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## ARTICLE III.

## THE DATA AND METHOD OF PHILOSOPHY.

BY THE REV. E. H. MERRELL, D. D., PRESIDENT OF RIPON COLLEGE.

I. IT is within bounds to say that Philosophy in the general mind is viewed with distrust. It is not exactly the dismal science, as Carlyle esteemed Political Economy to be, but rather an attempt, from the nature of the case futile, to construct a science out of visions in the air or phantasms of the brain. This is declared to be the reason why Philosophy is so congenial to the German mind; for according to a saying of Richter's, "to the English belongs the empire of the sea, to the French of the land, and to the Germans of the air."

And there are good reasons for the popular prejudice and distrust. The contradictions among philosophers themselves, the mutually exclusive hypotheses and even doctrines that have been seriously believed and defended, the antipodal extremes that have been concurrently accepted and expounded, are nothing less than surprising. Kant, who declared that Philosophy cannot transcend experience, supposed that he had proved a Philosophy of the Absolute to be impossible. But "four Philosophies of the Absolute, each of great method and importance, and numbering a great crowd of disciples in its day, arose within forty years" from his solemn declaration of impossibility. And these four Philosophies are irreconcilable with one another. With Fichte the Absolute is the Ego; with Schelling it is the unity of the Ego and Non-Ego; with Hegel it is pure Thought—thought and being are identical; and with Schopenhauer it is Will. At the foundation, these systems are mutually exclusive. They are the standing illustration of great quanti-

ties of this German thinking, which, as a matter of fact, are mere system-mongering, in which magnificent schemes are woven from the filmy product of their own spinnerets, in complacent indifference to the facts of being, and with surprising incomprehensibility. Hegel is said to have declared when on his dying bed, "I shall leave behind me in all Europe but one man who understands my philosophy, and he doesn't." These uncertainties in Philosophy have given eccentric thinkers their opportunity, and their following has often been large in proportion to the absurdity of their pretensions. Wilford Hall leads clerical sciolists in troops, and theologians with twists in their minds are on that account secure of admiration from materialistic scientists.

II. Nevertheless, to philosophize is an ordinance of the human mind. It is difficult to conceive of an intellect so feeble that it never asks the question, *Why?* and to ask why a thing is, as distinct from the affirmation that it is, is to heed the philosophic impulse. Aristotle long ago remarked that we are "compelled to philosophize, in order to prove that Philosophy itself is illusory and vain." "Scepticism," says Professor Bowen, "is as much a speculation and a system, as dogmatism; either is a nullity, if it does not rest on a philosophical basis." These higher walks of knowledge cannot be monopolized by a few select minds. The method of induction, the great intellectual instrument in modern scientific progress, was in the world long before Bacon revealed the possibilities in it for the uses of research. The intellectual process in that form of knowledge which we call common-sense is now known to be nothing other than induction, more or less complete, from the facts of common life. So all active minds philosophize, crudely or otherwise; and the question is not with us, *Shall we philosophize?* but, rather, *Shall our philosophizing be scientific and sound?*

III. The fact that Philosophy has data and a method, a fact denied by none, implies that it is a science. And if it is a

science, as such it may be mastered and taught. What is science but knowledge reduced to system? In any form it begins with observation of its data, proceeds through precise definition to a classified arrangement, through a deductive process attempts to verify its conclusions, and by some form of philosophy seeks to account for all the facts as to their origin and order. To all of these conditions Philosophy must submit, or it can lay no claim to be a science at all. The real difficulty in mastering Philosophy is found at the very first step. The faculty by which we observe its data is neither consciousness nor perception by the senses. For all forms of physical science we depend on the senses, alone or aided by instruments and apparatus in the observation of facts. In Psychology and the sciences related to it we depend primarily on consciousness, the knowledge by the soul of its own acts and states. But the data of Philosophy can be reached by neither of these faculties. They are seen immediately in the intuitions of reason, or are found in those interpreted indications which we call inductions. We find here the exact reason why there is so great diversity of belief among philosophers. The data of this fundamental science being known through our primary intuitions and judgments, which of course are unerring, we should expect all men to be agreed as to them. Such is not the fact. We have one of the best illustrations of this point in the science of Morals. We find, as a matter of fact, a wide divergence of views among thinkers on the subject of theoretical morals, but a very general agreement as to practical duty. The question as to the origin of duty or the foundation of obligation is

knowledge is not easy. The word "right," or its equivalent, is in every language of men, even the rudest; but what exactly it is in its ground significance even learned men are not at one in affirming. Indeed, if it were not for the fact of the great progress of Philosophy in the last fifty years, modesty would seem to require that all dogmatic statement in regard to it should be avoided.

IV. The relation of Philosophy to the other sciences is interesting, and quite essential to a clear understanding of its data and field.

It is not uncommon to define Philosophy as the Science of Sciences. This means more than that it is a chief science in importance and rank; it means rather that it gives the laws which are fundamental to all the specific forms of science. Philosophy is the science of first principles, and all the sciences have their foundation in principles which are the regulative laws of their procedure. We are accustomed to say that there is a rational element in all knowledge. This is true, and this rational element is made up of the principles which Philosophy observes, defines and verifies. All forms of science, therefore, must accept Philosophy as their constant voucher. Without a sound philosophical basis they lack rationality. But since Philosophy itself is a science, it must have method according to the laws of thinking, and therefore is subject to Logic as its law-giver. But there is a science that announces what it is to think, and whether the mind does actually perceive and define principles, and what is their authority in reason. This is Psychology, and in a most important sense both Logic and Philosophy are subject to it.

V. Coming without further preliminary statement to a consideration of the data of Philosophy, we need, first of all, to say, by way of clearing the ground, that the real basis of this science is not subjective. "It is not the knowing of the knower, but the known of the knower," that engages

our study. Our knowledge is not subjective except in the sense in which all knowledge is subjective. All knowledge is in the mind in the sense that only the mind can know; nevertheless all knowledge is objective with reference to the knowing mind, and implies reality. Philosophy, therefore, is not a mere method of knowledge, but is the mind's recognition of certain realities which may be called the given of the science. Philosophy has real material with which to deal as certainly as any branch of knowledge, though the method of knowing that material, as we have seen, is not entirely easy.

The data of Philosophy are threefold:—

1. Being. There is in the mind, among the primary products of knowledge, an idea of being. It is simple, undefinable, and one of the first and most certain of all the products of the mind's activity. But the consideration of this idea belongs to Psychology rather than to Philosophy. The reality corresponding to the idea of being is the fact with which Philosophy has to do. It assumes not only that being is, but also that we may know what it is. Not that our knowledge of what it is is exhaustive, but that we know what it is in its fundamental characteristics. It is a common assumption that we do not know being, but only the attributes or manifestations of being. If this were so, there would be absolutely no fixed starting-point for Philosophy, and universal mind would be embarked upon unknown seas of speculation upon which the mariners in be-

In which case the philosophy of time and space must be simply a branch of Psychology. We know what being is, and also that it is not mere thought; the strictly logical outcome of any form of philosophy that does not concede these two points must be absolute idealism, if not universal scepticism. "This doctrine, that space and time are *only* forms of human perception," says Professor Bowen, "is the most comprehensive and thorough-going system of scepticism that the wit of man has ever devised."<sup>1</sup> Objective being is, and it is revealed to our intuition in its attributes. What spirit is and what matter is, we know immediately in the manifestations of each. Reason affirms that substance is as its attributes, and in the knowledge of attributes the mind has an intuitive knowledge of what substance is.

2. The second datum of Philosophy is manifestation. Under manifestation are comprised the qualities of matter which it is possible for us to know through sense-perception and the phenomena of mind known through consciousness. But these phenomena are studied only as related to being and as revelations of it, and not in classes by themselves. When thus studied by themselves as related to classes of objects, they constitute the bases of the special sciences. The study of the relations of classes of phenomena to each other as indicating absoluteness or dependence of being belongs to Philosophy.

3. The third of the data of Philosophy is made up of the necessary and universal principles which underlie and pervade all finite being. These principles are in the nature

tions of principles that are built into the fabric of nature. Such a one is the so-called law of gravitation. These principles are the peculiar property of Philosophy, "giving it its supremacy and authority in the rank of knowledge, and making its influence universal and eternal, and its power supreme." The fact that these principles are the peculiar property of Philosophy is seen from the nature of explanation. To explain a thing is to answer the question why it is so. But this is to philosophize. But to answer the question why a thing is so, is to refer it to its true principle. Philosophy first finds the true principles, and then brings the facts to order under them. In this latter process, Philosophy and Science overlap each other.

VI. Passing from the data to the method of Philosophy, several particulars must be noted which naturally call for more extended treatment than is possible in a brief article.

1. Granting, as we must, that Philosophy shall submit to the tests of all science; that it is subject to Logic as its lawgiver, like the rest, we must begin in this science, as in all others, at the point of the knowledge given, or data. Exact observation is the first step in every form of scientific knowledge. But since Philosophy concerns being, phenomena, and their laws, we instantly see that the philosophic method of observation or gaining knowledge of its facts must differ from that of the special sciences; that is, its method is psychologically different. The most general statement which I wish to make on this point is, that the facts of Philosophy are cognized by reason in its *a priori* acts, or by that process of the thought activity by which we form inductions. The distinction between these two forms of knowledge is clear, though often confused in psychological thinking; and, when



properly classified and trusted. Suppose, for example, that we take the standpoint of empiricism with John Stuart Mill and the philosophers of his school. Mr. Mill maintains the doctrine that the mind knows, not being, but only phenomena. Mind, according to him, is only a succession of sensations and their modifications, and what we call matter is but the per-enduring but unknowable cause of sensations. Of course, on this supposition, induction is the only method of reaching fundamental truths. We seem to know absolutely that every event must have a cause, but really the law is an induction from the order of sequences which we have observed in the course of the natural world. And so we have no absolute knowledge. The corollary that all knowledge is relative follows necessarily from the assumed principle that we know only manifestation and not being. We know nothing absolutely, and two into two make five in some worlds.<sup>1</sup> It is not in place here to discuss the Cosmic Philosophy, but only to show that an unsound psychological method must result in misleading philosophical assumptions. The mind has certain forms of knowledge that are absolute, and these forms are a most important part of what we call philosophical knowledge. The ideas of time, space, cause, identity, and many more, are necessary and the same for all intelligences, and are immediately seen to be different generically from the ideas of gravity, affinity, centripetence, order, and the like. The truth that the whole is equal to the sum of all its parts is absolute, and must remain true whether the intelligence to know it exists or not. But the law that material bodies attract each other directly as their mass and inversely as the square of their distance from each other is

can be changed or developed into the other ; and, hence, that they are products of faculties of mind whose activities differ *sui generis*.

2. A second law of method is that of objectivity ; the subjective method can result in nothing else than empty speculation. It has already been said that the data of Philosophy are the known of the knower, and not the knowing of the knower. What we mean by saying that philosophical method must be objective is, that the truths of being, phenomena, and the universal and necessary principles of being, are real and objective to the mind. They are what they are because the nature of things is what it is, and their nature, order, and relations determine the forms of activity by which they are known. The mind cannot impose laws on being, but being can impose conditions on the knowing mind. The subjective method of Philosophy, which we call speculation, has been more or less prevalent in the history of thought, appearing in essentially pure form in Scholasticism. The Philosophy of the Absolute as it appears in Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, is the full grown product of a vicious subjective method. Speaking of Fichte's attempt to derive the universe from the "self-positing Ego," Professor Bowen says, "Fichte is driven to the usual subterfuge of these philosophers of the Absolute. Unable to explain the creation of a real universe of actual beings such as we are, he resolves existence itself into a mere dream, and all finite and determined being into a mere shadow of the Absolute. The Ego is then supposed to spin an imaginary Non-Ego out of its own thought, a still dimmer reflection of its own shadowy exist-

show how the Ego creates God. Professor Bowen does not hesitate to express the belief that these subjective "system-mongers" in a large number of cases do not believe their own systems. They seem to be wrought out merely for the purpose of finding out whether there may chance to be any possibilities in them, and, if so, what.

3. It is evident, further, that the true method of Philosophy must take cognizance of all its data, or given. This must comprise all of being, infinite and finite, spiritual and material, with their manifestations and their fundamental laws. If we select any system of pantheism, we shall find that it violates this canon of philosophic method. Spinoza's pantheism, for example, identifies God with the sum of being. All substance is in him, and beyond him nothing is. All manifestation is a blind out-working of necessities in his own nature. "The error of his system is found in the fact that his datum is both incomplete and unreal. There is other being besides God; and Spinoza's God is not the true God. It is an absolute substance with the contradictory attributes of spirit and matter, or of thought and extension, without will, without personality, and ever developing into the universe of phenomena."<sup>1</sup> He assumed an absolute and false unity, and ignored all being save the poor fiction of his own mind.

Here, also, we find the fundamental defect in that general form of Philosophy known as the Cosmic, or as Empiricism, and sometimes as Agnosticism. It does not absolutely deny the being of God, but it denies the possibility of our knowing anything about him. So far as scientific knowledge is concerned, it were as well, if he were not. The most immensely important part of the true data of Philosophy is treated as non-existent. It is a futile attempt to account for the phenomena of the universe "in terms of the redistribution of matter and motion." The essence of things is abso-

<sup>1</sup> Unpublished paper by the Rev. Henry Matson.

lutely transcendent, and all we can say of it is that it manifests itself in the phenomena of the visible world. It is a thing of course, that, if the being of a personal God is denied, multitudes of principles accounted primary, and hence philosophical, must go with the denial. Design and final causes are inconceivable on any other assumption than that of a personal First Cause. The agnostic must accept a field of principles very much circumscribed.

4. A fourth law of philosophic method requires that we distinguish being as to its kinds. This involves the assumption that differences *sui generis* exist as a truth of being. These differences are radically two :—

(1) Mind and matter. This discrimination assumes that matter as to its fundamental qualities is known, and that it is known to be of such sort that it cannot by any possible modification become mind or spirit. It also assumes that mind is known as to its fundamental nature, and that it cannot by any modification become matter. This is the truth of being as opposed to both idealistic and materialistic pantheism. The philosophic tendency to some form of monism, that is, the reduction of all being to one absolute substance and the including of everything in it, is as long as the history of thought. Dualism is held to be absurd ; and in the form that implies two absolutes,—two infinities that are self-existent and independent,—it is. But it would seem true that, if we may not distinguish matter from mind as different in kind, and also that the material universe is not God or a part of God, then we may not trust the intuitions of the mind in any form of knowledge. The brilliant and now famous passage in Tyndall's "Fragments of Science" suggests the absurdity of neglecting the discrimination now under consideration. Speaking of the hypothesis of natural or materialistic Evolution, he says : "Strip it naked, and you stand face to face with the notion that not alone the more ignoble forms of animalcular or animal life, not alone the noble forms of the

horse and the lion, not alone the exquisite and wonderful mechanism of the human body, but the human mind itself, emotion, intellect, will, and their phenomena, were once latent in fiery cloud. Surely the mere statement of such a notion is more than refutation. But the hypothesis would probably go even further than this. Many who hold it would probably assent to the position, that at the present moment all our philosophy, all our poetry, and all our art, Plato, Shakespeare, Newton, and Raphael, are potential in the fires of the sun." After this we are not surprised to meet in the same lecture the statement, that "those who hold to the doctrine of Evolution" (meaning, as the connection shows, natural or materialistic Evolution) "are by no means ignorant of the uncertainty of their data; and they yield no more to it than provisional assent." Surely enough they do not; for it is a bold philosopher that affirms the impossibility of trusting our natural intuition in the affirmation that matter and spirit are not identical, that each has being, and that neither can be reduced to the other.

A surprising disregard of the law we are now considering appears in an article recently published in *The Forum* (April, 1890), written by Dr. Lyman Abbott. The title of the article is "No Theology or New Theology." The author, after criticising the no-theology positions as represented by the cosmic philosophers in general, proceeds to give the most distinguishing characteristic of the new-theology movement. This he finds in philosophical monism as opposed to the dualism implied in the phrases "science and religion," "nature and supernatural," "order of nature and miracles," "reason and faith," "this and the other world," "matter and spirit." "human and divine." "This dualism

philosophical principles. Among the *principia* of his theological system, if indeed it is proper to say he has a theological system, are such affirmations as these: "God and nature are not dual. . . . God is immanent in nature as the soul is in the body. . . . There is no such thing as nature and the supernatural . . . for everything natural is the supernatural, and the supernatural is everything natural." The doctrine of God's transcendence cannot possibly be made to stand in rational coincidence with these words. The doctrine of the incarnation has the same pseudo-monistic bias. Christ is not God and man; but the incarnation is "God in man . . . and is not an isolated fact; it is continuous and progressive." Christ is the "divine spirit filling a human life with its presence and power, so that his life is a perfect type of what God means human character and life to be"—the ordinary Unitarian view, though better expressed by other Unitarian writers. In logical consistency, Dr. Abbott should either accept some form of the Philosophy of the Absolute, or else Pantheism in either its materialistic or idealistic form. It is refreshing to set over against such writing as that of the *Forum* article some words by Dr. Delitzsch recently published in *The London Expositor*. In an article entitled "The deep Gulf between the Old Theology and the New," he says: "The restricting of God to the course of nature has two results: First, it denies to all prayer any effect on external events; second, it weakens faith in the Easter message." And in the same article is the following emphatic statement of the fact that Philosophy must

either that there is no world different from God, or that there is no God different from the world. Spirit and body are antitheses which must likewise remain unreduced, otherwise spirit is identified with matter itself, developed from below upwards to self-consciousness. Man is a duality of spirit and body, and whoever annuls this dualism of the human substance places man on a level with the highly developed beast."

(2) The second of the differences in the distinguishing of being as to kind is indicated by the words infinite and finite, absolute and relative, self-existent and dependent. We find here the truth of being opposed to both atheism and pantheism, especially in their monistic extremes. A true Philosophy will recognize in finite being not only two kinds, mind and matter, but also that this being is relative and dependent. Finite being may stand for the not-being of the Eleatic philosophers, for its being is on account of the absolute and self-existent being, that is, God. "In him we live, and move, and have our being." It follows from this that we cannot pass from relative to self-existent being by simply increasing the quantity of the relative. To increase the quantity of relative being is but to increase the quantity of dependence. If we could conceive of the universe as increased to infinity, we could not, if we thought aright, also conceive of it as self-existent. Here again Dr. Abbott's philosophy is seen to be unsound, for it fails at this point to distinguish between things that differ *per se*. Man he declares to be divine, and he says in express terms that the "difference between God and man, that is, the ideal man, is quantitative, not qualitative." The statement seems appalling, and would be accounted so, if similar ones had not come to be the fashion. When such a belief gets firm hold of the general understanding, worship will have become a man-originated sentiment, to be itself supplanted in due course by disgust and despair.

If we pass from the relative and dependent to the absolute and self-existent, and make it the standpoint of our thought, we see that the absolute, because of its kind and nature, must impose its law upon all finite mind. The ordinary forms of the Philosophy of the Absolute start from a subjective idea, and proceed to exhibit the necessities in the idea. The true method requires that we start from the absolute Being and yield to the laws and necessities in that Being. We live under the constraints of being, not under those of an idea. The fundamental idea of Spinoza in respect to this absolute Being is, *omnis determinatio est negatio*; that is, if we attempt to affirm anything of the absolute positively, we take away from its infinity. In this view the law for us can never be an ordinance of the Infinite. Modern Agnosticism makes the same objection to affirming personality of God. It holds that the Absolute must be, as the notion requires, independent of all relations, rather than, as the facts of being require, independent of all necessary and dependent relations. It is not against the real absoluteness of God that he has relations to the universe which he has created. And it is unnecessary to annihilate the universe by our philosophy, lest its existence should imply that the Absolute become something less than absolute. The present point has illustration in a pleasant story told of a little child by Professor Mead.<sup>1</sup> A little child once asked his mother, "Does God know everything?" "Yes, certainly," she replied. "No," was the retort, "there is one thing he does not know; he does not know what 'gookie' means." "This gookie,"



would be to discourse about the 'gookie' and the 'non-gookie.'"

5. Another law of method requires that the *order* of being shall be faithfully regarded. It is needless to stop to prove that the order of being, in the very nature of things, must be God; man, and the material universe. Man is more than the world and above it, and God is over all. Philosophy should, therefore, be a movement of mind from God to finite being. For a similar reason, also, the movement of mind should be from Philosophy to Science rather than from Science to Philosophy. This must be true, if Philosophy supplies the regulative laws of all scientific procedure. We may proceed from Science to Philosophy only as we seek to find for our science a rational explanation. If we make Science the voucher for knowledge, we proceed as we should, if we made the world the arbiter of the laws of God. The only sense in which it is proper to pass from the world to God is, that we may properly endeavor to discover what God is in the revelation which he has made of himself in the works of his hands. But in that study we are constantly to assume that when God and his law are seen, we are to bow instantly to the divine authority.

From this it follows that the laws of spirit are to be put before the laws of matter. The very constitution of man indicates as much. It is against the philosophical order of being to assume that matter is the cause of mind; not so to assume that mind or spirit is the cause of matter. It is for this reason that idealistic Pantheism has always been thought to be more harmonious with reason than Pantheism in its materialistic forms. If the ordinary theistic view of the being of God be accepted, there is nothing unreasonable in the assumption that God is the Creator of the material universe, and of man as the head of the world.

The philosophical method of materialistic Evolution violates the canon of method we are now considering. Being,

in its most immensely significant part and portion, is accounted the Unknowable; and not only must we not proceed from God to the world in the trend of our thought, but it is an impropriety to assume that we, as philosophers, have any concern with God at all. We are to get our bearings on this great sea, not from the heavens above us, but from attention to the things of the world—from a diligent scrutiny of the small end of things. Possibly we all in some sense accept a development hypothesis, if we do not believe in *the* Development Hypothesis. We need not be disturbed, if at length it shall be proved beyond reasonable doubt that God wrought progressively through millions of years according to the methods in general assumed by the supporters of the Development Hypothesis to reach a body suitable for the habitancy of the soul of man. If that shall be fully established, we shall have one more proof, and that of the highest order, of the transcendent value of man. But no philosophy of evolution can ultimately stand that involves the view of God accepted by either Agnosticism or Deism.

When materialistic Evolution disregards, as it uniformly does, the true order of being, it also violates the fundamental principle that every cause must be adequate to its effect. A very great matter cannot come out of one insignificantly little. Dr. Chadbourne in his work on "Natural Theology" has pointed out this materialistic infirmity as follows: "It is not readily seen how a force manifesting itself in conjunction with other forces, and yet only as it makes them subservient, can be developed from those forces." Sure enough; for, in that case, the effect would appear without an adequate cause. President Hopkins, in his "Outline Study of Man," presents a scheme that definitely recognizes the true order of finite being, and the principles of their differentia-

is carried up, and then something is added—it is not developed from what is below or caused by it—but added to it till we reach man at the top. Man is there by the possession of everything that is below him, and something more, that something being that which makes him man." Here we have progress, and, if one please, development; but the progress in the matter has an adequate cause in a free and intelligent power that is transcendent above the matter while it works inside of it. Neither is this the "carpenter theory," as commonly announced by way of reproach; for the Theistic philosophy assumes that the transcendent Being is also immanent, and works from within outward.

6. A sixth canon of method requires that every fact shall be explained by the reference of it to the law to which it is truly and naturally related. We explain the tides by reference to the movements of the moon, but more ulteriorly to the principle of gravitation. It would be unsound to explain them by the laws of chemical affinity, unless we could show that gravity is caused by chemical affinity. We account for the cold north winds of April by the snow of the northern forests; but we wish, before we are satisfied, to know the laws by which we may determine the distribution of heat and moisture on the face of the earth. Sound philosophy pushes us back to the principles that lie concealed in the foundation of the world. An unsound philosophical method explains the facts of reminiscence by certain movements of particles or fibres of the brain. The explanation is against the revealed facts of consciousness, and it also disregards the natural order, the necessary relations, and the principal laws of spirit and matter. Equally unsound is the explanation of religion by the feeling of dependence, or of conscience by the principle of fear. But it is needless to multiply illustrations. It is obvious that nothing is really explained, if the principle underlying is missed. The explanation of the changes in weather by the forms of the crescent moon is at

length abandoned, and the spirit of such explanation now appears almost nowhere else than in materialistic and agnostic philosophy.

VII. If space permitted, it would be interesting to exhibit in outline the principles of the Theistic philosophy, and to show how completely in its data and method it satisfies the conditions of true Philosophy. But without particular statement I deem it safe to say, that the best thinking of the world is bringing us to the sure conclusion that Theism is to be the triumphant Final Philosophy.