II.—THE SENTIMENT OF RATIONALITY.

I.

What is the task which philosophers set themselves to perform? And why do they philosophise at all? Almost everyone will immediately reply: They desire to attain a conception of the frame of things which shall on the whole be more rational than the rather fragmentary and chaotic one which everyone by gift of nature carries about with him under his hat. But suppose this rational conception attained by the philosopher, how is he to recognise it for what it is, and not let it slip through ignorance? The only answer can be that he will recognise its rationality as he recognises everything else, by certain subjective marks with which it affects him. When he gets the marks he may know that he has got the rationality.

What then are the marks? A strong feeling of ease, peace, rest, is one of them. The transition from a state of puzzle and perplexity to rational comprehension is full of lively relief and pleasure.

But this relief seems to be a negative rather than a positive character. Shall we then say that the feeling of rationality is constituted merely by the absence of any feeling of irrationality? I think there are very good grounds for upholding such a view. All feeling whatever, in the light of certain recent psychological speculations, seems to depend for its physical condition not on simple discharge of nerve-currents, but on their discharge under arrest, impediment or resistance. Just as we feel no particular pleasure when we breathe freely, but a very intense feeling of distress when the respiratory motions are prevented; so any unobstructed tendency to action discharges itself without the production of much cogitative accompaniment, and any perfectly fluent course of thought awakens but little feeling. But when the movement is inhibited or when the thought meets with difficulties, we experience a distress which yields to an opposite feeling of pleasure as fast as the obstacle is overcome. It is only when the distress is upon us that we can be said to strive, to crave, or to aspire. When enjoying plenary freedom to energise either in the way of motion or of thought, we are in a sort of anaesthetic state in which we might say with Walt Whitman, if we cared to say anything about ourselves at such times, "I am sufficient as I am". This feeling of the sufficiency of the present moment, of its absoluteness—this absence of all need to explain it, account for it or justify it—is what I call the
Sentiment of Rationality. As soon, in short, as we are enabled from any cause whatever to think of a thing with perfect fluency, that thing seems to us rational.

Why we should constantly gravitate towards the attainment of such fluency cannot here be said. As this is not an ethical but a psychological essay, it is quite sufficient for our purposes to lay it down as an empirical fact that we strive to formulate rationally a tangled mass of fact by a propensity as natural and invincible as that which makes us exchange a hard high stool for an arm-chair or prefer travelling by railroad to riding in a springless cart.

Whatever modes of conceiving the cosmos facilitate this fluency of our thought, produce the sentiment of rationality. Conceived in such modes Being vouches for itself and needs no further philosophic formulation. But so long as mutually obstructive elements are involved in the conception, the pent-up irritated mind recoiling on its present consciousness will criticise it, worry over it, and never cease in its attempts to discover some new mode of formulation which may give it escape from the irrationality of its actual ideas.

Now mental ease and freedom may be obtained in various ways. Nothing is more familiar than the way in which mere custom makes us at home with ideas or circumstances which, when new, filled the mind with curiosity and the need of explanation. There is no more common sight than that of men’s mental worry about things incongruous with personal desire, and their thoughtless incurious acceptance of whatever happens to harmonise with their subjective ends. The existence of evil forms a “mystery”—a “problem”; there is no “problem of happiness”. But, on the other hand, purely theoretic processes may produce the same mental peace which custom and congruity with our native impulses in other cases give; and we have forthwith to discover how it is that so many processes can produce the same result, and how Philosophy, by emulating or using the means of all, may attain to a conception of the world which shall be rational in the maximum degree, or be warranted in the most composite manner against the inroads of mental unrest or discontent.

II.

It will be best to take up first the theoretic way. The facts of the world in their sensible diversity are always before us, but the philosophic need craves that they should be conceived in such a way as to satisfy the sentiment of rationality. The philosophic quest then is the quest of a conception. What now
is a conception? It is a teleological instrument. It is a partial aspect of a thing which for our purpose we regard as its essential aspect, as the representative of the entire thing. In comparison with this aspect, whatever other properties and qualities the thing may have, are unimportant accidents which we may without blame ignore. But the essence, the ground of conception, varies with the end we have in view. A substance like oil has as many different essences as it has uses to different individuals. One man conceives it as a combustible, another as a lubricator, another as a food; the chemist thinks of it as a hydro-carbon; the furniture-maker as a darkener of wood; the speculator as a commodity whose market price to-day is this and to-morrow that. The soap-boiler, the physicist, the clothes-scourer severally ascribes to it other essences in relation to their needs. UEberweg’s doctrine\(^1\) that the essential quality of a thing is the quality of most worth, is strictly true; but UEberweg has failed to note that the worth is wholly relative to the temporary interests of the conceiver. And, even, when his interest is distinctly defined in his own mind, the discrimination of the quality in the object which has the closest connexion with it, is a thing which no rules can teach. The only \(a\) priori advice that can be given to a man embarking on life with a certain purpose is the somewhat barren counsel: Be sure that in the circumstances that meet you, you attend to the right ones for your purpose. To pick out the right ones is the measure of the man. “Millions,” says Hartmann, “stare at the phenomenon before a genialer Kopf pounces on the concept.”\(^2\) The genius is simply he to whom, when he opens his eyes upon the world, the “right” characters are the prominent ones. The fool is he who, with the same purposes as the genius, infallibly gets his attention tangled amid the accidents.

Schopenhauer expresses well this ultimate truth when he says that Intuition (by which in this passage he means the power to distinguish at a glance the essence amid the accidents) “is not only the source of all knowledge, but is knowledge \(k\alpha\tau \varepsilon\xi\omicron\omicron\nu\) . . . is real insight. . . . Wisdom, the true view of life, the right look at things, and the judgment that hits the mark, proceed from the mode in which the man conceives the world which lies before him . . . He who excels in this talent knows the (Platonic) ideas of the world and of life. Every case he looks at stands for countless cases; more and more he goes on to conceive of each thing in accordance with its true nature, and his acts like his judgments bear the stamp of his insight. Gradually his face too acquires the straight and

\(^1\) Logic, English tr., p. 139.
\(^2\) Philosophie des Unbewussten, 2te Auflage, p. 249.
piercing look, the expression of reason, and at last of wisdom. For the direct sight of essences alone can set its mark upon the face. Abstract knowledge about them has no such effect."¹

The right conception for the philosopher depends then on his interests. Now the interest which he has above other men is that of reducing the manifold in thought to simple form. We can no more say why the philosopher is more peculiarly sensitive to this delight, than we can explain the passion some persons have for matching colours or for arranging cards in a game of solitaire. All these passions resemble each other in one point; they are all illustrations of what may be called the aesthetic Principle of Ease. Our pleasure at finding that a chaos of facts is at bottom the expression of a single underlying fact is like the relief of the musician at resolving a confused mass of sound into melodic or harmonic order. The simplified result is handled with far less mental effort than the original data; and a philosophic conception of nature is thus in no metaphorical sense a labour-saving contrivance. The passion for parsimony, for economy of means in thought, is thus the philosophic passion par excellence, and any character or aspect of the world’s phenomena which gathers up their diversity into simplicity will gratify that passion, and in the philosopher’s mind stand for that essence of things compared with which all their other determinations may by him be overlooked.

Mere universality or extensiveness is then the one mark the philosopher’s conceptions must possess. Unless they appear in an enormous number of cases they will not bring the relief which is his main theoretic need. The knowledge of things by their causes, which is often given as a definition of rational knowledge, is useless to him unless the causes converge to a minimum number whilst still producing the maximum number of effects. The more multiple are the instances he can see to be cases of his fundamental concept, the more flowingly does his mind rove from fact to fact in the world. The phenomenal transitions are no real transitions; each item is the same old friend with a slightly altered dress. This passion for unifying things may gratify itself, as we all know, at truth’s expense. Everyone has friends bent on system and everyone has observed how, when their system has once taken definite shape, they become absolutely blind and insensible to the most flagrant facts which cannot be made to fit into it. The ignoring of data is, in fact, the easiest and most popular mode of obtaining unity in one’s thought.

But leaving these vulgar excesses let us glance briefly at some

¹ **Welt als Wille u. Vorstellung, II., p. 83**
more dignified contemporary examples of the hypertrophy of the unifying passion.

Its ideal goal gets permanent expression in the great notion of Substance, the underlying One in which all differences are reconciled. D’Alembert’s often quoted lines express the postulate in its most abstract shape: “L’univers pour qui saurait l’embrasser d’un seul point de vue ne serait, s’il est permis de le dire, qu’un fait unique et une grande vérité”. Accordingly Mr. Spencer, after saying on page 158 of the first volume of his *Psychology*, that “no effort enables us to assimilate Feeling and Motion, they have nothing in common,” cannot refrain on page 162 from invoking abruptly an “Unconditional Being common to the two”.

The craving for Monism at any cost is the parent of the entire evolutionist movement of our day, so far as it pretends to be more than history. The Philosophy of Evolution tries to show how the world at any given time may be conceived as absolutely identical, except in appearance, with itself at all past times. What it most abhors is the admission of anything which, appearing at a given point, should be judged essentially other than what went before. Notwithstanding the *lacunae* in Mr. Spencer’s system; notwithstanding the vagueness of his terms; in spite of the sort of jugglery by which his use of the word “nascent” is made to veil the introduction of new primordial factors like consciousness, as if, like the girl in *Midshipman Easy*, he could excuse the illegitimacy of an infant, by saying it was a very little one—in spite of all this, I say, Mr. Spencer is, and is bound to be, the most popular of all philosophers, because more than any other he seeks to appease our strongest theoretic craving. To undiscriminating minds his system will be a sop; to acute ones a programme full of suggestiveness.

When Lewes asserts in one place that the nerve-process and the feeling which accompanies it are not two things but only two “aspects” of one and the same thing, whilst in other passages he seems to imply that the cognitive feeling and the outward thing cognised (which is always other than the nerve-process accompanying the cognitive act) are again one thing in two aspects (giving us thereby as the ultimate truth One Thing in Three Aspects, very much as Trinitarian Christians affirm it to be One God in Three Persons),—the vagueness of his mode only testifies to the imperiousness of his need of unity.

The crowning feat of unification at any cost is seen in the Hegelian denial of the Principle of Contradiction. One who is willing to allow that A and not-A are one, can be checked by few farther difficulties in Philosophy.
But alongside of the passion for simplification, there exists a sister passion which in some minds—though they perhaps form the minority—is its rival. This is the passion for distinguishing; it is the impulse to be acquainted with the parts rather than to comprehend the whole. Loyalty to clearness and integrity of perception, dislike of blurred outlines, of vague identifications, are its characteristics. It loves to recognise particulars in their full completeness, and the more of these it can carry the happier it is. It is the mind of Cuvier versus St. Hilaire, of Hume versus Spinoza. It prefers any amount of incoherence, abruptness and fragmentariness (so long as the literal details of the separate facts are saved) to a fallacious unity which swamps things rather than explains them.

Clearness versus Simplicity is then the theoretic dilemma, and a man's philosophic attitude is determined by the balance in him of these two cravings. When John Mill insists that the ultimate laws of nature cannot possibly be less numerous than the distinguishable qualities of sensation which we possess, he speaks in the name of this aesthetic demand for clearness. When Prof. Bain says1:—"There is surely nothing to be dissatisfied with, or to complain of in the circumstance that the elements of our experience are in the last resort two and not one . . . Instead of our being 'unfortunate' in not being able to know the essence of either matter or mind—in not comprehending their union, our misfortune would rather be to have to know anything different from what we do know,"—he is animated by a like motive. All makers of architectonic systems like that of Kant, all multipliers of original principles, all dislikers of vague monotony, whether it bear the character of Elatic stagnancy or of Heraclitic change, obey this tendency. Ultimate kinds of feeling bound together in harmony by laws, which themselves are ultimate kinds of relation, form the theoretic resting-place of such philosophers.

The unconditional demand which this need makes of a philosophy is that its fundamental terms should be representable. Phenomena are analysable into feelings and relations. Causality is a relation between two feelings. To abstract the relation from the feelings, to unify all things by referring them to a first cause, and to leave this latter relation with no term of feeling before it, is to violate the fundamental habits of our thinking, to baffle the imagination, and to exasperate the minds of certain people much as everyone's eye is exasperated by a magic-lantern picture or a microscopic object out of focus. Sharpen it, we say, or for heaven's sake remove it altogether.

The matter is not at all helped when the word Substance is brought forward and the primordial causality said to obtain between this and the phenomena; for Substance *in se* cannot be directly imaged by feeling, and seems in fact but to be a peculiar form of relation between feelings—the relation of organic union between a group of them and time. Such relations, represented as non-phenomenal entities, become thus the belle noire and pet aversion of many thinkers. By being posited as existent they challenge our acquaintance but at the same instant defy it by being defined as noumenal. So far is this reaction against the treatment of relational terms as metempirical entities carried, that the reigning British school seems to deny their function even in their legitimate sphere, namely as phenomenal elements or "laws" cementing the mosaic of our feelings into coherent form. Time, likeness, and unlikeness are the only phenomenal relations our English empiricists can tolerate. One of the earliest and perhaps the most famous expression of the dislike to relations considered abstractedly is the well-known passage from Hume: "When we run over libraries, persuaded of these principles, what havoc must we make! If we take in our hand any volume of divinity or school metaphysic, for instance, let us ask, Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number? No. Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact existence? No. Commit it then to the flames: for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion."1

Many are the variations which succeeding writers have played on this tune. As we spoke of the excesses of the unifying passion, so we may now say of the craving for clear representability that it leads often to an unwillingness to treat any abstractions whatever as if they were intelligible. Even to talk of space, time, feeling, power, &c., oppresses them with a strange sense of uncanniness. Anything to be real for them must be representable in the form of a lump. Its other concrete determinations may be abstracted from, but its tangible thinghood must remain. Minds of this order, if they can be brought to psychologise at all, abound in such phrases as "tracts" of consciousness, "areas" of emotion, "molecules" of feeling, "agglutinated portions" of thought, "gangs" of ideas &c., &c.

Those who wish an amusing example of this style of thought should read *Le Cerveau* by the anatomist Luys, surely the very worst book ever written on the much-abused subject of mental physiology. In another work, *Psychologie réaliste*, by P. Sièrèbois (Paris 1876), it is maintained that "our ideas exist in us in a

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molecular condition, and are subject to continual movements.

Their mobility is as great as that of the molecules of air or any gas.” When we fail to recall a word it is because our ideas are hid in some distant corner of the brain whence they cannot come to the muscles of articulation, or else “they have lost their ordinary fluidity.” “These ideal molecules are material portions of the brain which differs from all other matter precisely in this property which it possesses of subdividing itself into very attenuated portions which easily take on the likeness in form and quality of all external objects.” In other words, when I utter the word ‘rhinoceros’ an actual little microscopic rhinoceros gallops towards my mouth.

A work of considerable acuteness, far above the vulgar materialistic level, is that of Czolbe, *Grundzüge einer extensionalen Erkenntnisstheorie* (1875). This author explains our ideas to be extended substances endowed with mutual penetrability. The matter of which they are composed is “elastic like india-rubber”. When “concentrated” by “magnetic self-attraction” into the middle of the brain, its “intensity” is such that it becomes conscious. When the attraction ceases, the idea-substance expands and diffuses itself into infinite space and so sinks from consciousness.

Again passing over these quasi-pathological excesses, we come to a permanent and, for our purpose, most important fact—the fact that many minds of the highest analytic power will tolerate in Philosophy no unifying terms but elements immanent in phenomena, and taken in their phenomenal and representable sense. Entities whose attributes are not directly given in feeling, phenomenal relations functioning as entities, are alike rejected. Spinozistic Substance, Spencerian Unknowable, are abhorred as unrepresentable things, numerically additional to the representable world. The substance of things for these clear minds can be no more than their common measure. The phenomena bear to it the same relation that the different numbers bear to unity. These contain no other matter than the repeated unit, but they may be classed as prime numbers, odd numbers, even numbers, square numbers, cube numbers, &c., just as truly and naturally as we class concrete things. The molecular motions, of which physicists hope that some day all events and properties will be seen to consist, form such an immanent unity of colossal simplifying power. The “infinitesimal event” of various modern writers, Taine for example, with its two “aspects,” inner and outer, reaches still farther in the same direction. Writers of this class, if they deal with Psychology, repudiate the “soul” as a scholastic entity. The phenomenal unity of consciousness must flow from some
element immutably present in each and every representation of the individual and binding the whole into one. To unearth and accurately define this phenomenal self becomes one of the fundamental tasks of Psychology.

But the greatest living insister on the principle that unity in our account of things shall not overwhelm clearness, is Charles Renouvier. His masterly exposition of the irreducible categories of thought in his *Essais de Critique générale* ought to be far better known among us than it is. The onslufts which this eminently clear-headed writer has made and still makes in his weekly journal, the *Critique Philosophique*, on the vanity of the evolutionary principle of simplification, which supposes that you have explained away all distinctions by simply saying "they arise" instead of "they are," form the ablest criticism which the school of Evolution has received. Difference "thus displaced, transported from the esse to the fieri, is it any the less postulated? And does the fieri itself receive the least commencement of explanation when we suppose that everything which occurs, occurs little by little, by insensible degrees, so that, if we look at any one of these degrees, what happens does so as easily and clearly as if it did not happen at all? . . . If we want a continuous production *ex nihilo*, why not say so frankly, and abandon the idea of a 'transition without break' which explains really nothing?"¹

IV.

Our first conclusion may then be this: No system of philosophy can hope to be universally accepted among men which grossly violates either of the two great aesthetic needs of our logical nature, the need of unity and the need of clearness, or entirely subordinates the one to the other. Doctrines of mere disintegration like that of Hume and his successors, will be as widely unacceptable on the one hand as doctrines of merely engulfing substantialism like those of Schopenhauer, Hartmann and Spencer on the other. Can we for our own guidance briefly sketch out here some of the conditions of most favourable compromise?

In surveying the connexions between data we are immediately struck by the fact that some are more intimate than others. Propositions which express those we call necessary truths; and with them we contrast the laxer collocations and sequences which are known as empirical, habitual or merely fortuitous. The former seem to have an *inward* reasonableness which the latter are deprived of. The link, whatever it be,

¹ *Critique Philosophique*, 12 Juillet, 1877, p. 383.
which binds the two phenomena together, seems to extend from the heart of one into the heart of the next, and to be an essential reason why the facts should always and indefeasibly be as we now know them. "Within the pale we stand," As Lotze says:

"The intellect is not satisfied with merely associated representations. In its constant critical activity thought seeks to refer each representation to the rational ground which conditions the alliance of what is associated and proves that what is grouped belongs together. So it separates from each other those impressions which merely coalesce without inward connexions, and it renews (while corroborating them) the bonds of those which, by the inward kinship of their content, have a right to permanent companionship."

On the other hand many writers seem to deny the existence of any such inward kinship or rational bond between things. Hume says: "All our distinct perceptions are distinct existences and the mind never perceives any real connexion among distinct existences."2

Hume's followers are less bold in their utterances than their master, but throughout all recent British Nominalism we find the tendency to enshrine mere juxtaposition as lord of all and to make of the Universe what has well been styled a Nulliverse. "For my part," says Prof. Huxley, "I utterly repudiate and anathematise the intruder [Necessity]. Fact I know; and Law I know; but what is this Necessity, save an empty shadow of the mind's own throwing?"

And similarly J. S. Mill writes: "What is called explaining one law by another is but substituting one mystery for another, and does nothing to render the course of nature less mysterious. We can no more assign a why for the more extensive laws than for the partial ones. The explanation may substitute a mystery which has become familiar and has grown to seem not mysterious for one which is still strange. And this is the meaning of explanation in common parlance. . . . The laws thus explained or resolved are said to be accounted for; but the expression is incorrect if taken to mean anything more than what has been stated."3

And yet the very pertinacity with which such writers remind us that our explanations are in a strict sense of the word no explanations at all; that our causes never unfold the essential nature of their effects; that we never seize the inward reason why attributes cluster as they do to form things, seems to prove that they possess in their minds some ideal or pattern of what a

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1 Microcosmus, 2nd ed. I., p. 261.
genuine explanation would be like in case they should meet it. How could they brand our current explanations as spurious, if they had no positive notion whatever of the real thing?

Now have we the real thing? And yet may they be partly right in their denials? Surely both; and I think that the shares of truth may be easily assigned. Our “laws” are to a great extent but facts of larger growth, and yet things are inwardly and necessarily connected notwithstanding. The entire process of philosophic simplification of the chaos of sense consists of two acts, Identification and Association. Both are principles of union and therefore of theoretic rationality; but the rationality between things associated is outward and custom-bred. Only when things are identified do we pass inwardly and necessarily from one to the other.

The first step towards unifying the chaos is to classify its items. “Every concrete thing,” says Prof. Bain, “falls into as many classes as it has attributes.”¹ When we pick out a certain attribute to conceive it by, we literally and strictly identify it in that respect with the other concretes of the class having that attribute for its essence, concretes which the attribute recalls. When we conceive of sugar as a white thing it is pro tanto identical with snow; as a sweet thing it is the same as liquorice; quod hydro-carbon, as starch. The attribute picked out may be per se most uninteresting and familiar, but if things superficially very diverse can be found to possess it buried within them and so be assimilated with each other, “the mind feels a peculiar and genuine satisfaction. . . . The intellect, oppressed with the variety and multiplicity of facts, is joyfully relieved by the simplification and the unity of a great principle.”²

Who does not feel the charm of thinking that the moon and the apple are, as far as their relation to the earth goes, identical? of knowing respiration and combustion to be one? of understanding that the balloon rises by the same law whereby the stone sinks? of feeling that the warmth in one’s palm when one rubs one’s sleeve is identical with the motion which the friction checks? of recognising the difference between beast and fish to be only a higher degree of that between human father and son? of believing our strength when we climb or chop to be no other than the strength of the sun’s rays which made the oats grow out of which we got our morning meal?

We shall presently see how the attribute performing this unifying function, becomes associated with some other attribute to form what is called a general law. But at present we must

² Bain, *Logic*, II., p. 120.
note that many sciences remain in this first and simplest classificatory stage. A classificatory science is merely one the fundamental concepts of which have few associations or none with other concepts. When I say a man, a lizard, and a frog are one in being vertebrates, the identification, delightful as it is in itself, leads me hardly any farther. "The idea that all the parts of a flower are modified leaves, reveals a connecting law, which surprises us into acquiescence. But now try and define the leaf, determine its essential characteristics, so as to include all the forms that we have named. You will find yourself in a difficulty, for all distinctive marks vanish, and you have nothing left, except that a leaf in this wider sense of the term is a lateral appendage of the axis of a plant. Try then to express the proposition 'the parts of a flower are modified leaves' in the language of scientific definition, and it reads, 'the parts of the flower are lateral appendages of the axis'." ¹ Truly a bald result! Yet a dozen years ago there hardly lived a naturalist who was not thrilled with rapture at identifications in "philosophic" anatomy and botany exactly on a par with this. Nothing could more clearly show that the gratification of the sentiment of rationality depends hardly at all on the worth of the attribute which strings' things together but almost exclusively on the mere fact of their being strung at all. Theological implications were the utmost which the attributes of archetypal zoology carried with them, but the wretched poverty of these proves how little they had to do with the enthusiasm engendered by archetypal identifications. Take Agassiz's conception of class-characters, order-characters &c., as "thoughts of God". What meagre thoughts! Take Owen's archetype of the vertebrate skeleton as revealing the artistic temperament of the Creator. It is a grotesque figure with neither beauty nor ethical suggestiveness, fitted rather to discredit than honour the Divine Mind. In short the conceptions led no farther than the identification pure and simple. The transformation which Darwin has effected in the classificatory sciences is simply this—that in his theory the class-essence is not a unifying attribute pure and simple, but an attribute with wide associations. When a frog, a man and a lizard are recognised as one, not simply in having the same back-bone, &c., but in being all offspring of one parent, our thought instead of coming to a standstill, is immediately confronted with further problems and, we hope, solutions. Who were that parent's ancestors and cousins? Why was he chosen out of all to found such an enormous line? Why did he himself perish in the struggle to survive? &c.

¹ Helmholtz, *Popular Scientific Lectures*, p. 47.
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Association of class-attributes inter se, is thus the next great step in the mind's simplifying industry. By it Empirical Laws are founded and sciences, from classificatory, become explanatory. Without it we should be in the position of a judge who could only decide that the cases in his court belonged each to a certain class, but who should be inhibited from passing sentence, or attaching to the class-name any further notion of duty, liability, or penalty. This coupling of the class-concept with certain determinate consequences associated therewithal, is what is practically important in the laws of nature as in those of society.

When, for example, we have identified prisms, bowls of water, lenses and strata of air as distorting media, the next step is to learn that all distorting media refract light rays towards the perpendicular. Such additional determination makes a law. But this law itself may be as inscrutable as the concrete fact we started from. The entrance of a ray and its swerving towards the perpendicular, may be simply associated properties, with, for aught we see, no inwardly necessary bond, coupled together as empirically as the colour of a man's eyes with the shape of his nose.

But such an empirical law may have its terms again classified. The essence of the medium may be to retard the light-wave's speed. The essence (in an obliquely-striking wave) of deflexion towards the perpendicular may be earlier retardation of that part of the wave-front which enters first, so that the remaining portion swings round it before getting in. Medium and bending towards perpendicular thus coalesce into the one identical fact of retardation. This being granted gives an inward explanation of all above it. But retardation itself remains an empirical coupling of medium and light-movement until we have classified both under a single concept. The explanation reached by the insight that two phenomena are at bottom one and the same phenomenon, is rational in the ideal and ultimate sense of the word. The ultimate identification of the subject and predicate of a mathematical theorem, an identification which we can always reach in our reasonings, is the source of the inward necessity of mathematical demonstration. We see that the top and bottom of a parallelogram must be equal as soon as we have unearthed in the parallelogram the attribute that it consists of two equal, juxtaposed triangles of which its top and bottom form homologous sides—that is, as soon as we have seen that top and bottom have an identical essence, their length, as being such sides, and that their position is an accident. This criterion of identity is that which we all unconsciously use when we discriminate between brute fact and explained fact. There is no other test.
In the contemporary striving of physicists to interpret every event as a case of motion concealed or visible, we have an adumbration of the way in which a common essence may make the sensible heterogeneity of things inwardly rational. The cause is one motion, the effect the same motion transferred to other molecules; in other words, physics aims at the same kind of rationality as mathematics. In the second volume of Lewes's Problems we find this anti-Humean view that the effect is the "procession" of the cause, or that they are one thing in two aspects brought prominently forward.¹

And why, on the other hand, do all our contemporary physical philosophers so vie with each other in the zeal with which they reiterate that in reality nerve-processes and brain-tremors "explain" nothing of our feelings? Why does "the chasm between the two classes of phenomena still remain intellectually impassable"?² Simply because, in the words of Spencer which we quoted a few pages back, feeling and motion have nothing whatever in common, no identical essence by which we can conceive both, and so, as Tyndall says, "pass by a process of reasoning from one to the other". The "double-aspect" school postulate the blank form of "One and the Same Fact," appeal to the image of the circle which is both convex and concave, and think that they have by this symbolic identification made the matter seem more rational.

Thus when the connexions of things become strictly rational only when, by successive substitutions of essences for things, and higher for lower essences, we succeed in reaching a point of view from which we can view the things as one. A and B are concretes; a and b are partial attributes with which for the present case we conceive them to be respectively identical (classify them) and which are coupled by a general law. M is a further attribute which rationally explains the general law as soon as we perceive it to form the essence of both a and b, as soon as we identify them with each other through it. The softening of asphalt pavements in August is explained first by the empirical law that heat, which is the essence of August, produces melting, which is the essence of the pavement's change, and secondly this law is inwardly rationalised by the conception of both heat and melting being at bottom one and the same fact, namely, increased molecular mobility.

¹ This view is in growing favour with thinkers fed from empirical sources. See Wundt's Physikalische Axione and the important article by A. Riehl, "Causalitat und Identitat," in Vierteljahrsschr. f. wiss. Philos. Bd. 1., p. 265. The Humean view is ably urged by Chauncey Wright, Philosophical Discussions, N.Y. 1877, p. 406.
² Tyndall, Fragments of Science, 2nd ed., p. 121.
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Proximate and ultimate explanations are then essentially the same thing. Classification involves all that is inward in any explanation, and a perfected rationalisation of things means only a completed classification of them. Every one feels that all explanation whatever, even by reference to the most proximate empirical law, does involve something of the essence of inward rationalisation. How else can we understand such words as these from Prof. Huxley? "The fact that it is impossible to comprehend how it is that a physical state gives rise to a mental state, no more lessens the value of our [empirical] explanation of the latter case, than the fact that it is utterly impossible to comprehend how motion is communicated from one body to another weakens the force of the explanation of the motion of one billiard-ball by showing that another has hit it."

To return now to the philosophic problem. It is evident that our idea of the universe cannot assume an inwardly rational shape until each separate phenomenon is conceived as fundamentally identical with every other. But the important fact to notice is that in the steps by which this end is reached the really rationalising, pregnant moments are the successive steps of conception, the moments of picking out essences. The association of these essences into laws, the empirical coupling, is done by nature for us and is hardly worthy to be called an intellectual act. On the other hand the coalescence-into-one of all items in which the same essence is discerned, in other words the perception that an essence whether ultimate, simple and universal, or proximate and specific, is identical with itself wherever found, is a barren truism. The living question always is, Where is it found? To stand before a phenomenon and say what it is; in other words to pick out from it the embedded character (or characters) also embedded in the maximum number of other phenomena, and so identify it with them—here lie the stress and strain, here the test of the philosopher. So we revert to what we said far back: the genius can do no more than this; in Butler's words—

"He knows what's what, and that's as high As metaphysic wit can fly."

2 This doctrine is perfectly congruous with the conclusion that identities are the only propositions necessary à priori, though of course it does not necessarily lead to that conclusion, since there may be in things elements which are not simple but bilateral or synthetic, like straightness and shortness in a line, convexity and concavity in a curve. Should the empiricists succeed in their attempt to resolve such Siamese-twin elements into habitual juxtapositions, the Principle of Identity would become the only à priori truth, and the philosophic problem like all our ordinary problems
V.

We have now to ask ourselves how far this identification may be legitimately carried and what, when perfected, its real worth is. But before passing to these further questions we had best secure our ground by defending our fundamental notion itself from nominalistic attacks. The reigning British school has always denied that the same attribute is identical with itself in different individuals. I started above with the assumption that when we look at a subject with a certain purpose, regard it from a certain point of view, some one attribute becomes its essence and identifies it, \textit{pro hae vice}, with a class. To this James Mill replies: “But what is meant by a mode of regarding things? This is mysterious; and is as mysteriously explained, when it is said to be the taking into view the particulars in which individuals agree. For what is there, which it is possible for the mind to take into view, in that in which individuals agree? Every colour is an individual colour, every size is an individual size, every shape is an individual shape. But things have no individual colour in common, no individual shape in common; no individual size in common; that is to say, they have neither shape, colour, nor size in common. What, then, is it which they have in common, which the mind can take into view?” Those who affirmed that it was something, could by no means tell. They substituted words for things; using vague and mystical

would become a question as to facts: \textit{What} are these facts which we perceive to exist? Are there any existing facts corresponding to this or that conceived class? Lewes, in the interesting discussion on necessary and contingent truth in the Prolegomena to his \textit{History} and in Chap. XIII. of his first \textit{Problem}, seems at first sight to take up an opposite position, in that he maintains our commonly so-called contingent truths to be really necessary. But his treatment of the question most beautifully confirms the doctrine I have advanced in the text. If the proposition “A is B” is ever true, he says it is so necessarily. But he proves the necessity by showing that what we mean by A is its essential attribute \( x \), and what we mean by B is again \( x \). Only \textit{in so far} as A and B are identical is the proposition true. But he admits that a fact sensibly just like A may lack \( x \), and a fact sensibly unlike B may have it. In either case the proposition, to be true, must change. The contingency which he banishes from propositions, he thus houses in their terms; making as I do the act of conception, subsumption, classification, intuition, naming, or whatever else one may prefer to call it, the pivot on which thought turns. Before this act there is infinite indeterminateness—A and B may be anything. After the act there is the absolute certainty of truth—all \( x \)'s are the same. In the act—is A, \( x \) ? is B, \( x \) ? or not \( x \)?—we have the sphere of truth and error, of living experience, in short, of \textit{Fact}. As Lewes himself says: “The only necessity is that a thing is what it is; the only contingency is that our proposition may not state what the thing is” (\textit{Problems}, Vol. I., p. 395).
phrases, which, when examined, meant nothing;" the truth being according to this heroic author, that the only thing that can be possessed in common is a name. Black in the coat and black in the shoe agree only in that both are named black—the fact that on this view the name is never the same when used twice being quite overlooked. But the blood of the giants has grown weak in these days, and the nominalistic utterances of our contemporaries are like sweet-bells jangled, sadly out of tune. If they begin with a clear nominalistic note, they are sure to end with a grating rattle which sounds very like universalia in re, if not ante rem. In M. Taine,2 who may fairly be included in the British School, they are almost ante rem. This bruit de cloche, fêlée, as the doctors say, is pathognomonic of the condition of Ockham's entire modern progeny.

But still we may find expressions like this: "When I say that the sight of any object gives me the same sensation or emotion to-day that it did yesterday, or the same which it gives to some other person, this is evidently an incorrect application of the word same; for the feeling which I had yesterday is gone never to return. . . . Great confusion of ideas is often produced, and many fallacies engendered, in otherwise enlightened understandings, by not being sufficiently alive to the fact (in itself always to be avoided), that they use the same name to express ideas so different as those of identity and undistinguishable resemblance."3

What are the exact facts? Take the sensation I got from a cloud yesterday and from the snow to-day. The white of the snow and that of the cloud differ in place, time and associates; they agree in quality, and we may say in origin, being in all probability both produced by the activity of the same brain tract. Nevertheless, John Mill denies our right to call the quality the same. He says that it essentially differs in every different occasion of its appearance, and that no two phenomena of which it forms part are really identical even as far as it goes. Is it not obvious that to maintain this view he must abandon

1 Analysis, Vol. I., p. 249.
2 How can M. Taine fail to have perceived that the entire doctrine of "Substitution" so clearly set forth in the nominalistic beginning of his brilliant book is utterly senseless except on the supposition of realistic principles like those which he so admirably expounds at its close? How can the image be a useful substitute for the sensation, the tendency for the image, the name for the tendency, unless sensation, image, tendency and name be identical in some respect, in respect namely of function, of the relations they enter into? Were this realistic basis laid at the outset of Taine's De l'Intelligence, it would be one of the most consistent instead of one of the most self-contradictory works of our day.
the phenomenal plane altogether? Phenomenally considered, the white per se is identical with itself wherever found in snow or in cloud, to-day or to-morrow. If any nominalist deny the identity I ask him to point out the difference. Ex hypothesi the qualities are sensibly indistinguishable, and the only difference he can indicate is that of time and place; but these are not differences in the quality. If our quality be not the same with itself, what meaning has the word "same"? Our adversary though silenced may still grudge assent, but if he analyse carefully the grounds of this reluctance he will, I think, find that it proceeds from a difficulty in believing that the cause of the quality can be just the same at different times. In other words he abandons altogether the platform of the sensible phenomenon and ascends into the empyrean, postulating some inner nomenal principle of quality + time + place + concomitants. The entire group being never twice alike, of course this ground, or being in se, of the quality must each time be distinct and, so to speak, personal. This transcendental view is frankly avowed by Mr. Spencer in his Psychology, II., p. 63—(the passage is too complex to quote); but all nominalists must start from it, if they think clearly at all.  

We, who are phenomenists, may leave all metaphysical entities which have the power of producing whiteness to their fate, and content ourselves with the irreversible datum of perception that the whiteness after it is manifested is the same, be it here or be it there. Of all abstractions such entities are the emptiest, being ontological hypostatisations of the mere susceptibility of being distinguished, whilst this susceptibility has its real, nameable, phenomenal ground all the while, in the time, place, and relations affected by the attribute considered.

The truly wise man will take the phenomenon in its entirety and permanently sacrifice no one aspect to another. Time, place, and relations differ, he will freely say; but just as freely admit that the quality is identical with itself through all these differences. Then if, to satisfy the philosophic interest, it becomes needful to conceive this identical part as the essence of the several entire phenomena, he will gladly call them one; whilst if some other interest be paramount, the points of difference will

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1 I fear that even after this some persons will remain unconvinced, but then it seems to me the matter has become a dispute about words. If my supposed adversary, when he says that different times and places prevent a quality which appears in them from ever being twice the same, will admit that they do not make it in any conceivable way different, I will willingly abandon the words "same" and "identical" to his fury; though I confess it becomes rather inconvenient to have no single positive word left by which to indicate complete absence of difference.
become essential and the identity an accident. Realism is eternal and invincible in this phenomenal sense.

We have thus vindicated against all assailants our title to consider the world as a matter susceptible of rational formulation in the deepest, most inward sense, and not as a disintegrated sand-heap; and we are consequently at liberty to ask: (1) Whether the mutual identification of its items meet with any necessary limit; and (2) What, supposing the operation completed, its real worth and import amount to.

VI.

In the first place, when we have rationally explained the connexion of the items A and B by identifying both with their common attribute $x$, it is obvious that we have really explained only so much of these items as is $x$. To explain the connexion of choke-damp and suffocation by the lack of oxygen is to leave untouched all the other peculiarities both of choke-damp and of suffocation, such as convulsions and agony on the one hand, density and explosibility on the other. In a word, so far as A and B contain $l$, $m$, $n$ and $o$, $p$, $q$, respectively in addition to $x$, they are not explained by $x$. Each additional particularity makes its distinct appeal to our rational craving. A single explanation of a fact only explains it from a single point of view.\(^1\) The entire fact is not accounted for until each and all of its characters have been identified with their likes elsewhere. To apply this now to universal formulas we see that the explanation of the world by molecular movements explains it only so far as it actually is such movements. To invoke the “Unknownable” explains only so much as is unknowable; “Love” only so much as is love; “Thought,” so much as is thought; “Strife” so much as is strife. All data whose actual phenomenal quality cannot be identified with the attribute invoked as Universal Principle, remain outside as ultimate, independent kinds or natures, associated by empirical laws with the fundamental attribute but devoid of truly rational kinship with it. If A and B are to be thoroughly rationalised together, $l$, $m$, $n$ and $o$, $p$, $q$, must each and all turn out to be so many cases of $x$ in

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\(^1\) In the number of the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* for April 1879, Prof. John Watson most admirably asserts and expresses the truth which constitutes the back-bone of this article, namely that every manner of conceiving a fact is relative to some interest, and that there are no absolutely essential attributes—every attribute having the right to call itself essential in turn, and the truth consisting of nothing less than all of them together. I avow myself unable to comprehend as yet this author’s Hegelian point of view, but his pages 164 to 172 are a most welcome corroboration of what I have striven to advance in the text.
disguise. This kind of wholesale identification is being now attempted by physicists when they conceive of all the ancient, separate Forces as so many determinations of one and the same essence, molecular mass, position and velocity.

Suppose for a moment that this idea were carried out for the physical world,—the subjective sensations produced by the different molecular energies, colour, sound, taste, &c., &c., the relations of likeness and contrast, of time and position, of ease and effort, the emotions of pain and delight, in short, all the mutually irreducible categories of mental life, would still remain over. Certain writers strive in turn to reduce all these to a common measure, the primordial unit of feeling, or infinitesimal mental event which builds them up as bricks build houses. But this case is wholly different from the last. The physical molecule is conceived not only as having a being in se apart from representation, but as being essentially of representable kind. With magnified perceptions we should actually see it. The mental molecule, on the other hand, has by its very definition no existence except in being felt, and yet by the same definition never is felt. It is neither a fact in consciousness nor a fact out of consciousness, and falls to the ground as a transcendent absurdity. Nothing could be more inconclusive than the empirical arguments for the existence of this noumenal feeling which Taine and Spencer draw from the sense of hearing.

But let us for an instant waive all this and suppose our feelings reduced to one. We should then have two primordial natures, the molecule of matter and the molecule of mind, coupled by an empirical law. Phenomenally incommeasurable, the attempt to reduce them to unity by calling them two "aspects" is vain so long as it is not pointed out who is there adspicere; and the Machtspruch that they are expressions of one underlying Reality has no rationalising function so long as that reality is confessed unknowable. Nevertheless the absolute necessity of an identical material substratum for the different species of feeling on the one hand, and the genera feeling and motion on the other, if we are to have any evolutionary explanation of things, will lead to ever renewed attempts at an atomistic hylozoism. Already Clifford and Taine, Spencer, Fechner, Zöllner, G. S. Hall, and more besides, have given themselves up to this ideal.

But again let us waive this criticism and admit that even the chasm between feeling and motion may be rationally bridged by the conception of the bilateral atom of being. Let us grant that this atom by successive compoundings with its fellows builds up the universe; is it not still clear that each item in the
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universe would still be explained only as to its general quality and not as to its other particular determinations? The particulars depend on the exact number of primordial atoms existing at the outset and their exact distances from each other. The “universal formula” of Laplace which Du Bois-Reymond has made such striking use of in his lecture Über die Grenzen des Natürlicheren, cannot possibly get along with fewer than this almost infinite number of data. Their homogeneity does not abate their infinity—each is a separate empirical fact.

And when we now retract our provisional admissions, and deny that feelings incommensurable inter se and with motion can be possibly unified, we see at once that the reduction of the phenomenal Chaos to rational form must stop at a certain point. It is a limited process,—bounded by the number of elementary attributes which cannot be mutually identified, the specific qualia of representation, on the one hand, and, on the other, by the number of entities (atoms or monads or what not) with their complete mathematical determinations, requisite for deducing the fulness of the concrete world. All these irreducible data form a system, no longer phenomenally rational, inter se, but bound together by what is for us an empirical law. We merely find the system existing as a matter of fact, and write it down. In short, a plurality of categories and an infinity of primordial entities, determined according to these categories, is the minimum of philosophic baggage, the only possible compromise between the need of clearness and the need of unity. All simplification, beyond this point, is reached either by throwing away the particular concrete determinations of the fact to be explained, or else it is illusory simplification. In the latter case it is made by invoking some sham term, some pseudo-principle, and conglomerating it and the data into one. The principle may be an immanent element but no true universal: Sensation, Thought, Will are principles of this kind; or it may be a transcendent entity like Matter, Spirit, Substance, the Unknowable, the Unconscious, &c.¹ Such attempts do but postulate unification, not effect it; and if taken avowedly to represent a mere claim, may be allowed to stand. But if offered as actual explanations, though they may serve as a sop to the rabble, they can but nauseate those whose philosophic appetite is genuine and entire. If we choose the former mode of simplification and are willing to abstract from the particulars of time, place and combination in the concrete world,

¹ The idea of “God” in its popular function is open to neither of these objections, being conceived as a phenomenon standing in causal relation to other phenomena. As such, however, it has no unifying function of a properly explanatory kind.
we may simplify our elements very much by neglecting the numbers and collocations of our primordial elements and attending to their qualitative categories alone. The system formed by these will then really rationalise the universe so far as its qualities go. Nothing can happen in it incommensurable with these data, and practically this abstract treatment of the world as quality is all that philosophers aim at. They are satisfied when they can see it to be a place in which none but these qualities appear, and in which the same quality appears not only once but identically repeats itself. They are willing to ignore, or leave to special sciences the knowledge of what times, places and concomitants the recurring quality is likely to affect.

The Essais de Critique générale of Renouvier form, to my mind, by far the ablest answer to the philosophic need thus understood, clearness and unity being there carried each to the farthest point compatible with the other’s existence.

VII.

And now comes the question as to the worth of such an achievement. How much better off is the philosopher when he has got his system than he was before it? As a mere phenomenal system it stands between two fires. On the one hand the unbridled craver of unity scorns it, as being incompletely rational, still to a great extent an empirical sand-heap; whilst on the other the practical man despises its empty and abstract barrenness. All it says is that the elements of the world are such and such and that each is identical with itself wherever found; but the question: Where is it found? (which is for the practical man the all-important question about each element) he is left to answer by his own wit. Which, of all the essences, shall here and now be held the essence of this concrete thing, the fundamental philosophy never attempts to decide. We seem thus led to the conclusion that a system of categories is, on the one hand, the only possible philosophy, but is, on the other, a most miserable and inadequate substitute for the fulness of the truth. It is a monstrous abridgment of things which like all abridgments is got by the absolute loss and casting out of real matter. This is why so few human beings truly care for Philosophy. The particular determinations which she ignores are the real matter exciting other æsthetic and practical needs, quite as potent and authoritative as hers. What does the moral enthusiast care for philosophical ethics? Why does the Aesthetik of every German philosopher appear to the artist like the abomination of desolation? What these men need is a particular counsel, and no barren, universal truism.
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"Grau, theuer Freund, ist alle Theorie
Und grün des Lebens goldner Baum."

The entire man, who feels all needs by turns, will take nothing as an equivalent for Life but the fulness of living itself. Since the essences of things are as a matter of fact spread out and disseminated through the whole extent of time and space, it is in their spread-outness and alternation that he will enjoy them. When weary of the concrete clash and dust and pettiness, he will refresh himself by an occasional bath in the eternal spring, or fortify himself by a daily look at the immutable Natures. But he will only be a visitor, not a dweller in the region; he will never carry the philosophic yoke upon his shoulders, and when tired of the gray monotony of her problems and insipid spaciousness of her results, will always escape gleefully into the teeming and dramatic richness of the concrete world.

So our study turns back here to its beginning. We started by calling every concept a teleological instrument (supra p. 319). No concept can be a valid substitute for a concrete reality except with reference to a particular interest in the conceiver. The interest of theoretic rationality, the relief of identification, is but one of a thousand human purposes. When others rear their heads it must pack up its little bundle and retire till its turn recurs. The exaggerated dignity and value that philosophers have claimed for their solutions is thus greatly reduced. The only virtue their theoretic conception need have is simplicity, and a simple conception is an equivalent for the world only so far as the world is simple; the world meanwhile, whatever simplicity it may harbour, being also a mightily complex affair. Enough simplicity remains, however, and enough urgency in our craving to reach it, to make the theoretic function one of the most invincible and authoritative of human impulses. All ages have their intellectual populace. That of our own day prides itself particularly on its love of Science and Facts and its contempt for all metaphysics. Just weaned from the Sunday-school nurture of its early years, with the taste of the catechism still in its mouth, it is perhaps not surprising that its palate should lack discrimination and fail to recognise how much of ontology is contained in the "Nature," "Force" and "Necessary Law," how much mysticism in the "Awe," "Progress" and "Loyalty to Truth" or whatever the other phrases may be with which it sweetens its rather meagre fare of fragmentary physiology and physics. But its own inconsistency should teach it that the eradication of music, painting and poetry, games of chance and skill, manly sports and all other aesthetic energies from human life, would be an easy task compared with that
suppression of Metaphysics which it aspires to accomplish. Metaphysics of some sort there must be. The only alternative is between the good Metaphysics of clear-headed Philosophy and the trashy Metaphysics of vulgar Positivism. Metaphysics, the quest of the last clear elements of things, is but another name for thought which seeks thorough self-consistency; and so long as men must think at all, some will be found willing to forsake all else to follow that ideal.

VIII.

Suppose then the goal attained. Suppose we have at last a Metaphysics in which clearness and unity join friendly hands. Whether it be over a system of interlocked elements, or over a substance, or over such a simple fact as "phenomenon" or "representation," need not trouble us now. For the discussion which follows we will call the result the metaphysical Datum and leave its composite or simple nature uncertain. Whichever it be, and however limited as we have seen be the sphere of its utility, it satisfies, if no other need, at least the need of rationality. But now I ask: Can that which is the ground of rationality in all else be itself properly called rational? It would seem at first sight that in the sense of the word we have hitherto alone considered, it might. One is tempted at any rate to say that, since the craving for rationality in a theoretic or logical sense consists in the identification of one thing with all other outstanding things, a unique datum which left nothing else outstanding would leave no play for further rational demand, and might thus be said to quench that demand or to be rational in se. No otherness being left to annoy the mind we should sit down at peace.

In other words, just as the theoretic tranquillity of the poor results from his spinning no further considerations about his chaotic universe which may prevent him from going about his practical affairs; so any brute datum whatever (provided it were simple and clear) ought to banish mystery from the Universe of the philosopher and confer perfect theoretic peace, inasmuch as there would then be for him absolutely no further considerations to spin.

This in fact is what some persons think. Prof. Bain says: "A difficulty is solved, a mystery unriddled, when it can be shown to resemble something else; to be an example of a fact already known. Mystery is isolation, exception, or it may be apparent contradiction: the resolution of the mystery is found in assimilation, identity, fraternity. When all things are assimilated, so far as assimilation can go, so far as likeness holds, there is an end to explanation; there is an end to what the
mind can do, or can intelligently desire. . . . The path of
science as exhibited in modern ages, is towards generality, wider
and wider, until we reach the highest, the widest laws of every
department of things; there explanation is finished, mystery
ends, perfect vision is gained."

But unfortunately this first answer will not hold. Whether
for good or evil, it is an empirical fact that the mind is so
wedded to the process of seeing an other beside every item of its
experience, that when the notion of an absolute datum which is
all is presented to it, it goes through its usual procedure and
remains pointing at the void beyond, as if in that lay further
matter for contemplation. In short, it spins for itself the further
positive consideration of a Nonentity enveloping the Being of its
datum; and as that leads to no issue on the further side, back
recoils the thought in a circle towards its datum again. But
there is no logical identity, no natural bridge between nonentity
and this particular datum, and the thought stands oscillating to
and fro, wondering "Why was there anything but nonentity?
Why just this universal datum and not another? Why any-
thing at all?" and finds no end, in wandering mazes lost.
Indeed, Prof. Bain's words are so untrue that in reflecting men
it is just when the attempt to fuse the manifold into a single
totality has been most successful, when the conception of the
universe as a fait unique (in D'Alembert's words) is nearest its
perfection, that the craving for further explanation, the ontolo-
gical θαυμάζεων arises in its extremest pungency.

As Schopenhauer says, "The uneasiness which keeps the
never-resting clock of metaphysics in motion, is the conscious-
ness that the non-existence of this world is just as possible as its
existence". 1

The notion of Nonentity may thus be called the parent of the
philosophic craving in its sublimest and profoundest sense.
Absolute existence is absolute mystery. Although selbstständig,
it is not selbstverständlich; for its relations with the Nothing
remain unmediated to our understanding. One philosopher
only, so far as I know, has pretended to throw a logical bridge
over this chasm. Hegel, by trying to shew that Nonentity and
Being as actually determined are linked together by a series of
successive identities, binds the whole of possible thought into an
adamantine unity with no conceivable outlying notion to disturb
the free rotary circulation of the mind within its bounds. Since
such unchecked motion constitutes the feeling of rationality, he
must be held, if he has succeeded, to have eternally and ab-
solutely quenched all its logical demands.

1 Welt als Wille &c., 3 Auflage, I., p. 189.
But for those who, like most of us, deem Hegel's heroic effort to have failed, nought remains but to confess that when all has been unified to its supreme degree, (Prof. Bain to the contrary notwithstanding), the notions of a Nonentity, or of a possible Other than the actual, may still haunt our imagination and prey upon the ultimate data of our system. The bottom of Being is left logically opaque to us, a datum in the strict sense of the word, something which we simply come upon and find, and about which, (if we wish to act,) we should pause and wonder as little as possible. In this confession lies the lasting truth of Empiricism, and in it Empiricism and imaginative Faith join hands. The logical attitude of both is identical, they both say there is a plus ultra beyond all we know, a womb of unimagined other possibility. They only differ in their sentimental temper: Empiricism says, "Into the plus ultra you have no right to carry your anthropomorphic affirmations"; Faith says, "You have no right to extend to it your denials". The mere ontologic emotion of wonder, of mystery, has in some minds such a tinge of the rapture of sublimity, that for this aesthetic reason alone, it will be difficult for any philosophic system completely to exercise it.

In truth, the philosopher's logical tranquillity is after all in essence no other than the boor's. Their difference regards only the point at which each refuses to let further considerations upset the absoluteness of the data he assumes. The boor does so immediately, and is therefore liable at any moment to the ravages of many kinds of confusion and doubt. The philosopher does not do so till unity has been reached, and is therefore warranted against the inroads of those considerations—but only practically not essentially secure from the blighting breath of the ultimate "Why?" Positivism takes a middle ground, and with a certain consciousness of the beyond abruptly refuses by an inhibitory action of the will to think any further, stamps the ground and says "Physics, I espouse thee! for better or worse, be thou my absolute!"

The Absolute is what has not yet been transcended, criticised or made relative. So far from being something quintessential and unattainable as is so often pretended, it is practically the most familiar thing in life. Every thought is absolute to us at the moment of conceiving it or acting upon it. It only becomes relative in the light of further reflection. This may make it flicker and grow pale—the notion of nonentity may blow in from the infinite and extinguish the theoretic rationality of a universal datum. As regards this latter, absoluteness and rationality are in fact convertible terms. And the chief effort of the rationalising philosopher must be to gain an absoluteness for his datum which shall be stable in the maximum degree, or as far as possible
removed from exposure to those further considerations by which we saw that the vulgar Weltanschauung may so promptly be upset. I shall henceforth call the further considerations which may supervene and make relative or derationalise a mass of thought, the reductive of that thought. The reductive of absolute being is thus nonentity, or the notion of an aliter possibile which it involves. The reductive of an absolute physics is the thought that all material facts are representations in a mind. The reductive of absolute time, space, causality, atoms, &c., are the so-called antinomies which arise as soon as we think fully out the thoughts we have begun. The reductive of absolute knowledge is the constant potentiality of doubt, the notion that the next thought may always correct the present one—resulting in the notion that a noumenal world is there mocking the one we think we know. Whatever we think, some reductive seems in strict theoretic legitimacy always imminently hovering over our thought ready to blight it. Doubleness dismissed at the front door re-enters in the rear and spoils the rationality of the simple datum we flattered ourselves we had attained. Theoretically the task of the philosopher, if he cannot reconcile the datum with the reductive by the way of identification à la Hegel, is to exorcise the reductive so that the datum may hold up its head again and know no fear. Prof. Bain would no doubt say that nonentity was a pseud-idea not derived from experience and therefore meaningless, and so exorcise that reductive. The antinomies may be exorcised by the distinction between potentiality and actuality. The ordinary half educated materialist comforts himself against idealists by the notion that, after all, thought is such an obscure mystical form of existence that it is almost as bad as no existence at all, and need not be seriously taken into account by a sensible man.

If nothing else could be conceived than thoughts or fancies, these would be credited with the maximum of reality. Their reductive is the belief in an objective reality of which they are but copies. When this belief takes the form of the affirmation of a noumenal world contrasted with all possible thought, and therefore playing no other part than that of reductive pure and simple,—to discover the formula of exorcism becomes, and has been recognised ever since Kant to be, one of the principal tasks of philosophy rationally understood.

1 The author of A Candid Examination of Theism (Trübner, 1878) exorcises Nonentity by the notion of the all-excluding infinitude of Existence,—whether reasonably or not I refrain from deciding. The last chapter of this work (published a year after the present text was written), is on "the final Mystery of Things," and impresses in striking language much that I have said.

2 See Renouvier: Premier Essai.
The reductive used by nominalists to discredit the self-identity of the same attribute in different phenomena is the notion of a still higher degree of identity. We easily exorcise this reductive by challenging them to show what the higher degree of sameness can possibly contain which is not already in the lower.

The notion of Nonentity is not only a reductive; it can assume upon occasion an excising function. If, for example, a man's ordinary mundane consciousness feels staggered at the improbability of an immaterial thinking-principle being the source of all things, Nonentity comes in and says, "Contrasted with me, (that is, considered simply as existent) one principle is as probable as another". If the same mundane consciousness recoils at the notion of providence towards individuals or individual immortality as involving, the one too infinite a subdivision of the divine attention, the other a too infinite accumulation of population in the heavens, Nonentity says, "As compared with me all quantities are one: the wonder is all there when God has found it worth His while to guard or save a single soul".

But if the philosopher fails to find a satisfactory formula of exorcism for his datum, the only thing he can do is to "blink". the reductive at a certain point, assume the Given as his necessary ultimate, and proceed to a life whether of contemplation or of action based on that. There is no doubt that this half wilful act of arrest, this acting on an opaque necessity, is accompanied by a certain pleasure. See the reverence of Carlyle for brute fact: "There is an infinite significance in Fact." "Necessity," says a German philosopher,¹ and he means not rational but simply given necessity, "is the last and highest point that we can reach in a rational conception of the world. . . . It is not only the interest of ultimate and definitive knowledge, but also that of the feelings, to find a last repose and an ideal equilibrium, in an uttermost datum which can simply not be other than it is."

Such is the attitude of ordinary men in their theism, God's fiat being in physics and morals such an uttermost datum. Such also is the attitude of all hard-minded analysts and Verstandessmensch. Renouvier and Hodgson, the two foremost contemporary philosophers, promptly say that of experience as a whole no account can be given, but do not seek to soften the abruptness of the confession or reconcile us with our impotence.

Such mediating attempts may be made by more mystical minds. The peace of rationality may be sought through ecstasy when logic fails. To religious persons of every shade of doctrine moments come when the world as it is seems so divinely orderly,

¹ Dühring: Cursus der Philosophie, Leipzig 1875, p. 35.
The Sentiment of Rationality.

and the acceptance of it by the heart so rapturously complete, that intellectual questions vanish, nay the intellect itself is hushed to sleep—as Wordsworth says, “Thought is not, in enjoyment it expires”.

Ontological emotion so fills the soul that ontological speculation can no longer overlap it and put her girdle of interrogation-marks around existence. Even the least religious of men must have felt with our national ontologic poet, Walt Whitman, when loaﬁng on the grass on some transparent summer morning, that “Swiftly arose and spread over him the peace and knowledge that pass all the argument of the earth.” At such moments of energetic living we feel as if there were something diseased and contemptible, yea vile, in theoretic grubbing and brooding. To feel “I am the truth” is to abolish the opposition between knowing and being.

Since the heart can thus walk out the ultimate irrationality which the head ascertains, the erection of its procedure into a systematised method would be a philosophic achievement of first-rate importance. As used by mystics hitherto it has lacked universality, being available for few persons and at few times, and even in these being apt to be followed by ﬁts of “reaction” and “dryness”; but it may nevertheless be the forerunner of what will ultimately prove a true method. If all men could permanently say with Jacobi, “In my heart there is light,” though they should for ever fail to give an articulate account of it, existence would really be rationalised.1

1 A curious recent contribution to the construction of a universal mystical method is contained in the Anaesthetic Revelation by Benj. P. Blood (Amsterdam, N.Y., 1874). The author, who is a writer abounding in verbal felicities, thinks we may all grasp the secret of Being if we only intoxicate ourselves often enough with laughing-gas. “There is in the instant of recall from the anaesthetic stupor a moment in which the genius of being is revealed. . . . Patients try to speak of it but invariably fail in a lost mood of introspection. . . . But most will accept this as the central point of the illumination that sanity is not the basic quality of intelligence, . . . but that only in sanity is formal or contrasting thought, while the naked life is realised outside of sanity altogether. It is the instant contrast of this tasteless water of souls with formal thought as we come to that leaves the patient in an astonishment that the awful mystery of life is at last but a homely and common thing. . . . To minds of sanguine imagination there will be a sadness in the tenor of the mystery, as if the key-note of the universe were low—for no poetry, no emotion known to the normal sanity of man, can furnish a hint of its primeval prestige, and its all-but appalling solemnity; but for such as have felt sadly the instability of temporal things there is a comfort of serenity and ancient peace; while for the resolved and imperious spirit there are majesty and supremacy unspeakable.” The logical characteristic of this state is said to be “an apodal sufﬁciency—to which sufﬁciency a wonder or fear of why it is sufﬁcient cannot pertain and could be attributed only as an impossible disease or lack. . . . The disease of Metaphysics vanishes in the fading of the question and not in the coming of an answer.”
But if men should ever all agree that the mystical method is a subterfuge without logical pertinency, a plaster, but no cure, that the Hegelian method is fallacious, that the idea of Nonentity can therefore neither be exorcised nor identified, Empiricism will be the ultimate philosophy. Existence will be a brute Fact to which as a whole the emotion of ontologic wonder shall rightfully cleave, but remain eternally unsatisfied. This wonderfulness or mysteriousness will then be an essential attribute of the nature of things, and the exhibition and emphasising of it will always continue to be an ingredient in the philosophic industry of the race. Every generation will produce its Job, its Hamlet, its Faust or its Sartor Resartus.

With this we seem to have exhausted all the possibilities of purely theoretic rationality. But we saw at the outset that when subjectively considered rationality can only be defined as perfectly unimpeded mental function. Impediments which arise in the purely theoretic sphere might perhaps be avoided if the stream of mental action should leave that sphere betimes and pass into the practical. The structural unit of mind is in these days, deemed to be a triad, beginning with a sensible impression, ending with a motion, and having a feeling of greater or less length in the middle. Perhaps the whole difficulty of attaining theoretic rationality is due to the fact that the very quest violates the nature of our intelligence, and that a passage of the mental function into the third stage before the second has come to an end in the cul de sac of its contemplation, would revive the energy of motion and keep alive the sense of ease and freedom which is its psychic counterpart. We must therefore inquire what constitutes the feeling of rationality in its practical aspect; but that must be done at another time and in another place.

WM. JAMES.

Note.—This article is the first chapter of a psychological work on the motives which lead men to philosophise. It deals with the purely theoretic or logical impulse. Other chapters treat of practical and emotional motives and in the conclusion an attempt is made to use the motives as tests of the soundness of different philosophies.

III.—KUNO FISCHER ON ENGLISH PHILOSOPHY.

No one perhaps has written the history of Philosophy at once so agreeably, so fully and so instructively as Prof. Fischer. His style is clear and for German remarkably unembarrassed. Every paragraph has its topic, every sentence its own thought.