets of their disposition are open before Him. The foundation of a kingdom of God is a work which, as a matter of fact, can be achieved by God alone. Nevertheless, man must not remain inactive; on the contrary, here, as in all ethical matters, "he must proceed as if everything depended on himself."

The idea of a people of God takes in man's hands the form of a Church. The Church, as it owes its foundation to man, may be called the visible Church, to distinguish it from the invisible universal Church, or the ideal union of all upright men in a morally governed universe. The only possible foundation of a universal Church (and, in its idea, every Church is universal) is the pure faith (*der reine*

\* Hence the title of the third section: "The victory of the good principle over the evil, and the foundation of a Kingdom of God upon earth."



Religionsglaube), which has been already expounded. Those doctrines alone whose content is purely rational, and which are in no way dependent on historical facts, can command universal assent. But the natural need of mankind for something on which they can lay hold with their senses—some fact of experience which may serve, in a manner, as a voucher for the ideas of reason—has effectually prevented them, as history testifies, from ever founding a Church on this purely ethical belief. It is not easy to convince men that constancy in a morally good life is all that God asks from them, and that, in the performance of their duties to themselves and others, they are “constantly in the service of God.” They persist in regarding God after the manner of an earthly monarch, who has need of honour and marks of submission from his subjects. There emerges, accordingly, the idea of a religion of ritual observance or a *cultus* (eine gottesdienstliche Religion). Morally indifferent actions are exalted even above the performance of duty, because they are supposed to be done *for* God. We invariably find, therefore, alongside of the moral code, a set of statutory or positive commands, which, as well as the former, are supposed to emanate from the divine will. The commandments of morality are discoverable by every man in his own reason, and they constitute for humanity as such the perfect and sufficient worship of God. It cannot be denied, however, that the addition of a set of statutory commands seems to be a necessity for man as a member of an ethical community; and these imply the form of a revelation, that is, of a historical belief, which, in contradistinction to a purely rational faith, may be called the belief of the Church (Kirchenglaube). The safest depository of this extra-belief, as it may be called, is found

by experience to be a sacred book. But, in some form or other, a *Kirchenglaube* is found invariably, as if by an ordinance of nature, preceding the pure *Religionsglaube*. In the process of breaking in mankind to an ethical commonwealth, the one serves as the vehicle for the introduction and propagation of the other.

This being, then, one of the facts to which we must accommodate ourselves,\* the question arises, what is the proper attitude of reason towards the Church's claim to be the depository of a special revelation. Kant answers this question with the full measure of Critical caution. He indicates as his own position that of pure Rationalism, as opposed to Naturalism on the one hand, and Supernaturalism on the other. The pure Rationalist does not, like the Naturalist, deny the possibility of a revelation; he is ready even to admit that a revelation may have been necessary for the introduction of the true religion. But he does not consider a belief in this supernatural origin and its accompaniments to be an essential part of saving faith, as the Supernaturalist does. The question of origin is thus shelved, as a transcendent inquiry which is beyond the scope of the critical reason, but which is at the same time of no practical moment. A religion must be judged, in the end, not by its origin, but by its content; its capacity to become a universal religion depends on the identity of its content with the moral faith which reason reveals. It is part of Kant's aim in this book, as we have seen, to exhibit this identity in the case of Christianity. In this connection, he introduces a distinction which seems almost to contain a reference to

\* There is a ring of semi-ludicrous resignation about the copious array of particles in which Kant reconciles himself to the inevitable: "Wenn es nun also einmal nicht zu ändern steht, u.s.w."

Lessing's leading thought in the *Education of the Human Race*. A religion, he says, which, objectively, or in respect of its content, is a natural religion, may yet, subjectively, or in the mode of its first appearance, be called a revelation. Where the religion is of such a nature that men might have arrived at it, and ought to have arrived at it, of their own accord by the mere use of their reason, but yet, if left to themselves, would not have reached it so early or so generally,—there the term revelation, in this sense, cannot be objected to.\* With this suggestion, Kant leaves the matter, and we are at liberty to infer, if we like, that this was his personal view of the origin of Christianity; it is evident that he considers the subjective revealedness of a religion a question of little importance, when the religion is once there, and recognized as a natural or rational faith.

So far as a religion is objectively a revelation, that is, so far as it contains contingent or non-rational matter, it is, in Kant's view, temporal and local, and destined to pass away. The value of such positive creeds is not to be depreciated. They serve as vehicles for the ideas of true religion, and they are not to be rudely or thoughtlessly attacked.† On the contrary, it is our bounden duty to utilize whatever historical *Kirchenglaube* we find in general acceptance around us. The "empirical belief," however, must be interpreted throughout in a practical or ethical sense. The theoretical part of the Church's creed has no interest for us, except so far as it aids us

\* *Werke*, vi. 254.

† As Kant says in a note elsewhere, "All deserve the same respect, so far as their forms are attempts of poor mortals to body forth to themselves the Kingdom of God upon earth; but all deserve the same blame, when they hold the form in which they represent this idea for the thing itself." *Werke*, vi. 274, n.

in realizing our duty as the divine will, and in performing it as such. This is the supreme canon of interpretation:— All scripture is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. The interpretation may often appear forced, as regards the text of the revelation; nay, it may often really be so. But the interpreter is not, therefore, to be reckoned dishonest, as long as he does not pretend that the moral sense which he attaches to the symbols of the popular belief or its sacred books, is the original sense in which they were intended by their authors.\* Alongside of this interpretation in the interests of reason, the “learned” or historical interpretation may of course assert its place, as necessary for the systematizing of the belief of the Church as a definite organization within certain limits of time and space. But the historical belief is “dead in itself;” it is only by the comparative ease with which a revelation lends itself to an ethical exegesis, that it justifies its claims to a divine origin. Historical belief is, in fact, in every case merely a leading-string to bring us to pure religion, and ought to be employed with the consciousness that it is nothing more. That Church is a true church, whose creed contains the principle of continual approximation to this pure belief, so as to enable us eventually to dispense with the leading-string.

There are two articles of a “saving faith,” Kant proceeds, resuming in effect what he had said in the first two sections. These are the belief in a satisfaction due for sin and the belief in the possibility of finding

\* Kant refers approvingly, in this connection, to the philosophic allegorizing of the pagan myths in later antiquity; which forms, indeed, an apt parallel to some of his interpretations of Biblical dogmas.

acceptance with God by perseverance in the good life. Kant again points out that a belief in satisfaction or substitution (in the sense already explained) is necessary only for the theoretical explanation of salvation; whereas the unconditioned command attached to the second article makes the improvement of a man's life the supreme principle of a saving faith. But so far as belief, in the case of the first article, is fixed simply on the idea of a perfect humanity, it is itself ethical; and the two articles represent "one and the same practical idea," in which the standard of holy living is contemplated from two opposite sides. But the same cannot be said, if the article be taken to mean an empirical belief in the historical appearance of the ethical ideal in a definite individual. In this form, the idea is closely connected with the non-moral notions of expiation which are to be found in all religions. "But in the God-man," Kant says, "it is not what the senses apprehend, or what can be known of him through experience, but the prototype which lies in our reason, that is properly the object of saving faith." It is a necessary consequence of our natural development, he concludes, that religion should be gradually severed "from all empirical grounds of determination, from all statutes which rest on history, and which provisionally, by means of a *Kirchenglaube*, unite men for the furtherance of the good. So at last pure rational religion will reign universally, 'that God may be all in all.' . . . The leading-string of sacred tradition which did good service in its day, becomes gradually no longer necessary, and is felt at last as a fetter, when humanity arrives at manhood. 'When I was a child, I understood as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.'"\*

\* *Werke*, vi. 219.

In considering this process as exemplified in the historic religions of the world, Kant restricts his view to Christianity. He is apparently unable to trace any uniformity of development in the other faiths of mankind. In particular, it is worth noting that he emphatically denies to Judaism any connection with the Christian Church. The political and positive aspect of Jewish religion, the national exclusiveness which found expression in it, and the want of reference to the immortality of the soul, combine to make Kant do less than justice to the religious elements which the Hebrews undoubtedly possessed. The trouble which the first teachers of Christianity took to connect the new belief with historical Judaism, he considers to be a natural expedient on the part of men anxious to spread their principles among a prejudiced and exclusive race, but as in itself proving nothing. Of the actual history of Christianity Kant takes a very gloomy view. Its origin is obscure, for it is passed over without mention by the "learned public" of that day; we do not know, therefore, the effect of its doctrines upon the life of its early professors. But its later history, as exemplified in the Eastern and Western Empires, in the Crusades, and in the ambitious intrigues of the Popes, "might well justify the exclamation—*Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum.*" Such a fate was not to be escaped, so far as Christianity was founded on a historical belief; but, in spite of this miscarriage, "the true first intention" of its institution was evidently "the introduction of a pure religious belief, about which there could be no conflicting opinions." If asked what period in the whole known history of the Church is the best, Kant says he has no hesitation in answering—the present. The universal Church is already bursting the bonds of

*The Philosophy of Religion.*

special system in which it has been confined. As evidence in support of his opinion, Kant instances the general spread of a spirit of modesty and tolerance towards the claims of revealed religion, together with a firm conviction that in ethics lies the core of the whole matter. In the universal acknowledgment of these principles consists the coming of the Kingdom of God, which, in the sacred records, is represented chiliastically as the end of the world. But the universal Church will not come with violence and revolution; it will be the result of gradual reform and of ripe reflection. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." Empirically we cannot see to the end of this development,\* but intellectually we must regard ourselves as already citizens of such a kingdom. "Behold, the Kingdom of God is within you."

The *fourth* section, "Of service and spurious service under the dominion of the good principle, or of religion and priestcraft," is more of the nature of an Appendix; and most of what is important in it has been already anticipated. Kant's object is to contrast the pure service of God, which consists in a moral life, with the spurious notions of service that are the natural growth of a statutory system. He maintains the essential identity of Christianity with the moral religion; and, by a somewhat copious reference to the teachings of Christ in the Gospels, he has little difficulty in showing their exclusive

\* Indeed, in a note at another place, Kant treats the idea of a universal Church as an Idea of reason, which can never be realized, but which is indispensable as a 'practical regulative principle.' Every Church, like every kingdom, strives after universal dominion; but always when it seems in a fair way to make good its pretensions, a principle of dissolution shows itself, which breaks it up anew into different sects.

reference to purity of heart and life. Even where the form of expression is accommodated to the traditions of Judaism, there shines through, according to Kant, "a doctrine of religion universally intelligible and universally convincing." But the "episodic means of recommendation" employed by Christ and the first teachers of His religion, have been exalted by theologians into essential articles of faith, just "as if every Christian were to be a Jew, whose Messiah has come." By so doing, the doctors of the Church do their best to defeat the intention of the Founder of the religion, by imparting to it a statutory character. A religion so conceived is the natural soil in which false ideas of the service due to God spring up. Spurious service consists essentially in the notion of winning the divine favour by other means than by uprightness of moral will. Whether it be sacrifices, or castigations and pilgrimages that we lay on ourselves, or ceremonies, solemn festivals, even public games (as in Greece and Rome), the idea is the same; something is done specially for God, by way of proving our entire submission to His will, and inducing Him to look with a kindly eye upon His servants. Usually, the more useless the action, the more efficacious is it supposed to be. The secret motive of such service is the hope of influencing to our advantage the unseen power that directs the destiny of man. In all its phases, therefore, it is Fetichism. The man supposes himself to influence God, and so employs Him as a means to produce an effect in the world. In opposition to this, true religion teaches that we have nothing to do but to cultivate a dutiful disposition. To such a disposition all things that are lacking in its righteousness will be added by Supreme Wisdom *in some way*—it matters not how. Everything,



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in short, depends on the order in which the two ideas of morality and the service of God are taken. We must begin with virtue, and end with the conception of our duty as a continual service of God by obedience to His will. Otherwise we make God himself an idol.

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## CHAPTER II.

### CRITICISM OF THE KANTIAN STANDPOINT AND TRANSITION TO HEGEL.

THERE are two points in which Kant's treatment of religion differs from that of the *Aufklärung*, viz., in its recognition of the important function of positive creeds in leading men towards the true faith, and in its repudiation of the easy-going Optimism, which is repugnant to the very genius of religion. The *Aufklärung* was profoundly unhistorical in its spirit, and was content, for the most part, to consider the genesis of positive religion as sufficiently accounted for by priestcraft and deceit. The doctrines, symbols, and sacred books of the historical faith appear to it, therefore, in a merely obstructive light. They are weeds which have to be pulled up; and when the ground is cleared, the doctrines of natural or of rational religion will have free course. Man is man all the world over; history cannot change the essential character of his reason, and reason reveals to him, by its natural light, the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. Any addition to this creed is superstition, and fires the iconoclastic zeal of the century. The attitude of

the *Aufklärung* towards historical religion, or what, for it, is the same thing, historical Christianity, is thus one of assault ; it is purely negative. Kant's Philosophy of Religion, defective as it may be in many ways, represents a break with this spirit, and the dawn of something like a historical sense.

To begin with, the mechanical view of religion, as a contrivance of priests and lawgivers, is definitely given up. Positive or statutory religion is recognized as the leading-string which guides the race towards the realization of the Kingdom of God. The leading-string is acknowledged to be necessary, if humanity is to attain this end ; and a necessary means may fairly be regarded as of divine appointment. This implies an entire change in the tone of our criticism of historical systems. They are no longer subjective delusions to be rudely brushed away ; they are the steps on which the human spirit has mounted to its present elevation. They may express the pure religion imperfectly, and with much admixture of error ; but the ladder which has served the childhood of thought, and which, it may be, still serves many of our fellow-men, is not there simply to be kicked contemptuously aside. Destructive criticism finds no favour with Kant. It is not that he himself holds to the literal sense of the Church's doctrines ; on the contrary, it is pretty plain that his personal conclusions on these points were not very different from those of the *Aufklärung* generally. But the prevalent style of negative criticism (as exemplified, for instance, in the Wolfenbüttel Fragments), with its delight in demolishing miracles and laying bare discrepancies in the Biblical narratives, seemed to him to place altogether too much stress on the historical. Kant's whole aim was to separate

what he conceived to be the true and eternal content of Christianity from the 'husk' of circumstance in which those truths were first presented to the world. His own canon of interpretation is, as has been seen, exclusively ethical; and all questions of the original sense or historical accuracy of the sacred writings, are simply left on one side. "We must not dispute unnecessarily over the historical weight to be attached to anything, if (whatever construction be put upon it) it contributes nothing towards making us better men. . . . Historical knowledge, which has no such universally valid inward reference, belongs to the *ἀδιάφορα*, concerning which each may believe what he finds to be for his own edification."\* He speaks with something like contempt of the mode of dealing with Scripture which gets from it nothing more than an "unfruitful enlargement of our historical knowledge;" and in the same breath he places the truths of religion above historical proof. There is no point, indeed, on which Kant is more explicit than that, when we are once in possession of true religion and of the rational grounds on which it is based, it can be nowise fruitful to dispute the Biblical narratives and the popular interpretation of them. He applies this especially to the case of miracles, which constitute the *crux* of ordinary rationalism. The Christian miracles, for instance, may all be true, he says, as well as the miracle of inspiration, which guarantees the account of them. "We may let them all rest on their merits, and even continue to reverence the husk which has served to publish and to spread such a doctrine; but the credentials of the doctrine rest on a document preserved ineffaceably in every soul, and requiring no miracles to attest it."†

\* *Werke*, vi. 137, note.† *Ibid.* vi. 181.

This theoretical possibility of the miraculous, however, has nothing to do with religion, as we now understand it. Religion is degraded by being made to rest on such evidence; and practically, he adds somewhat ironically, the belief is harmless, for rational men never allow for the possible recurrence of such phenomena in the business relations of life. But, just because the historical is so unimportant in his eyes, Kant deprecates useless or wanton attacks upon the contents of the sacred books. "It is the most rational and equitable course, in the case of a book which is once for all there, to continue to use it as the foundation of instruction in the Church."\* It is understood, of course, that in doing so we labour to bring out its really religious side, and endeavour to let the adventitious matter fall, as much as may be, out of sight. This attitude, we shall see, is shared by Hegel, who defends his position on very similar grounds.

The other point on which Kant parts company from the eighteenth century, is his renunciation of the Optimistic view of life and of human nature. This brings him, at once, much nearer to a distinctively religious standpoint. It is a commonplace to say that the element of religion is not light-hearted satisfaction with the present, and a belief that all is going well. It is the need of some explanation for the cruel riddles of destiny, that drives men to religion; and though its issue, as a celebration of the victorious purpose of God, is necessarily optimistic, yet the pain and the wrong of the present are an essential element. The root of religion may even be said to be a consciousness of present sin and misery. The human consciousness, as Kant remarks, seems instinctively to connect suffering with sin. When mis-

\* *Werke*, 231.

fortune comes upon him, man forthwith, as if by an impulse of nature, examines himself to see by what offence he has deserved the chastisement. Religion takes its rise in the consciousness of sin which is the result of this introspection. For the savage is sure to discover some neglect or some transgression which has laid him open to the anger of his god, and his next step is to devise some method of atoning for his guilt. The mental analysis of the savage may be at fault, and his expiation immoral; yet the notions which his conduct involves are the germ of religion. Religion always goes within for its explanation, and the unsophisticated voice of the religious consciousness is invariably a cry of infinite unworthiness. Man is forced to acknowledge the justice of his punishment, and to admit that he has no right even to the measure of happiness and well-being he enjoys. The notion of "sin," which is peculiar to religion, contains more than that of wrong-doing. Wrong-doing is external and legal in its application, or, if the expression be allowable, it is a *finite* notion. Each action is viewed separately, and compared with an external standard. But religion, because it moves entirely in an inward or spiritual sphere, recognizes no such separation. Action—even a single action—is the expression of the whole character. There can, therefore, be no measurement of guilt; the man sees only an infinite alienation of his whole being from holiness, and there comes the despairing question—How, then, can man be justified before God? The consciousness of sin, in other words, is the consciousness of the need of a reconciliation or atonement. These twin notions of sin and reconciliation are at the root of all that is distinctively religious. But both ideas were in abeyance in the

eighteenth century, and, as a necessary consequence, there was a failure to fathom the religious consciousness, and its manifestations in the historical religions of mankind. The eighteenth century was convinced that man was on the whole good; and its God was a species of *bon Dieu*, who could not find it in his heart to be an exacting master. Hence the significance of Kant's emphatic assertion that man is by nature not good, but that, on the contrary, there is a radical taint in the human will.

Nevertheless, it is impossible to regard Kant's treatment as wholly satisfactory, whether as regards the cause of evil, or as regards the rationale which he offers of the nature of redemption. There is a wire-drawnness in his interpretation of the dogmas of the Church, which is the result, in part, of a tendency, constitutional in Kant, to carry out his scheme too much into detail; in part, of the peculiarly elaborate and juridically conceived theory of Christian doctrine, which he assumed as his basis of operations. Hence, though there can be no doubt of the ingeniousness of the ethical interpretation, this, rather than its soundness, is apt to be the quality which most impresses the reader. Of course, to have any value at all, the interpretation of religion must be ethical; but the unconvincingness of Kant's theory is due to the separation of ethics from metaphysics. Hence the ethical problem appears as a problem of the individual alone, and to be worked out by the individual himself; and the consequence is that Kant hardly seems to regard his own construction as vital, and occasionally shows a tendency to cast it all to the winds, and to return with a fling to the simple moral command. In these respects, the Hegelian Philosophy of Religion, though essentially based upon the Kantian, has manifest advantages over it. It possesses

the background of metaphysic which seems essential to religion. Hegel's *Religionsphilosophie* may even be said to be, in a sense, the centre of its author's thinking.

On the cardinal point of original sin, it must be admitted, I think, that Kant's theory of an "intelligible act," as the explanation of the origin of evil, is both mystical and unintelligible. It is useless to speak of the act as timeless, for the word "act," and the notion of evil as originating, are not thinkable by us except in terms of time. To a certain extent, however, Kant's language here may perhaps be viewed as an accommodation to the narrative form in which the Church presents the necessary implication of evil in the human consciousness. In describing himself as seeking not the origin in time, but the *Vernunftursprung*, of evil, he seems to indicate that he is showing, not how a creature, supposed to be originally good, passed into evil, but how evil is essentially bound up with the notion of the human will. This is borne out by a comparison of the theory of the Fall given in this book with a suggestive interpretation of the Mosaic story in a small treatise belonging to the year 1786, entitled "Probable Beginning of Human History."\* The loss of Paradise is there interpreted as the transition from mere animality to humanity—"from the go-cart of instinct to the guidance of reason." The career of rational progress which was then begun is "for the race a progress from worse to better, but it is not the same for the individual. Before reason awoke, there was neither command nor prohibition, and therefore no transgression. But when reason began its work, and,

\* Muthmasslicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte, *Werke*, iv. 312-29.

weak as it was, came into conflict with the whole strength of the animal nature, evils, and—what is worse—when reason became more cultivated, vices, could not but arise, which were unknown to the state of ignorance. The state of ignorance was a state of innocence. . . . The history of Nature, therefore, begins with good, because it is the work of God; the history of Freedom begins with evil, because it is the work of man. For the individual, who, in the exercise of his freedom, looks only to himself, the change meant loss; but for Nature, whose aims are for the race, it was gain.” The Fall from a state of animal innocence is thus at the same time the condition of the possibility of a life of rational freedom; and as humanity in this capacity is the only thing of ‘worth’ in the world—or, to repeat Kant’s phrase, the only possible object of the divine decree,—the Fall appears as a necessary part of that purpose, and as an advance upon the foregoing stage. Nevertheless, it consists essentially in the assertion of self, and in the setting up of ends other than those which Nature seems to have with the animal creature. It is viewed accordingly, in each case, as being, in the most intimate sense, a free or personal action. It must also inevitably appear as a transgression, for the first form of freedom is arbitrary selfishness. Consequently responsibility and the consciousness of evil are inseparably bound together, the one being possible only through the other. Whether we choose to identify the ‘intelligible act’ with such a transition from instinct to reason or not, the fact that Kant is formulating is simply this inevitable implication of evil in the moral consciousness. The fact is, after all, what we must stand by; for an actual genesis of reason and morality out of instinct is just as impossible to construct as a supposed



intelligible act. The man (or animal) must have been morally accountable before the primal act, it may be argued, if he is to recognize himself as responsible for it afterwards, and so on *ad infinitum*. Consciousness cannot be treated in any of its phases as something which comes into being. The idea of an absolute beginning, in short, has no place in philosophy, because philosophy does not deal with a series of events; it deals with the notions which these events imply, and is content with showing how one notion is connected with another and with all others. The point in question here is the relation of the consciousness of evil to morality, and to the whole structure of human progress. The relation of reason to sense may certainly constitute the basis of morality, whether the inconceivable transition from a merely natural to a rational life was ever actually made or not. In Hegel we find substantially the same view as in the *Muthmasslicher Anfang*, combined with the same curious allegorization of the Biblical story. Hegel is at pains to show that the breach of the merely natural harmony carries with it the promise of a higher reconciliation in reason. By the conception of such a reconciliation as involved in the divine purpose, that is to say, philosophically, as eternally complete in God, he is able, without resorting to Kant's artificial doctrine of substitution, to put a more vital meaning into the leading tenet of historical Christianity.

Kant's whole theory of religion suffers from the limitations of his Critical standpoint. The central idea in religion, to which all others return, is the idea of God; and it is just here that the breakdown of Criticism becomes most apparent in the hands of its author. It must be remembered that, in spite

of the ample materials which Kant supplies for the construction of a new theology, he never got fairly outside of the old-fashioned mechanical construction of Deism. God is, according to this conception, a Being by himself, to whom no necessary relations attach; but He is supposed, by an exercise of 'will,' to have 'created' the world, and, with it, finite intelligences. The manner or the meaning of this creation is not explained, and so its assertion becomes simply a word. That is to say, reason, in its search for the causes of individual things, extends its range, and ends by asking for the cause of the collective fabric of things. As a temporary satisfaction, this causation is thrown back upon a Being postulated *in hunc effectum*, and called, in virtue of his function, the Great First Cause. The designations of Supreme Being, or Absolute Being, give no additional information as to his nature; and the inferential knowledge which Deism professes to have of its God, will always be found to dwindle down to the bare assertion that he exists. It is against the possibility of proving the existence of such a deistic God, that Kant does battle in the Pure Reason; and, in that regard, his arguments and those of others must be acknowledged to be conclusive—though only in that regard. Take, for example, his famous illustration of the hundred dollars. I may have an idea of a hundred dollars, but my pocket may be empty enough for all that. In like manner, Kant argues, I may have an idea of God, but that is far from proving, as the supporters of the Ontological argument would have us believe, the objective existence of a Being corresponding to my idea. Clearly, Kant's reasoning depends for its validity on the measure of analogy between God and the hundred dollars. If

God is a Being or thing as separable from me as the hundred dollars are, then certainly there is no passage from idea to reality. Deism puts God at a distance in this way; and Deism, therefore, succumbs to Kant's illustration. But if God cannot be, in any sense, a thing or object, then the idea of God may very well be at the same time His real existence. If the idea of God is inseparable from consciousness as such—is, in fact, the perfect rational synthesis of which every consciousness is, and recognizes itself to be, the potential form,—then this existence 'in thought' seems to give all the reality that can be asked for. Unless, indeed, we are determined to materialize God into an object of our present or future senses, this is the only existence of which we can speak. If this idea be substituted for the deistic conception, it will be found that the utterly bare and self-contradictory notion of a First Cause must be exchanged for that of a final cause or End. In other words, it is absurd to seek a *cause* of the universe as a whole. The universe exists; that is all we can say about it. But, though a cause cannot be assigned, there is a sense in which a *reason* may. This will be found in the Idea, should this be discoverable, which the universe realizes. The Idea is then the purpose or *raison d'être*, or simply the 'meaning,' of the universe. For the word purpose must not be held to imply a separation of the Idea (as in a scheming intellect) from its actual realization.

This notion of the Divine existence, however, has been definitely formulated since Kant's time, and accordingly it does not interfere with the course of his reasoning. In the sphere of pure reason, God remains, according to Kant, unknowable and unprovable. But Kant did not leave things so; for the

existence of God is, as has been seen, a Postulate of the practical reason. What is more, it is postulated precisely in the old deistic sense. It is true, there is the saving clause, that what is reached on ethical grounds has, so far as we are concerned, only an ethical content, and is to be employed solely in an ethical interest. And for Fichte, accordingly, the notion became at once synonymous with that of the moral order of the universe. But by Kant the moral order is conceived, in the spirit of the baldest Individualism, as the final adjustment of happiness and virtue; and God becomes purely a *Deus ex machina* to effect this combination. The indignity of the position is obvious, for He is treated in the scheme primarily as a means towards the happiness of the particular individual. Once there, He is clothed, of course, with the qualities of moral Lawgiver; but the motive of His introduction at all is the one just indicated. The law and its authority are sufficiently explained, Kant admits, by the notion of the noumenal Self, and so the knowledge of duty as the will of God seems, in the Kantian scheme, a somewhat superfluous duplication of what we already possess. The noumenal and self-legislative Self is, indeed, when properly conceived, identical with the will of God, and leaves no room for any extraneous Deity. But the thoroughly mechanical idea of such a Power weighing happiness against virtue, cannot be charmed out of the letter of Kant's theory. This has been the stumbling-block which has caused many to reject his Ethics *in toto*, and to identify the true Kant exclusively with the Critical scepticism of the intellectual theory. This, however, it has been already pointed out, is a mistake. Kant was not unfaithful to his method in the moral sphere; it is his method itself which is defective. It may be readily admitted that the great

excellence of the Critical standpoint is, that it explodes the pretended knowledge of transcendent realities in which Dogmatic metaphysic had dabbled. But the weakness of Kantianism, in the hands of its author, is that the ghost of transcendent reality is not laid; it cannot be seen, but it is supposed still to stalk on the other side of knowledge. The temptation to transcendent speculation cannot be perfectly removed, except by a philosophy which is able to view experience as a whole, and to see realized in the synthesis of the actual the true sense of the objects which such speculation overleaps itself to reach. What is known, in a broad sense, as Hegelianism, is at least an attempt at such a complete and rounded philosophy; and in it the dualisms which vex us in Kant disappear. The ideas of God and man are still so far mutually exclusive for Kant, that what is done by man in history appears to be necessarily done without God. What is done by God, on the contrary—as, for example, a revelation—appears like a hand from behind the clouds thrust suddenly into the web of human affairs. Hence the antithesis between Naturalism and Supernaturalism, and the *non liquet*, which is the last dictum of the Critical reason. Hegelianism abolishes the antithesis, by conceiving the whole process of history as the work of God, and a growing revelation of His nature and purpose. It remains now to sketch very shortly, more by way of indication than of exhaustive exposition, some of the leading features of the Philosophy of Religion, as they appear from such a standpoint.

The metaphysical position of Hegel may be summarily distinguished from that of Kant, by saying that in the later philosophy thought is recognized as absolute or

self-conditioning—as the unity, in other words, within which all oppositions are only relative. Thought is, therefore, the source of all the distinctions which make up the knowable universe—even of the distinction between the individual self and the objective world to which it is related. Thought itself becomes the object of philosophy, and the search for something “real,” beyond and apart from thought, is definitely abandoned. The business of philosophy is henceforth the explication of the distinctions which belong to the nature of thought, and this is otherwise definable for Hegel as “the explication of God.”

Philosophy thus becomes identical in its object with religion; for the constant aim of religion is to determine the nature of God, and His purpose in the individual and in the world. It is impossible to deny this metaphysical character to religion, and to present it simply as a set of empirical rules for conduct. “From the beginning of the world down to the present day,” says Fichte, “religion, whatever form it may have assumed, has been essentially metaphysic.” In other words, it is the need of a final synthesis, which both philosophy and religion strive to satisfy—the one predominantly on the side of the intellect, the other predominantly on the side of the heart and life. Religion is never content till it apprehend the working whereby God is able to subdue all things unto Himself. After a more or less sufficient probing of the imperfection and wrong in the world, it will invariably be found putting forward some conception or theory, as the solution of the contradictions that baffle us from day to day. The conception may, or it may not, be adequate to the difficulties of the case; that is according to circumstances. But it is the presence of this conception that imparts to religion the joy and confidence which are

lacking in morality as such. Religion has been defined in our own day as "morality touched by emotion." The definition, as applied by its author, is both suggestive and beautiful; but it is still necessary to inquire into the source of the emotion. This, I think, is always derived from a certain view of the world as a whole, that is to say, more or less articulately, from a metaphysical conception. It is the subject's identification of himself with a divine world-order, that is the perennial source of the religious emotion which lifts him who experiences it above the lets and hindrances of time. Without this, he is an atom struggling in vain with the evil of his own nature, and possibly, too, with the misery of surrounding circumstances. If he is to be successful in the struggle, he must be persuaded that he is not alone, or, in the language of religion, that God is for him and that nothing, therefore, can be ultimately against him. The triumph that he only anticipates in himself and others he must conceive as secure of fulfilment—in fact, as already fulfilled in the eternal purpose of God. The peace which this conviction imparts is itself, in a sense, the realization of that triumph in the individual—his present reconciliation with God. It is also the most powerful dynamic that can be supplied to morality.

Kant himself was not able to eliminate the metaphysical side of religion entirely, though he considers it necessary only for 'the theoretical explanation of salvation,' and always returns by preference to the unvarnished religion of right-doing. In the notion of moral perfection as the End of creation—an End realized in God, and destined to be realized in man—and in the notion of the Church as a corporate unity for the expression of this idea, the world is represented by Kant as an ethical whole, in which

atonement is made for the sins of the individual and of the moment. This appears much more emphatically in Hegel.\* The attainment of reconciliation with God is the motive of all religions; the fact of an accomplished reconciliation, is, according to Hegel, the deepest religious truth. It is revealed in the Christian religion. It is at the same time the profoundest insight of philosophy, for it is the expression of the essential nature of Spirit. True religion and true philosophy coincide; for "the absolute content," as Hegel says, must be the same. The notion of Spirit is not the absence of contradiction, for that would mean absolute sameness, which is equivalent to pure nonentity; it is the solution of contradiction, by exhibiting the opposite as held in its own unity. Spirit lives by difference, but in all difference it is still identity with itself. God was first known as Spirit, Hegel says, in the Christian religion, and this is the meaning of its central doctrine of the Trinity. The determination of God as Triune is not to be taken, as Enlightenment takes it, with reference to the number three. Rightly understood, it is a reading of the nature of God, which is fatal to the abstract unit which Deistic free-thought deems so easy of acceptance. This God-in-himself, as the idea may be styled, has a connection with the world that is purely arbitrary, and serves reason merely as a *point d'appui*. He is nothing more than a name upon our lips; we know nothing of his nature, because, as so conceived, there is nothing to know. To say that God is unknowable, and to say that He is the Supreme Being, are, according to Hegel, identical propositions.

\* Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* are contained in vol. xi and xii of the *Werke*, but references to religion occur in almost every one of his works.



God cannot be known apart from the world ; He cannot be said to exist out of that reference. " Without the world, God were not God." " God is the Creator of the world ; it belongs to His being, to His essence, to be Creator. . . . That He is Creator is, moreover, not an act undertaken once for all ; what is in the Idea is the Idea's own eternal moment and determination."\* This is expressed in the doctrine of the Trinity, Hegel continues, by saying that from eternity God has begotten a Son, or that He produces himself eternally in his Son. But this absolute diremption or distinction of Himself from Himself is at the same time perfect identity ; and the knowledge of God as the unity of Father and Son is the knowledge of Him as Spirit or as the Triune God. 'The Holy Ghost is the " eternal love," which expresses this unity—this distinction in which there is no difference. Here is the " still mystery," which is the source of the world's life. It may be otherwise expressed, by saying that it is a necessity of the Absolute to create a world of finite spirits. God is, in the strictest sense, neither more nor less than this self-revelation. Man is as necessary to God as God to man. The true infinity of Spirit is realized in the knowledge of the Infinite as in the finite, and of the finite as in the Infinite, or, as Christianity says, in the oneness of God and man. God is this eternal process or history.

But, so far as we have gone, there seems no room for the disturbance or alienation from God, which is the subjective root of religion. Where there is no estrangement, reconciliation, in the ordinary sense of the term, can have no function. It may fairly be objected to Hegel's

\* Hegel, *Werke*, xii. 181 (*Philosophie der Religion*, vol. ii).

account given above, that it moves too much in the clear æther of the Idea, in which distinction is not difference. As Hegel says in the *Phaenomenology*, the notion of the divine life as a play of love with itself, even though true, sinks to insipidity, if "the seriousness, the pain, the patience and labour of the negative" is not allowed for. The first may be said to be the notion of the universe from the divine standpoint; it is, in fact, in Hegelian terminology, the Idea. The second is the human side of the relation—the Idea as it appears in history. Here the world is viewed not in its ideal completeness, as the Son who is eternally and essentially one with God, but as the world in the more proper sense of the term, in which the otherness of the relation is accentuated and comes to its right. We have here the other, as the other; the world (of nature and of finite spirit) appears as something independent of God, and free in itself. It is a mark, Hegel characteristically adds, of the freedom and security of the Idea, that it permits this relative independence without detriment to its ultimate synthesis. Nevertheless, he is somewhat at a loss to find a motive for passing from the perfect Son to the imperfect world. For it is, of course, necessary to suppose that, with the freedom, there comes also the weakness and the imperfection, of separation; it is the fact of 'this present evil world' that calls for explanation. This is the point where Hegel approximates most nearly to Schelling. He seems to treat the origin of the finite system of things as a species of *Abfall* or primal apostasy; and, as Plato has recourse to the mythical form where clear thought fails him, so we find Hegel falling back on Jacob Böhme. The first begotten, he quotes from Böhme, was Lucifer, the light-bearer, the bright, the clear one; but Lucifer lost himself

in his imaginings, and asserted his independence, and fell. "So we pass into the determination of space, of the finite world, of the finite spirit." That, at least, is Hegel's complacent continuation. The whole reminds the reader very much, not to go further afield, of Schelling's little treatise on *Philosophy and Religion*, already referred to.\* But the point is only touched on by Hegel, and the net result is simply that the finite world, as finite, is due to a holding fast of the form of difference. So far as this finitude or difference exists, the restoration of unity appears as a process in time—something to be gradually worked out. Here properly comes in the need of reconciliation and, with the need, the idea.

Reconciliation can be effected only in the sphere of Spirit; and as religion exists only in relation to man or finite spirit, we may concentrate attention on the way in which Hegel interprets alienation here. "This is the place of the conflict of good and evil—the place, too, where this conflict must be fought out."† For the rest, we know that Nature is but the theatre or sphere of spirit. But man, as he first appears on that theatre, is simply a part of Nature. Man in a state of nature is a complexus of animal desires, which he fulfils in turn as they arise. But the notion or destiny of man is to be intelligent and free; therefore, his existence as a merely natural being is in itself, as inadequate to his notion, evil. The state of nature or 'immediacy' is simply a starting-point, which is to be left behind. Consciousness brings the knowledge of this breach between the 'is' and the 'ought-to-be,' and with knowledge comes guilt. In this connection, we have the well-known Hegelian interpretation of the Fall, which occurs in various parts of the Works. The connection between evil and knowledge in the story is,

\* Cf. p. 65, *supra*.† *Werke*, xii. 62.

according to Hegel, essential. Man *was* evil in his merely natural state, *i.e.*, he was not as he ought to be; but with the dawn of consciousness he *knows* that he is evil. The knowledge of his state opens up to him the possibility of escape from it, and he becomes responsible for further continuance in it. The "absolute demand" made upon man is, that he do not continue in this state; and though the content of the newly awakened will is, to begin with, simply the full play of the man's animal desires, yet the conviction grows that this ought not so to be. In other words, consciousness brings with it a separation between the subject and the natural basis of desires with which he was formerly identical; and the separation means (in the long run) the knowledge that the true will or self is not to be found in the mere satisfaction of the wants of the natural individual. It means the knowledge of a higher rational Self, of an obligation to realize it, and an infinite falling short of attainment. The breach between the natural man and that which he necessarily regards as his essence or destiny, is the source (also in the long run) of an infinite pain; and out of pain and unworthiness springs religion with its conception of reconciliation.

Hegel turns to history for the verification of his thesis. The sense in man of failure to realize his vocation, and the consequent misery of alienation from his true good, is what religion calls the consciousness of sin. This consciousness continued to deepen in the human heart; and of the various religions that appeared on the earth none had more than a partial cure for it. It was necessary that the lowest depths of suffering should be fathomed, before any healing could be effectual; for it is a principle of universal application, that a contradiction must be strained to its utmost before it can be successfully

solved. So it was with the religious consciousness. The extreme of abandonment and despair was reached in the Roman world, before 'the fulness of time' came, and the word of reconciliation could be spoken. Profoundly dissatisfied with the existent world, men tried, in Stoicism and kindred systems, to escape from it by withdrawing wholly within themselves. But this flight from the world could not be the world's salvation; it is in itself merely a confession of discomfiture. In my relation to the world consist my duties; Stoicism is the renunciation of these, and so remains barren. The principle that is destined to transform the world bears another aspect. 'I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.' To a distracted humanity Christ whispers the tidings of the nearness of God. In the midst of unworthiness and helplessness there springs up the new consciousness of reconciliation. Man, with all his imperfections on his head, is still the object of the loving purpose of God. God *is* reconciled, if only man will strip off his painful individuality, and believe it. There *is* a victorious purpose in the world, if only he will find himself in it, and work joyfully in its light. With this assurance in the ground of his heart comes the peace of essential unity with what, to his individual effort, is still a flying goal. His subjective frailty and shortcomings simply do not count, when weighed against the active perception of unity with God, which is the substance or element of his life.

As a matter of fact, the reconciliation must still be worked out on the stage of the individual life and of universal history. Faith, as we know, without works is dead; it is an idea which lacks its embodiment in reality. But the faith must be there, if man is to work from a proper vantage-ground. Hence Christianity teaches

God's reconciliation of the world with Himself, as a fact or as an eternal truth; and this becomes a presupposition for the individual. It is something that is 'finished,' and in the strength of which he works. This accomplished reconciliation is the basis of the Church or the Christian community (*Gemeinde*); it is taught in the Church's doctrine, and the Church is itself the outward expression of the truth. The relation of the subject to the problem of salvation is, therefore, essentially different, according as he is, or is not, born within the pale of the Christian community. This is expressed by the Church in the sacrament of Baptism. Baptism says in symbol that the child is not born into a hostile world, but that his world, from the beginning, is the Church, which is built upon the consciousness of reconciliation. The Church is, in its notion, a society where the virtual conquest over evil is already achieved, and where, therefore, the individual is spared such bitter conflict and outcast wretchedness as preceded the formation of the community. The education which the Church bestows, smooths his path for him; and, in every respect, he essays the individual problem under more favourable conditions. The last and most solemn expression of the Church's life is in the Eucharist, or the sacrament of the Supper. Here the Church celebrates its sense of present reconciliation, and the conscious unity of the subject with God.

But so long as this unity is realized only in the Church, there remains an opposition between the Church and the world. The Church, in these circumstances, may be said to represent rather the idea than the reality of reconciliation, inasmuch as it is faced by a hostile power in which its principles have no application. This opposition is the distinctive mark of Mediaeval Christianity, in which Christianity resembled rather a flight from the world than

the subjugation of the world to God. The virtues of the Church were celibacy and poverty. The world was denounced as unholy; and, as a natural consequence of the stigma set upon it, it actually was unholy. Men's consciences convicted them of sin, when they tampered with the accursed thing. But this unhealthy dualism could not last, and, in the end, the spirit of worldliness possessed itself also of the Church. Instead of universal corruption, however, this was the signal for the appearance of the true conception of reconciliation, on which modern life is built. The Reformation is, in one aspect, the denial of that dualism between the Church and the world, between religion and secular life, which is the mark of Mediævalism in all its forms. The relations of the family and the State are restored to the divineness that belongs to them; or rather, their divineness is, for the first time, consciously realized. In the laws and customs of the rational or freely moving State, the Church first penetrates the real world with its principles. The State is "the true reconciliation, whereby the divine realizes itself in the field of reality." This final stage of realization in the world must not, of course, be held to supersede the inward function of religion;\* but we recognize here the point to which

\* It would be a misinterpretation of the Hegelian law of stages, to suppose that the final stage abolishes those that dialectically precede it. Hegel's positions are often represented in a false and repulsive light under the influence of this idea. The *Philosophie des Rechts*, for example, is represented as if the ultimate stage of *Sittlichkeit* were meant entirely to supersede the subjective function of *Moralität* or conscience. It is obvious that the two sides must continue to co-exist; the only thing that is superseded is the abstract conscience that ignores the actual, and insists on judging everything anew. So here, the objective reconciliation effected in the true State is not intended to supersede, for the individual, the subjective life of devotion.

Hegel always returns. As he says in the *Philosophy of History*, "The State is the Divine Idea as it exists on earth." The secular life of the modern world has been built up by Christianity; it is founded upon Christian conceptions of the dignity and the rights of man. The secular, therefore, is itself divine. This is, in Hegel's view, at once the principle of Protestantism, and the last principle of thought.

As may be imagined from the elaborate parallelism, or rather, identity, which he seeks to establish between his own philosophical positions and the leading doctrines of the Christian Church, Hegel has no sympathy with the prevalent modern aversion to theological dogma. He aims rather at a philosophic rehabilitation of dogmatic Christianity;\* and he is never more in his element than when running out his heavy guns against the theology of feeling. The basis of a Church must be a system of doctrines, and with their withdrawal the community lapses into an aggregation of atoms. It is only principles or beliefs that can be held *in common*; feeling, as such, is purely subjective, and can afford no bond of union. Feeling is certainly indispensable in religion. Religion must be realized in the element of feeling, if it is to have active force in the life. But feeling is in itself a mere form; it is indifferent to its content, and will attach itself,

\* "Die Wiederherstellung der ächten Kirchenlehre muss von der Philosophie ausgehen." *Werke*, xi. 10. Elsewhere he deplures the state to which theology has sunk, when it becomes necessary for philosophy to undertake the defence of the dogmas of the Church against the orthodox theologians themselves. There is a flavour of the comical perceptible in the unction with which he takes Tholuck to task for the slackness of his zeal in defending the doctrine of the Trinity. See in particular the Preface to the second edition of the *Encyclopædia*. *Werke*, vi. p. xi. *et seq.*



for the matter of that, to any content. It is of the utmost importance, then, to understand that religion, like philosophy, must found upon "a substantial, objective content of truth."\* This content, as the theory of the relations of God and man, is the absolute content; that is to say, it is an expression, in its last terms, of the process of the universe, and, as such, is necessarily identical in both. But from what has been seen of Hegel's statement of the 'eternal' content of religion, it is evident that the doctrines of ordinary Christianity undergo a considerable transformation in the process of philosophic interpretation. And this, according to Hegel, is no more than we need expect; this is, in fact, Hegel's fundamental distinction between *Vorstellung* and *Begriff*. Religion is truth for all; it is easy of comprehension. 'The poor heard Him gladly.' Philosophy is truth for those who are capable of the prolonged effort of thought which it implies. Philosophy presents truth essentially for the intellect—truth, therefore, in its exact, scientific, ultimate form. Religion presents the same synthesis, but primarily for the heart—presents it, therefore, in a form calculated to affect the feelings, and through them to work upon the moral will. Religious enlargement speaks the language of imagination; it is saturated with feeling. But its statements cannot be pressed as scientifically exact. Religion, Hegel says, is *reason thinking naïvely*.† It has got hold of vital and eternal principles; but the form in which it

\* *Werke*, xvii. 299 (Preface to Hinrich's *Religionsphilosophie*). This Preface, written in 1822, and now printed among the 'Vermischte Schriften,' throws much light on Hegel's attitude towards religion, towards the historical element in Christianity, etc. It contains also a bitter polemic against Schleiermacher, without, however, mentioning names.

† *Werke*, xi. 117.

presents them, while best suited to its own purpose, is not adequate to the principles themselves. Facts of the notion, constitutive of the universe as such, it treats as pieces of contingent history, which have been, and are no more. So with the Fall, so again with the Reconciliation; its form is throughout pictorial and narrative. All this Hegel means by saying that religion appears in the form of *Vorstellung*. The distinction between the *Vorstellung* and the *Begriff* is all-important, he contends, for it keeps us from confounding the living principles of religion with the historical form in which they are conveyed. A certain historical form is necessary; but the historical, as such, is contingent, and cannot, therefore, form part of the essential religious content. That content, when eliminated, is found to be identical with notional truth, or with the *Begriff*. The *Begriff*, however, Hegel seems to say, can never, for the mass of mankind, supersede the *Vorstellung*.

This opens up the whole question of Hegel's relation to historical Christianity. A memorable utterance of his own may be taken as the authoritative text of what follows:—Religion must contain nothing but religion; it contains, as such, only eternal truths of the spirit.\* A certain historical form, as just mentioned, is necessary. The true religion must appear, must *be*. The idea must have the side of reality, otherwise it is a mere abstraction; and reality implies the circumstantial surroundings of space and time. Or, to put it less abstrusely, the historical or sensuous form was essential, if the truth was ever to become a common possession of mankind. “The unity of the divine and human is the *thought* (*Gedanke*) of man; but it was necessary that this should first be

\* *Werke*, xi. 152.

believed as true of one individual Man." "The consciousness of the Absolute Idea is produced, in the first instance, not for the standpoint of philosophical speculation, but in the form of certainty for mankind."\* It is a universal rule that we set out from sensuous certainty, from something given, something positive. But the given has always to be intelligized; its *meaning* has to be reached. So the external world is given to us in sensation; but it is not a world till we have constructed sensations into a rational system. Religion also comes to us as something given, something positive; to the child in the form of education, to the race in the form of revelation. But the attitude of thought to sense, or to what is merely given, is always negative; we pass from it, and retain only the rational content of which it is the bearer. By the fact of a historical appearance (recognized as a necessary element of the truth), we must not, therefore, be misled into elevating the particulars of that history to the rank of divine verities. The frame, though necessary, does not stand on the same level as the work of art that it encloses.† The particulars of history are always contingent, that is, they may be *so*, or they may be otherwise; no truth of reason is involved in their being either. In this way, Hegel says, the whole question of miracles ought not to trouble us. We neither attack them nor defend them; but the testimony they could afford to religious truth was confined to the age in which they are said to have been wrought. The spiritual cannot be attested by the external or unspiritual, and, in regard to miracles, the main point is that we set them

\* *Werke*, xii. 237 and 238.

† *Ibid.* xvii. 283.

aside.\* The demonstration of the spirit is the only testimony that can be ultimately accepted.

The sensuous history in which Christianity first appeared is thus merely point of departure (Ausgangspunkt) for the spirit, for faith. The doctrine of the Church is neither the external history of its Founder, as such, nor His own immediate teachings.† It is the meaning of the history, as apprehended in the consciousness of the Christian Church. It is not to the point to say that this meaning is contained in the Bible, and that the whole doctrine is, as it were, spelled out of this text. The Bible is merely another form of the 'given ;' and as soon as we depart from the words of the sacred text, we have transformed it. Here, as elsewhere, the spirit is active in its receptivity. It is the Church's exegesis of the Bible, and not the words of the Bible, as such, that are the foundation of faith. The necessity of this passing away of the sensuous, or, at all events, of its transformation by the spirit, is clearly perceived by the author of the Fourth Gospel. The Johannean Christ expresses this insight in pregnant words, when he makes the growth of the Church dependent on his own departure. "It is expedient for you that I go away. . . The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. . . . Greater works than these shall he (the believer) do, *because* I go to my Father." Hence,

\* *Werke*, xii. 160. Die Hauptsache in dieser Seite der Wunder ist, dass man sie in dieser Weise auf die Seite stellt.

† Christus Lehre kann als diese unmittelbare nicht christliche Dogmatik, nicht Lehre der Kirche sein. *Ibid.* xii. 241.

according to Hegel, the importance of so far detaching the content of Christianity from its first sensuous presentment as to regard it in itself as 'eternal truth.' "The true content of Christian faith is to be justified by philosophy, not by history."\* Why, then, should we always be returning to the garments of flesh from which the spirit has passed? We get thus but a dead Christ; the living Christ is to be found in the Church that He has founded, and in the doctrines of the relation of God and man, of which it is the visible symbol.

The whole position may perhaps be put more generally. From the religious point of view, the value or worth of a history lies solely in the circumstance that it is the vehicle of such and such truths. Strip it of this significance, and the history is no more than any other bit of fact, *i.e.*, it has no religious bearing. A history affects us, only when read in the light of the eternal purpose of God. It is that purpose, therefore, which moves us, not the bare recital of events; and by any events the divine purpose must be inadequately represented or set forth. All spiritual effects must have spiritual causes. It is by eternal principles or truths that the mind is influenced; and though certain narratives may have proved themselves specially efficacious in bringing home these truths to men's minds, still that is no reason for insisting that the narratives, as they stand, are scientifically maintainable in all their particulars. That the majority of men find their account in holding to the original sense of the narratives, is likewise a very inadequate reason for believing this to be the ultimate form of the truth. The mass of men are habitually unaware of the true theory of what they nevertheless perform with sufficient correctness. The truth

\* *Werke*, xii. 266.

which the narratives convey, reaches them and influences them, without their being able to indicate exactly how it does so. The rationale of the process remains obscure, but the edification is a fact. Beyond this fact the ordinary man does not, as a rule, travel; and when he does, his reasonings on spiritual causation are as likely to be wrong as his reasonings on natural causation. The *post hoc ergo propter hoc* is the prevalent form of argumentation in both cases. He does not sift the antecedents. All the prominent circumstances that preceded the spiritual phenomenon are massed together as its cause; and he is as likely as not to point out as the essential element in the causation precisely the most contingent and indifferent circumstance. Spiritual instinct is unerring in the choice of its proper food; but it is helpless, when asked to explain how that food nourishes it.

Nor is it anything to the point, that a great number of those who derive benefit from the narratives and religious symbols in question perceive no conflict between their literal sense and the prerogative of reason in other spheres. The ordinary man, as Spinoza says, is slow to perceive contradictions, because he does not *bring them together*. His thinking is not continuous; it is often, indeed, interrupted and casual to the last degree—here a little and there a little. And so it comes that he passes from the religious half of his life to the secular half, without observing any inconsistency between his presuppositions and general habit of thought in the two spheres. But sooner or later the contradiction comes to light. So long as a spirit of simple, unaffected piety prevails, it does not appear; for piety passes, as if instinctively, to the inner content, and really lays no

stress on the finite particulars. They are there, and the thought of calling them in question has not arisen; but to the unsophisticated religious consciousness they in no wise constitute the foundation of faith. In one aspect, it is their unimportance which has saved them from question. But when the genuine spirit of religion fades out of the Church, its place is taken by an abstract logic and a philosophy of the understanding without insight into the things of God. Orthodoxy in this form, having no root in itself, begins to lay a disproportionate weight on the external and historical. It insists on making all these indifferent details a matter of faith. But here it is met by the *Aufklärung*, or the spirit of scientific enlightenment and historical criticism. In a historical reference, this is the movement specially associated with the activity of the eighteenth century, though it goes on still, and in many quarters may be said to be only beginning. It is to be noted that Hegel does not dispute the place and function of the negative here. He speaks of the Enlightenment as "the better sense" of mankind rising in revolt against the pretensions of a pettifogging orthodoxy; and as regards the contingent matter to which this orthodoxy would pin our faith, he unhesitatingly acknowledges the victory of the *Aufklärung* over its adversary.\* Individual utterances in this connection may be ambiguous—sometimes, perhaps, studiously so,—but the general tenor of Hegel's thought is, I think, not to be mistaken. The calmness with which he regards the *Aufklärung*, is due to the fact that, on one side, he is prepared to admit all its contentions.

\* Diese (die Aufklärung) ist Meister geworden über diesen Glauben. *Werke*, xi, 150.

What he disputes is the inference which Enlightenment draws from these admissions. He complains that it knows only the negative, and makes no distinction between the external or circumstantial, and the true or divine. In short, he denies the presupposition on which both ordinary orthodoxy and ordinary rationalism proceed, viz., that the peculiarly Christian doctrines stand or fall with the provable extra-naturalness of certain facts. The condemnation of the *Aufklärung* in an absolute regard is, that its tendency is to sweep away religion altogether along with its finite forms. Mere enlightenment is no substitute for religion, and the inquiries on which its champions spend their energies are likewise essentially non-religious. Hence Hegel considered that the *Aufklärung* had done its work; it had given its gift to the world, and was henceforth barren. Like Kant, therefore, he deprecates, in a religious interest, the perpetual renewal of useless controversy. Wanton attacks upon the sacred books of Christianity indicate a defect in culture quite as much as in religious sense. The Church is right, he holds, from its own standpoint, in fighting shy of investigations into matters of fact, undertaken in a non-religious interest.\* The reason is, that such investigations lend an exaggerated importance to the merely historical—an importance which it does not possess as treated by the Church. This is, of course, not the way in which the Church formulates its opposition; it is Hegel's sympathetic interpretation of her attitude. Hegel's sympathies are essentially religious, and this sometimes communicates

\* *Werke*, xii, 260. "So thut die Kirche insofern Recht daran, wenn sie solche Untersuchungen nicht annehmen kann." He instances the case of investigations into the reality of the reported appearances of Christ after his death.



a tone of undue depreciation to his remarks on the *Aufklärung*. But, as we have seen, he does not send Enlightenment away without the portion of goods that falls to its share. He considers his own position as a vantage-ground beyond both traditional orthodoxy and ordinary rationalism. In the strife, therefore, which still goes on between these two, Hegel can be invoked on neither side. His thoroughgoing distinction of *Vorstellung* and *Begriff* absolves him from descending into the noisy arena. "Thought justifies the content of religion, and recognizes its forms, that is to say, the determinateness of its historical appearance; but, in the very act of doing so, it recognizes also the limitations of the forms."\* This sentence from the conclusion of the *Philosophy of Religion* is well adapted to summarize the whole attitude of the Hegelian philosophy towards the question at issue.

Such, then, in outline, is the Hegelian Philosophy of Religion. So far as it trenches on technically theological ground, I am not called upon to criticize it here. Historically, its direct affiliation to the Kantian position is not to be mistaken. The relation of Hegel to Kant in his theory of religion is, indeed, an exact parallel to the relation between them in respect of the doctrine of knowledge. In both cases, the sameness is more striking than the difference. Kantianism seems everywhere on the point of casting off the presuppositions which bind it to the old metaphysic. In evidence of this, it is only necessary to specify, in the present case, Kant's whole attitude to positive religion, his treatment of the Fall, and even, to some extent, of the idea of Reconciliation. But the new metaphysic

\* *Werke*, xii. 286.

developed by Hegel out of Kantianism, does away with the abstract distinction between God and man which still remains at the Kantian standpoint. God is recognized, Hegel says, "not as a Spirit beyond the stars, but as Spirit in all spirits;" and so the course of human history is frankly identified with the course of divine self-revelation. The culmination of this religious development\* is reached in Christianity; and Christianity reveals nothing more than that God is essentially this revelation of Himself.† In this connection it is that a new significance is given to the doctrine of the Trinity, which thereby becomes fundamental for the Hegelian Philosophy of Religion. This attitude towards the course of history, and towards Christianity in particular, is the only one which is permissible to an Absolute philosophy. However fenced about with explanations, the thesis of such a philosophy must always be—'The actual is the rational.'

The difficulties of such a system are always found in accounting for contingency, for imperfection, for suffering and evil. It would not be fair to leave the subject, without pointing out in a word or two where the strain comes upon Hegelianism, when it is conceived as such a final and absolute system. Hegelianism, it may be premised, has, in the individual reflection of its author, no other basis than the bit-by-bit experience on which empiricism builds. This is a matter of course, which

\* The limits and the plan of this sketch make impossible even an outline of the course of this development in the historical religions of humanity. Hegel's characterizations of the different faiths are mines of thought, especially in the later stages, where he comes to compare Judaism, Hellenism, and the prosaic secularism of Rome, with the absolute religion for which they were destined to make way.

† *Werke*, xii. 158.

ought not to require stating; nevertheless, owing to the form which Hegel has given his thoughts, it is frequently ignored. Though the particulars, or the 'given,' must necessarily come first *in ordine ad individuum*, yet, the principle of synthesis having been divined, the Hegelian method does not present its results as a collection of inductions or deductions, more or less fragmentary, from experience. The subjective process by which the results are reached is, as it were, suppressed; and an attempt is made to lay before us the *system* of the actual—the actual as it exists *in ordine ad universum*, or from a divine standpoint. It is essential to the success of such an undertaking, that the system round itself in itself. What we get must be a perfect system of mutual relativity, and like the Divine Labourer we must be able at the end to pronounce all things very good. That is just equivalent to saying that it must actually *be* a system, and not the *disjecta membra* of one. The idea of perfection—Optimism, not as a hope, but as a reality—is the very nerve of such a synthesis. The world must be seen, as it were, to have its genesis in divine perfection, and it must be sealed up there again at the close. In other words (that all suspicion of an emanation hypothesis be avoided in the expression), there must be no hitch, no flaw, in the system, which might be inconsistent with the perfection of the whole.

Now the objections to which Hegel's synthetic or genetic mode of presentment has given rise—that his philosophy is an *à priori* system, a metaphysical cobweb spun in flagrant disregard of experience, and so forth—may be summarily dismissed, for they have their root in misconception and ignorance. But it is impossible to deny that it is precisely when Hegelianism presents itself

in system, as a self-cohering explanation of the whole, that we are apt to be least satisfied with it. The thoughts of the reader will revert instinctively, in the present case, to the hardly disguised failure of the transition from the Son to the world of finite men and things.\* Hegel is perfectly at home in describing the triune relations of the Idea; but as soon as their transparency or pellucidity is blurred by real difference, the strain comes upon him. The transition here is, in its way, an instructive counterpart to the unsatisfactory phrases in which the passage is made, in the *Encyclopædia*, from the necessity of the logical Idea to the contingency of Nature. In its general aspect, the problem is no less than to show how the existence of an imperfect world is compatible with divine perfection; and, of course, when we start from the perfect, the difficulty of explanation is enhanced. Hegel seems to gain the imperfect by a leap. When he has once gained it, he is much more successful in exhibiting the process of regeneration. His treatment of evil as an essential element in the consciousness of a sensuous being, for example, is profound and fundamental; but it manifestly presupposes the fact of the manifestation of reason in a sensuous creature like man. All imperfection may flow from the combination, but why should this combination itself be necessary? So, too, there is no point which Hegel is fonder of emphasizing than the *labour* of the Spirit. The world-spirit, he says, has had the patience to undertake "the prodigious labour of the world's history:" only subjective impatience demands the attainment of the goal without the means. His reference to "the seriousness, the pain, the patience and labour of the negative," has been already quoted. It would

\* Cf. p. 150 *supra*.

be an egregious mistake, therefore, to suppose that Hegel's Optimism is born of a superficial glance that ignores the darker sides of existence. Throughout, indeed, it takes the shape much more of a deliverance from evil than of the unimpeded march of a victorious purpose. In this respect, it is a much closer transcript of the course of the actual than most Optimistic systems are. But the inevitable question rises—Whence the necessity of this pain and labour in the all-perfect? And if we lose our grasp of this idea of an all-perfect whole, can we be said still to possess the imposing synthesis which Hegel lays claim to? Hegel might answer, that our difficulty is created by the abstract idea of perfection with which we start. Such pure perfection would be colourless nonentity; there is no victory possible without an adversary, and existence is, in its very essence, this conflict of opposites. His own position, he might say, is demonstrably identical with that of religion, which maintains that evil is 'permitted' for the sake of the greater good, or, as philosophy expresses it, is involved in its possibility. Evil that is the means to good, a dualism that yet is overcome, Optimism upon a ground of Pessimism,—such, he might say, is the character of existence as it reveals itself to us. God is this eternal conquest or reconciliation. We have no right to make unto ourselves other gods, or to construct an imaginary world, where good shall be possible without evil, result without effort. Whether Hegel would accept what is here put into his mouth, and whether, if he would, the position amounts to an absolute philosophy, are questions too wide to discuss further in a work whose object is mainly expository. But I probably express the conviction of many students, when

I say that the strength of Hegelianism lies not so much in the definite answer it gives to any of the questions which are supposed to constitute philosophy, as in its criticism of history. In history, whether it be the history of philosophies, of religions, or of nations, Hegel is like Antæus on his mother earth ; his criticisms are invincible, and his interpretations are ever fresh.



THE END.



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