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## ARTICLE III.

## ADMISSIONS OF PHILOSOPHICAL SCEPTICISM.

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PHILOSOPHICAL scepticism, not content with occupying the neutral ground of doubt, prefers to be polemic. Studiously avoiding the defensive, it adopts an aggressive policy. Affecting the hauteur of positivism, it boasts that along its march lie tattered creeds and theologians slain. By this dialectic legerdemain it has been wont to divert critical attention from itself, and impose the burden of proof upon Christian theism.

Christianity has never shirked the burden of proof. The Master assumed it, as a divine Teacher pointing to divine credentials, saying: "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them" (Matt. xi. 4, 5). "The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me" (John x. 25). "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works" (John x. 37, 38).

The apostles, as they proclaimed the gospel of Christ, accepted the burden of proof. Peter declares: "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, . . . . but were *eye-witnesses* of his majesty. . . . . The voice which came from heaven we *heard* when we were with him in the holy mount" (2 Pet. i. 16, 17, 18). "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen" (John iii. 11). And they charged the disciples, "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you" (1 Pet. iii. 15).

But while Christianity, in the spirit of the Master, is always ready to take the burden of proof, and frankly answer the inquiries of every candid mind, it has a logical and a moral right, after eighteen hundred years of recognition by the best and the most intelligent individuals and nations, — it has a right to claim the presumption in its favor, to challenge the strength of its modern adversary, and put philosophical scepticism upon the defensive. The inevitable reply to this challenge is the acknowledged inability to prove that there is no God. This acknowledgment, however reluctant, is universal. The attempt, persistent and repeated, has issued not in demonstration, but in denial, supported evermore by negative premises, like the assertion of La Place, that “No God could be seen within the range of his telescope.” But, as every logician knows, negative premises prove nothing. The telescope of La Place could not survey the universe; and if it could, yet would it discern only material bodies, which appear in space. God is not such a being. The telescope of La Place could not detect the mind even of its maker, much less of Him who created the heavens and the earth. Neither the telescope nor the microscope can detect mind and thought. Such denials are only *argumenta ad ignorantiam*. This first admission of philosophical scepticism is fundamental, and reveals its essential weakness, and yields to theism a matchless advantage both for attack and defence.

But the admission is not exhausted with this statement. The very attempt to prove that there is no God has been rebuked by the school of sceptics as unauthorized and rash. The latest attempt of this kind, that of the intrepid Dr. Büchner, is referred to by the Westminster Review (Oct. 1872) in the following words of friendly, but significant warning: “Dr. Büchner seems to overstep the limits of scientific argument, in that he endeavors to prove the Unknowable [Herbert Spencer’s nomenclature] to be untrue — a position which seems, on the face of it, to be self-contradictory.”

Here, not for the sake of the argument, but to relieve the

mind of some unfledged sceptic who may deem this warning gratuitous, it may be mentioned that Mr. Spencer affirms the existence of the infinite, the unknowable as source of all that is. "The ultimate religious truth of the highest possible certainty" is "that the power which the universe manifests to us is utterly inscrutable."<sup>1</sup> And again: "Appearance [manifestation] without reality is unthinkable."<sup>2</sup> Therefore "the inscrutable power" is "a reality"; and still again, according to Mr. Spencer, "to say that we cannot know the absolute [or inscrutable power] is, by implication, to affirm that there is an absolute,"<sup>3</sup> and more to the same effect.

Mr. Darwin declares: "The question whether there exists a Creator and Ruler of the universe has been answered in the affirmative by the highest intellects that have ever lived." Again he says: "An omniscient Creator must have foreseen every consequence which results from the law imposed by him"; and again, referring to natural laws: "An omnipotent and omniscient Creator ordains everything and foresees everything."<sup>4</sup>

Sir John Lubbock, speaking of "The Origin of Civilization and the Primitive Condition of Man," says: "The whole exhibits one grand scheme of progression, . . . . having for its object the continual manifestation of the design, the power, the wisdom, the goodness of Almighty God." Thomas Paine inserts in his creed: "I believe in one God, and no more, and I hope for happiness beyond this life."<sup>5</sup> "The Journal of Speculative Philosophy" (William Harris of St. Louis, editor), the modern representative of the Hegelian school in America, vindicates Hegel against the charge of irreligion, "Not only in not denying God, freedom, and immortality, — the three cardinal points of religious faith, — but in affirming them as the highest consequences of his speculations, rejecting atheism and pantheism in the clearest words." And, not to extend this line of admission, "the

<sup>1</sup> First Principles, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> p. 88.

<sup>3</sup> p. 91.

<sup>4</sup> Animals and Plants under Domestication, Vol. ii. p. 431.

<sup>5</sup> See Frothingham's "Beliefs of Unbelievers."

new philosophy," in its newest drift,<sup>1</sup> admits — asserts — "an almighty will, whose very life is idea, whose action produces time and all its facts and phenomena, . . . . an unconscious will and idea which called all creatures into being." His system, like that of his master, Schopenhauer, "starts from a positive idea of the spirituality, and also impersonality, of an overruling power — a will ruling over all nature and life," and rejects with contempt the gross hypothesis which would make matter originant, and reduce all things to materialism.

This primary admission of philosophical scepticism, we repeat, is fundamental, and at once casts suspicion upon the whole sceptical superstructure.

Closely related to this is another admission, viz. the inherent weakness of philosophical scepticism. Speaking of physical science, Professor Tyndall says: "The logical feebleness of science is not sufficiently borne in mind."<sup>2</sup> And again: "We know not the connection between body and mind."<sup>3</sup> As Mivart has forcibly said, "Physical science, as such, has nothing to do with the soul of man, which is hyperphysical,"<sup>4</sup> *a fortiori*, we say, it has nothing to do, as such, with God, who is a Spirit, who is before all things, and by whom all things consist. It cannot reach to the question of the supernatural, the question at issue. "The supernatural is not to be expected or looked for in the sphere of mere nature."<sup>5</sup> "No investigation of natural laws can show the conception of the divine action to be false." "Physical science can have nothing whatever to do with absolute or primary creation." This point is well stated by Baden Powell: "Science demonstrates incessant past changes, and dimly points to yet earlier links in a more vast series of developments of material existence; but the idea of a beginning, or of creation in the sense of original operation of divine volition to constitute nature and matter, is beyond the province

<sup>1</sup> Hartmann's *Philosophy of the Unconscious*.

<sup>2</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette*, June 15, 1868.

<sup>3</sup> *Eclectic Magazine*, p. 380, 1869.

<sup>4</sup> p. 303.

<sup>5</sup> p. 284.

of physical philosophy.”<sup>1</sup> Mr. Darwin says: “Our ignorance of the laws of variation is profound.”<sup>2</sup>

Comte proclaimed that philosophy *must be positive*, that is, leave no unknowable behind it, thus directly contradicting Herbert Spencer. But if philosophy ought to be so, it cannot be so on Comte's plan — the plan of mere experience; for no experience can affirm with certainty that behind the phenomenal there is, or is not, an unknown reality. For philosophical scepticism to deny or ridicule, on physical grounds, the doctrine of the divine existence were as illogical as for the blind man to deny the existence of the sun. Had this admission not been made by Tyndall and others, it were no less obvious; for positive science in its very nature involves it. Positive science instructs us to advance only so far as we know. Mr. Mill, its most precise and profound exponent, declares that we know only phenomena; that these have no real bond of connection; that they are only associated by the knowing soul as antecedent and sequent; that the soul itself is only a series of feelings, with no more real bond of connection than belongs to the external phenomena — mere antecedence and sequence; that by such an unreliable association, which such an unreliable soul has exalted into an unreliable law of unreliable induction, we know for all things phenomenal their phenomenal law may change on this phenomenal planet. Even the phenomenal soul may undergo a like complete change in its phenomenal law of knowing, so that even here what seems to be, and to be a law, may not be, or may be reversed; so that two and two shall make five in mathematics, two straight lines may inclose a figure in space, intelligence become folly in mind, and right become wrong in morals, and why not, with the utmost precision of Mr. Mill's logic, a God not appearing be at the next moment a God appearing? Or, to put it on the negative side more strongly than Mr. Mill could by his phenomenal system, a God impossible be a God possible! And

<sup>1</sup> Philosophy of Creation, Essay iii. Sec. 4, p. 480.

<sup>2</sup> Origin of Species, Summary of chap. v.

if for this world this is the logical and inevitable resultant of positivism, in the prudent and precise interpretation of its ablest exponent, *a fortiori* it may be for other worlds. By the very constitution of its system positivism deprives itself of the possibility of making any, the least, positive denial of the question at issue; and, further still, its principles (if they deserve the name) are subversive even of positive science. Its fundamental premise—while it is all that mere sensation can furnish, is, in the light of reason, positively unstable and self-destructive. “All things flow,” said the old Ionic positivists; but these modern positivists assert that there is nothing but the flow, and that is only a “possibility for sensation,” and therefore may not be what it seems; the very consciousness in which the seeming “flow” appears is only a flow, and may not be what it seems; and the soul itself is a flow of flowing feelings. So that things are only phenomenal; consciousness is only phenomenal; the soul is only phenomenal. There is nothing but the flow, and that may not be what it seems; indeed, it may not be at all.

Can such a fundamental premise be other than self-destructive? Can such principles be other than subversive of “positive science”? Is not such a system by its very constitution forever deprived of the possibility of making any, the least, positive denial of the issue involved in this discussion? Besides, how reliable can be an induction based upon such a shifting ground? We wonder not that when the possible sensation reached Mr. Mill’s “series of feelings” (for soul) that his fundamental premise was silently stealing away, the despairing admission escaped his lips: “Faith in induction is of slow growth.” Alas! the utter imbecility and nescience of positivism! Weaker than a broken reed to lean upon it is at best, and only a seeming reed—“Only this, and nothing more.” Its appropriate description would be a philosophic parody on Poe’s “Song of the Raven.” Is such a system a thing to be proud of? Does it offer a fitting license for dogmatism? Above all, does it authorize its votaries to indulge in defiance and insult toward faith in God, the faith

of our age, the faith of all the ages? If mere antecedence and sequence make up all there is in causality, then science is a mere seeming, the absurd assertion that Tenterden steeple is the cause of Sudbury downs should satisfy the author of Mill's Logic, and the reasoning of the peasant should take rank with that of the philosopher.<sup>1</sup>

But the admission does not exhaust itself with this statement. Still more is implied in the failure to array science against Christian theism. In almost every case — astronomy, geology, comparative philology, etc. — the attempt has been made, and the pre-judged opposition trumpeted. But uniformly has time compelled the admission that true science is not hostile to true religion. Indeed, since the time of Bacon, science has been the strong and sure ally of religious faith; stronger and surer as it has grown mature. Astronomy has enlarged and established the illustrations of eternal power and wisdom, until, as never before, the heavens have declared to man the glory of God, and the firmament has showed his handiwork. “Elegantissima hæcce compages solis, planetarum, et cometarum (et stellarum), non nisi consilio et dominio. Entis cujusdam potentis et intelligentis oriri potuit.”<sup>2</sup> Although celestial bodies moving through the depths of illimitable space have not all regarded the scientific dictate of La Place,<sup>3</sup> that all generated motion *must* lie in the same plane, and be in the same direction, yet they have implicitly regarded a higher law and Lawgiver; so that the satellite of Neptune, or of Uranus, however opposite its direction, has not disturbed the harmony of celestial motion. Suns and satellites now, as when Newton wrote or David sung or Isaiah prophesied, declare the glory of him “who bringeth out their host by number; who calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth” (Isa. xl. 26). The prevalence and fitness of one simple but efficient law — the law of gravitation — has been inductively traced, until, not by demonstration, but by

<sup>1</sup> Mill's Logic, i.

<sup>2</sup> Newton, Principia,

<sup>3</sup> *Système du Monde*, Book iv. chap. 2, p. 226.

progressive approach, it has been declared and believed to be universal; as if the universe were in fact one—bound to one centre by one law ordained by one supreme Creator.

Geology has not only illustrated, but well nigh demonstrated, tenets of religious faith held for ages as most exalted and far-reaching. In all this array of scientific witness for religious faith there has been no speech, no language. No voice has been heard; but the words (the expression) have gone forth through all the earth and to the end of the world.

But another scientific witness has recently offered its testimony for religious faith through speech, in language and with a voice coming up from all the earth—the science of comparative philology. All through the Aryan family, as it has spread over Europe and over India from its Asiatic centre more than five thousand years ago, religious faith has been invariably and universally entertained and expressed, repeated, and recorded in living words. In the Shemitic language, Jehovah God has been the sacred name supreme, borne everywhere most piously by every member of the whole Shemitic family, whether Chaldean, Mohammedan, or Jew, whether in Asia or Africa, or the Moor-lands in Spain, or the Islands of the Sea. While the remnants of the human race, however concentrated or dispersed, wherever wandering, whether Basque or Finn or Tartar or American savage, have carried with them the idea of the Great Spirit, have believed in him reverently and worshipped, and have piously transmitted this faith to their children and their children's children forever.

The science of comparative philology, in all the speech of earth, with myriad living voices and countless winged words, not only testifies for the past, but tells to the present and all coming time—tells of faith in God. Mr. Spencer has asserted a postulate, which is fundamental with him, that invariable belief is the highest possible test of certainty in human knowledge. In his own words, "The invariable existence of a belief is our sole warrant for every truth of immediate consciousness, for every primary generalization

of the truths of immediate consciousness, for every axiom, and for every demonstration.”<sup>1</sup> The youngest neophyte can easily apply Mr. Spencer’s postulate to the case in hand. One thing, at least, is evident, that there is no conflict between true science and true faith.

In reaching the conclusions to which I have just alluded, science has in each direction pursued the line of induction, assuming for an invariable law, as Bacon did, the principle that every effect must have a cause, an adequate cause, and therefore the course of nature is uniform and constant, and the method of induction is valid. This is in direct contrast to the bastard induction of Mill, which, as he complains, is “slow of acceptance,” and should be; because it can never be reliable, based as it is upon a baseless “possibility of sensation,” which is itself based upon the baseless “series of feelings” of a baseless mental being, which, if it exist, according to this useless and spurious induction, “never can be truly known.”

True science, following not the false but the true Baconian method of induction, has, in its different directions, reached these conclusions confirming religious faith; while the great representatives of science, Bacon, Locke, Newton, Whitney, — not to mention a host of no less worthy names which throng the vast temple of science, — really and reverently believe in God. We recall Mr. Darwin’s testimony, which will be admitted as “calm and impartial,” at least in this direction: “The question whether there exists a Creator and Ruler of the universe has been answered in the affirmative by the highest intellects that have ever lived.” To the sceptical scientist we commend the most thorough application of the Baconian method, “for,” in the words of its author, “while the mind of man looketh upon second causes scattered, it may sometimes rest in them, and go no farther; but when it beholdeth the chain of them, confederate and linked together, it must needs fly to Providence and Deity.”

We do not notice materialism for the reason that it is not

<sup>1</sup> Psychology, p. 28.

a settled science, nor can it be, by its very nature. Scientific knowledge is based upon consciousness — the consciousness of the knower. But consciousness testifies to the self and the not self — to mind as knowing, and matter as known but not knowing — to both as existing, and existing in contrast. To impugn consciousness is to undermine science; to discard the testimony of consciousness is to destroy the possibility of science. I might include another reason, which may have greater weight with those who are curious for anything in this direction — the admission of Professor Huxley: "I am no materialist, but, on the contrary, believe materialism to involve grave philosophic error."<sup>1</sup> And yet another reason, which may have still greater weight: According to Professor Fiske, who will be readily accepted as good authority by the class just referred to: "Those who wish to see materialism refuted by philosophic reasoning, and not by appeals to vulgar prejudice, may be referred to the latter portion of Mr. Spencer's lately-published volume on Psychology."<sup>2</sup>

In the light of these preliminary admissions we discern more clearly the appropriateness of Professor Tyndall's "Lecture on the Scientific Use of the Imagination," before the Liverpool association, and the peculiar force of his statement that, "The imagination has become the mightiest instrument of the physical discoverer"; and that "by this power we can lighten the darkness which surrounds the world of the senses"; that, "in much which has been recently said about protoplasm and life, there was only the outgoings of the same power." But, not to multiply quotations, after such statements by a master of exact science we cease to wonder that experts in positive philosophy and sympathetic reporters, who nurse their scepticism at the neglect not only of duty, but of philosophy, who proclaim the great discoveries of physical science which they do not even comprehend, and the explosion of theology which they

<sup>1</sup> *Physical Basis of Life.*

<sup>2</sup> Letter of March 1, 1871, to the *New York World*, from Mr. John Fiske, of Harvard University.

do not, would not understand, would thus conceal the weakness of their position, or comfort themselves by imaginary victories.

But we turn to another admission—that man is a religious being.

Of rationalism this is not only the admission, but the assertion. Assuming as an axiom the principle of an absolute religion, which belongs to man's nature, and as such is common to humanity, rationalism arrays its objection against a written revelation as philosophically and practically irrational; that no external revelation can extend the religious conviction already universal, or improve the internal revelation of God to the soul. The Radical Club recently listened with manifest approbation to this statement from one of its lecturers, that "the religious element is one of the strongest in the human soul"—an admission offered as at once an explanation and a confirmation of the fact that "religious controversies and wars have been the most bitter and deadly which the world has ever known."

Spinoza, whom Dr. Hedge styles "the typical exponent of pantheism, — Spinoza taught the immanence and prevalence and interfusion of God, flowing throughout the universe; so that, in the language of one of his interpreters, "All religions have windows that open to those all-governing skies." Satan is expelled from the universe as an impossibility, and all are religious, since, according to pantheism, each believes in nothing but God.

On the other hand, Comte, at first, magisterially excluded religion from his positive system as a delusion characterizing the childhood of the human race; but, finding the sentiment still prevalent and persistent, upon maturer reflection he supplemented positive science by an elaborate system of religion, demanding for each day two hours of religious service, with a "Catechism of Positive Religion" and a "Positivist Calendar."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Publications of the English Branch of the Positive School, or Publications of the American Branch.

While Mr. Mill rejects Comte's "Politique Positive" as a system of politics and morals, he applauds his religious systems, but suggests as an improvement that the "grand être," the divinity Comte would adore as collective humanity, we should worship in private adoration to woman as the *sexe aimant*, the proper representative of the "grand être," and, whether dead or alive, "les vrais anges gardiens."

Mr. Spencer would rear his altar not to collective humanity, but to the unknown God; where Mr. Huxley would unite with him in worship, not perchance with the expressiveness of Mr. Mill in his private adoration of woman, or of Comte with the public assembly of the French positivists in the two hours daily devotion to the "grand être," or with the English positivists in the presence of "collective humanity"; but Mr. Spencer and Mr. Huxley, apart from the positivist assembly, would unite in higher worship, "for the most part of the silent sort."

Mr. Froude tells us that "God gave us religion, although the devil gave us theology."

Mr. Huxley speaks of the religious sentiments as "the noblest and most human of man's emotions."<sup>1</sup> Mr. Higginson declares: "The religion of the heart can never perish, because it is a human instinct"; and he predicts that at some time in the future "there will meet in some one of the world's great centres an oecumenical council of the human race, drawn together by the natural religion of the human race — the religion of the heart."<sup>2</sup>

I have dwelt the longer upon this admission of philosophical scepticism, that man is a religious being, because it is fundamental toward theism, and significant of its inherent strength, in contrast with the preliminary admissions already noted as significant of the inherent weakness of scepticism. All religions lead to the great question of God. Indeed, religion is, strictly, a recognized relation toward God, and dependence upon him. Without this the term itself is deprived of sig-

<sup>1</sup> Lay Sermons, etc., p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> See Lectures at Horticultural Hall, Boston, January, 1871.

nificance. The alternative is unavoidable: Religious worship and dependence have a correlative object, or this "strongest element in the human soul," this "noblest and most human of man's emotions," is most false and deceptive—a conclusion which would not only endanger religion, but with it also endanger "positive philosophy."

But, while philosophical scepticism, by its own admission, cannot disprove the prevalence of the religious sentiment among mankind, it is especially powerless to disprove the facts of Christian experience.

This experience is attested by the best and the wisest of each sex in every clime and in every age. With the progress of civilization and the growth of intelligence, the testimony accumulates. Challenged to reply, philosophical scepticism remains in self-adjudged silence. By its own admission it has not applied the very test required by its own philosophy. In the very nature of the case, it does not, cannot claim to have even entered upon the ground of Christian experience, much less to apply this test to the system of faith, and still less to disprove the experimental argument which every Christian affirms for himself, and which the whole Christian world reaffirms with combined consciousness and sincerity. This concession, it should be observed, is by no means gracious, but unavoidable, and is, it should be remembered, fundamental toward Christianity as experimental. This is not, indeed, the field of sense, where men walk only by sight, and live by bread alone. The phenomena are not material; "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink"; yet the experience is no less real, no less intense. It is a life which transcends the life of the animal as far as "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost" is more exalted. Nor is it, indeed, the field of the understanding, when it judges merely according to sense, depending for its premises solely upon observation, and thence deducing conclusions by dialectical processes, which the apostle Paul, in the light of his Christian experience, has significantly styled "vain philosophy." Yet the knowledge is no less satisfying, no less

certain. We speak what we do know. We have not followed cunningly devised fables. Whether there be tongues they shall cease, or knowledge [phenomenal knowledge], it shall vanish away; but "this is life eternal, to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." Within this field of "noblest and most human experience, thronged by multitudes of the best and wisest witnesses, — within this field physical science, by the very nature of the case, cannot enter; and here philosophical scepticism can only in silence doubt; it cannot deny; and here most forcibly is it reminded of Tyndall's confession: "The logical feebleness of physical science is not sufficiently borne in mind." Yet this is only the negative statement of a fact self-evident, that for philosophical scepticism on physical grounds to deny or ridicule religious experience is not only feeble, but illogical.

But not to linger within the field of religion and religious experience, in this extremity, philosophical scepticism puts forth the plea of reason, instead of experience,—that "Reason is the only arbiter between truth and falsehood which we are sure we possess." Such is the re-statement of the admission by an authority no less unquestionable than the Westminster Review, and as recent as October, 1872; an admission, be it however remembered, though so recent, yet by no means novel—an admission which it would seem might win the very elect, but whose context warns of a foe in the garb of friendship, while it discourses thus upon "The Aesthetics of Physicism": "As reason must ever be the only medium by which the truth can be demonstrated between man and man, *it may be taken for granted that pure materialism is the only creed which a rational creature can adopt.*" However we may regard the admission, it is utterly impossible to accept the logic. Indeed, we can conceive of no principle of reason or process of reasoning which authorizes the conclusion; not even with "the possibility for sensation" and "the series of feelings" (for soul) manipulated by the adroit induction of Mr. Mill's logic that two and two may make five and that two straight lines may inclose a triangle; for, in

the enthymeme of the Westminster Review, not only is a premise wanting and the process vitiated by an illicit major, but the very terms assumed are lost from the conclusion. However we may regard this admission, it proves quite too much for the purpose of "physicism." This appeal to reason as arbiter we not only accept as timely, but commend as highly rational, if we may be pardoned the apparent, but unreal pun. It is timely that experience itself be tested, which is possible only by the proper standard; it is essential that induction have some reliable guide, which can only be by the application of some authoritative rule. We thank our modern sceptic "for that word"—reason as arbiter. True, it does not harmonize precisely with the claim of Spencer, that "Experience is the sole origin of knowledge";<sup>1</sup> or of Comte, that "Physics is the mother of all science."<sup>2</sup> Still, reason shall be the arbiter. It may not confirm the declaration of Schelling and Hegel that "Nature is petrified intelligence";<sup>3</sup> nor the opinion of the materialist that mind is rarefied matter. Still reason shall be the arbiter. It may find something to condemn in Spencer's definition of science, as "an extension of perceptions by means of reasoning";<sup>4</sup> or the statement of Oken and Hegel, that "to philosophize on nature is to re-think the great thought of creation."<sup>5</sup> Yet, according to the philosophical, and at the same time sceptical, Westminster Review, "Reason is the only arbiter." Indeed, to our surprise, Herbert Spencer, in a careful review of Oken and Hegel, seems to recognize the same authority, and make the same appeal. Condemning Oken for applying "a bastard *a priori* method," Spencer proposes "the legitimate *a priori* method, which sets out with propositions of which the negative is inconceivable." There is, then, an *a priori* method, which is legitimate; and, by the admission and example of Mr. Spencer, in the highest appeal, "reason shall be arbiter."

We are thus, by this combined admission, referred to an

<sup>1</sup> Recent Discussions, pp. 119, 167.

<sup>2</sup> p. 117.

<sup>3</sup> p. 169.

<sup>4</sup> p. 160.

<sup>5</sup> p. 167.

authority which may decide whether experience itself can in any department of phenomena be trusted — whether the senses themselves in the reports they bring us are reliable ; or whether the internal and the external worlds which are thus reported are unreal and illusory, “like an insubstantial pageant.” It is evident that some unquestionable authority must rule this testimony as valid, or philosophical scepticism will invade the field of the senses, and wrest even from positive philosophy all assurance, and drive us into the formless void of nihilism.

And beyond this, if bare facts and phenomena are true, as the senses report, is there nothing else — no bond of connection to unite these effects to causes, and relate these phenomena to things, and thus combine facts and forms and things into worlds, and worlds into a real universe, existing in space and time ? What shall decide whether this work of the understanding is valid or vain ?

No experience has reached and settled this great question ; and if there be no other appeal, then philosophical scepticism may successfully invade the field of the understanding, and vitiate with doubt the very process of induction. Without some first principles, induction itself is impossible, and neither experience nor understanding can avail. But these first principles reason alone can supply. Thus reason, and reason only, can guarantee the validity of induction and deduction, and regulate experience ; in a word, save us from credulity on the one hand, and doubt on the other — the Scylla and Charybdis which threaten every course of thought. Reason, then, shall be the arbiter. While we promptly pledge submission to its rulings, we shall insist that philosophical scepticism, according to its own arrangement, be subject to the same authority. If reason verify for the sense, we will accept it, even to the utmost limit of physical science. If it verify for the understanding, not only ourselves, but positive philosophy must accept the verifications with the authorized deductions. And if it verify for itself, revealing to us in its own light fundamental truths, reached

by "a legitimate *a priori* method"; if in morals it rule the testimony of conscience to be valid, and in religion assert the validity of revelation; if it discriminate between material and mental phenomena, and refer the one to a physical, the other to a metaphysical origin; if it relate effect to cause and qualities to substance; if it affirm spiritual identity and free personality and moral obligation and the duties of religion, and thus condemn philosophical scepticism as not only illogical, but also irrational, we are still to abide by its superior rulings. There is no appeal; "Reason," says the Westminster Review, "is the only arbiter." Certainly, we respond, if reason can and must verify for the sense; if it can and must verify for the understanding,—certainly, it can verify for itself, in its own light and by its own authority. And were we called upon to establish an affirmative, instead of considering the admissions of philosophic scepticism, we would show that thus reason does verify in the precise particulars indicated, and, having done this, rest our cause. For, however man becomes man,—whether by "natural selection," evolution," or "special creation," it is but a truism to assert that man is what he is, and as such he must be regarded, by common consent of selectionist, evolutionist, and creationist, as the highest being on the earth; as such, his testimony must be admitted as the highest within the same sphere. And further, since he can investigate and measure all things around him, but cannot be measured by them, so he is philosophically the measure of all things. And further still, he alone takes testimony from all the rest, which he examines and pronounces upon in the light of his own reason, thus guiding his own testimony, and confirming it as the highest of all, and decisive in the field of science and philosophy. This his own reason declares legitimate, and from this decision of human reason there can be no appeal to an inferior tribunal.

But since the Westminster Review, notwithstanding its admission, volunteers its support to Dr. Büchner's theory of "matter and force" as "all that is," and to "materialism as

the only creed which a rational creature can adopt," it is fitting that we call attention to other admissions of philosophic scepticism, which have an important bearing on this discussion.

Philosophic scepticism, be it physical or metaphysical, admits that, at least, something is. Doubt is. This is known by consciousness. And Mr. Mill admits that "what is known by consciousness is known beyond the possibility of question,"<sup>1</sup> and that thus "we know our feelings." But doubt is not an abstraction, independent and unrelated. Doubt is the mind doubting. It is the mind which doubts, not mere matter. Already, by this admission, the sceptic is borne beyond the control of his own scepticism. The effect and the cause, that is, the actor and the act, both are at once known and affirmed by the consciousness. Even Herbert Spencer, with singular precision, pointing out the divergence between some of his own views and those of Comte, admits our consciousness of cause — "a consciousness which remains dominant to the last as it was at the first,"<sup>2</sup> and declares: "The consciousness of cause can be abolished only by abolishing consciousness itself."<sup>3</sup> The doubt, then, is accounted for by referring it to the doubter. Thought and feeling and volition — these appear in the light of consciousness. Reason and conscience, too, are known with the same conscious certainty; and these are accounted for by referring them to the same conscious mind. Mr. Spencer admits "the personality of which each is conscious, and of which the existence is to each a fact beyond all others the most certain."<sup>4</sup>

But the phenomena around him which bear no resemblance to doubt or belief, to thought or feeling or volition; in a word, which bear no resemblance to the phenomena of mind — how shall these be accounted for? Evidently by referring them to something material, in which they inhere, and which produces them. These phenomena do not exist as abstractions, independent and unrelated. In the irrefutable assertion

<sup>1</sup> Logic, Introduction, p. 191.

<sup>2</sup> First Principles, Sec. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Recent Discussions, p. 124.

<sup>4</sup> First Principles, p. 66.

of Mr. Spencer, which amounts to more than an admission, "It is rigorously impossible to conceive that our knowledge is a knowledge of appearances only, without at the same time conceiving a reality of which they are appearances; for appearances without reality is unthinkable."<sup>1</sup> The admission, then, is inevitable that matter is, and that mind is; or, distinguishing them by whatever names, that something is which has material qualities — extension, figure, solidity, weight, and measure; and that something is which has mental qualities — thought, feeling, volition, reason, and conscience. By this admission the sceptic is borne beyond the control of his own scepticism. But these material things — how are they accounted for? By a reason in or out of themselves? And the doubting mind — how shall this be accounted for? By a reason within or without itself? For even Mr. Darwin admits not only that mind — finite mind — is, but also that it has not always been; an admission which history approves and geology confirms. Must there have been a super-cosmical mind, as the cause or origin? Or has something sprung from nothing? Why the demand that qualities be related to some substance as inherent — a demand which common sense makes, and forever speaks? Nothing but a thinking soul would raise such a question, or could answer it. The mind for itself sees what reason affirms and consciousness reveals, that mental qualities, e.g. thought, feeling, volition, inhere in mental substance. A like demand is made that material qualities be related to some substance as inherent. These special questions concerning quality and substance, effect and cause, and the all-embracing questions, Whence? and How? and Why? are not peculiar to the metaphysician and theologian. They are no less common and urgent among the scientists and philosophers, even the most positive of the positivists. The intrepid Büchner<sup>2</sup> not only raises these questions; but in Part I. claims to answer the question, Whence do we come? in Part II., Who are we? in Part III., Whither do we go? In the first and second

<sup>1</sup> *First Principles*, p. 88.

<sup>2</sup> *Place of Man in Nature*.

Parts he modestly claims to "solve the great mystery of existence"!

Theoretically, indeed, as we are reassured, these inquiries are magisterially forbidden. But the irrepressible questions will not down at the bidding. Theory is powerless here. Practically these questions are indulged; in fact, they are continuously repeated. What are the phenomena? is the clamorous demand of positive science; and whence? from force or volition? from matter, or from mind? and how? in correlation and conservation, or in persistence and distinction? by the law of evolution—the heterogeneous evolving from the homogeneous? or by the contrary process—the heterogeneous appearing according to intelligent prevision and superintendence? Are all phenomena the manifestation of forces? And if so, are these forces correlative and convertible? And if so, is matter force, or is it motion? And which is first, force or motion? And if matter is either, what is force? or what is motion? and whence is it? And if matter is neither, what is it? And which is first, matter or force or motion?

While such questions of positive science are ceaselessly recurring, until they burden the press and the public, it will not do for philosophical scepticism to pretend disapprobation or contempt of such inquiries, as if they were unauthorized or unimportant. The admission is as full as if it were formal. This admission is, at the same time, confirmed and extended by the varied, but unsatisfactory attempts of philosophy to answer these profound questions, What? and Whence? and How? and Why? questions which are at once fundamental to all science and native to all minds. Philosophical theories have been elaborated and multiplied and modified, until imitation has seemed unconscious, and the old faintly or fully reappears in the new, and originality, if longer possible, seems no longer certain. As we may have occasion to refer to some of these theories shrewdly labeled "modern," and presented by the "new philosophy" as original, and industriously paraded as triumphs of recent

discovery, it may be well to mention some of the earlier theories. Even a brief mention will prepare us somewhat the better to recognize old forms in new faces. There is the theory that all things came by chance, and then that all things are by fate; that even God cannot be God, since he must be controlled by fate.

The atomic theory of Democritus or Moschus, that atoms by fortuitous concurrence form this intricate and orderly mechanism of man and of the world, and the no less intricate and orderly universe of worlds.

The hylopathian theory of Anaximander, that there are phenomena or qualities, but no substance; that these qualities are real, yet originating from nothing; and that this dead matter, this chaos of insubstantial yet real qualities, issued in an orderly arrangement of organic and inorganic beings and worlds and systems, and a universe evolving life and mind and spirit.

The hylozoic theory, differing from the former not in making matter the source of all things, but in "ascribing latent life and understanding to the dead matter."

I might omit the mention of the homoeomery of Anaxagoras, who sought to avoid the absurdity of producing phenomena from nothing, or qualities without substance, and therefore supposed that the atoms of Democritus "were originally endued with all those forms and qualities that are vulgarly conceived to be in bodies, some bony, some fleshy, some fiery, some watery, some white, some black, some bitter, some sweet, and the like." I might omit the mention of homoeomery, since Anaxagoras himself was a theist, at least not an atheist, and taught that an eternal mind fashioned the eternal matter. But this theory has been perverted to the service of atheism, and, contrary to the intention of its author, has been made to deny the existence of God.

The theory of Parmenides, partly true and partly false (whom some theistic apologists have vindicated from the charge of atheism), the theory that, "as something could not come from nothing, therefore creation [absolute origination]

was impossible" — a theory which has been suborned to deny the existence of God ; though, if unbribed by atheism, and uninfluenced by a false theory of creation, it would testify for God as Creator, and most consistently with the true view of creation.

The theory of Empedocles, that hyle or rudimentary matter was increate and indestructible. However this theory has been perverted, yet Empedocles repudiated atheism.

Another theory, like the Ionic, taught that all things flow without a guide or governor to regulate the ceaseless movement ; yet, unlike the Ionic, that not natural forces, resulting in motion, but fire penetrated and subdued all things into restless commotion.

The theory of Protagoras, that whether there is a real world which all in common may know as existing is wholly uncertain, since there is nothing in the consciousness but sensations which are ever changing and transitory. Man is the measure of all things, but only for himself, and not for another. In this the self-styled modern theory of Mr. Mill may see itself reflected. Such a theory would be too narrow and fluctuating for establishing even a physical science, much less a science of the human mind or of God — a psychology or theology. While the one theory referred all things to fire, another ascribed all things to water, and still another attributed all things to air as first mover in producing a universe.

Thus has the atheistic (or non-theistic) adventurer in his chaotic realm of speculation been relentlessly tossed, fleeing now from the tempest of wind, and now from the fiercer tempest of water, and anon from the still fiercer tempest of fire, only to plunge into the fortuitous whirl of the restless atoms of a universe — the sport of capricious chance, or the victim of blind and pitiless fate.

Such labored, confused, and unsatisfactory theories — of which I have presented only a specimen — imply the admission of a demand, which even the atheist cannot resist, to account for the existence and order and design of himself

and the universe ; to seek, unintentionally, for the Author and Disposer of all things ; in a word, as an old and familiar writer admirably puts it, to " seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us ; for in him we live and move and have our being."

Lucretius, with logical dexterity equalled only by the Westminster Review in its defence of Dr. Büchner, denied that anything could have been made for intended use, for the thing must exist before the use. Hence he says there is no such thing as antecedent knowledge doing anything by intention. Such logical adroitness could as well dispense with principle or premise, and at once assume the desired conclusion. It would not only abbreviate, but improve the process.

Hobbes and the French atheists assert that there is no higher power than the forces of nature, and assume that the ideal element of thought, of being, of power, of cause, and of nature is identical, and therefore attribute to the material forces of the material universe what the theist attributes to the supreme intelligence.

Others, as Bruno, Hegel, and Schelling, maintain that God is only the principles and laws of the universe ; that the universe is thus a sort of self-existing and self-developing organism.

Others, as Spinoza, hold that, " prior to the creation of the world God was not God ; he was what he was ; that God and all things are one and the same ; that beside God no substance can be or be considered ; that God in the evolution of the material and spiritual is the absolute Spirit ; that this Spirit becomes objective to itself in nature, and returns to itself through the human spirit ; that God becomes self-conscious in man."

Lucretius denied the possibility of final cause. These deny the possibility of miracle.

Antiquated sceptical theories have been reproduced, sometimes with, sometimes without, modern modification.

“Gemmules infinitely numerous and infinitely minute,” which no human vision or skill of science has ever detected, — “gemmules” have been suggested, and “pangensis,” and “natural selection and sexual,” to account for the origin of species and the descent of man. This theory, embalmed and for twenty centuries enjoying undisturbed repose, scarcely introduced to the modern world, and by no means established, — this theory has been seized upon by the eager sceptic, apparently longing for some demonstration of his near kinship with the ape, and of his more distant, but unbroken relation to the Ascidian, and with undisguised satisfaction has been pressed into the service of philosophical scepticism, with persistent obliviousness of Mr. Darwin’s admission “that animals have descended from at most four or five progenitors, and plants from an equal or lesser number; life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one.”<sup>1</sup>

The hypothesis of “natural and sexual selection,” even if established, could not be decisive of the great issue involved in this discussion. There would remain the question of origin to settle. For the sake of the argument, if we admit Darwin’s theory that man descends (is developed) from the monkey, differing only in degree, that the ape descends from something lower, and lower, and lower still, until we reach blank matter, like the stock or the stone; yet, since man has the highest authority of anything in the domain of nature as he is the highest development, and since man is by this theory as strictly nature as the stock or the stone, the testimony of man’s inner voice or reason must be paramount. What is this testimony? Is it for or against the supernatural? Evidently for it. All history, religions, literatures, languages prove this. All these have recognized the supernatural. We have the thoughts and the words and the worship, the systems and the practice of all the past in evidence on this point. We know not but other things, could they speak, would give the same testimony. We know

<sup>1</sup> Origin of Species, p. 569, quoted by Mivart, p. 292.

that man — rational man — everywhere and in all the ages gives this testimony. This is one horn of the dilemma. If, on the other hand, Mr. Darwin admits that man differs from animals and things not only in degree, but in kind (as we affirm, for man is person, not thing), then man is supernatural — then he is miraculous in his origin and supernatural in his testimony. This is the other horn of the dilemma. According to the one, nature (if man and all is nature) turns state's evidence against Darwin as soon as it can speak (e.g. as in man), and by its own united voice declares a Supernatural, to be worshipped, feared, obeyed. According to the other, the testimony itself is rational — supernatural, as well as witness for the supernatural.

But the theory of "gemmules infinitely numerous and infinitely minute." What are these, and whence, and how? Does the "exact science" positively know that they are "infinitely minute?" How can we know them, if they are infinitely minute? How, especially, when the "positive science" declares as a "first principle" that we cannot know the infinite? And if, according to such a "first principle," we cannot know a single "gemmule," because it is "infinitely minute," how can we know that one exists; and how, especially, that they are "infinitely numerous"? This obvious criticism concerns, at least, the sceptic who would avail himself of this theory to dispense with a Creator. I know it is said that "gemmules multiply by fission"<sup>1</sup> and to confirm this it is asserted that "Thuret has seen the zoöspore of an alga divide itself, and both halves germinate." But how does this reach the difficulty, unless the zoöspore be a gemmule? And if it be, then the difficulty increases, since we are required not only to know a "gemmule," which is "infinitely minute," but also to know "both halves" of the "infinitely minute gemmule"! To make the point clearer for the scepticism which would adopt this theory, Professor Delpino has arranged this convenient formula: "The existence of the gemmules is a first unknown element; the propagative affinity of the

<sup>1</sup> Scientific Opinion, Oct. 13, 1869, p. 408, quoted by Mivart, p. 231.

gemmales is a second; their germinative affinity is a third; their multiplication by fission is a fourth,—and what an unknown element!” Again we remind the philosophical sceptic of Professor Tyndall’s prudent admission: “The logical feebleness of science is not sufficiently borne in mind.”

“Physical units” have been proposed, with mysterious powers of producing and reproducing organisms.” Atomism, hylozoism, and hylopathianism of the pagan period, with the increate and indestructible forces of Empedocles, have been severally recalled in our day, and merged into “evolution and correlated forces,” and, bearing this new name upon their modern frontlet, have been hailed as the climax of modern scientific discovery—the veriest wonder of the nineteenth century. This admiration of the “younger naturalists,” as Professor Youmans patronizingly puts it, may be deserved. To question its propriety is not our province nor our purpose. Of the valid advances in this direction we would not withhold our own admiration, nor refuse our hearty assent to authorized conclusions; but we protest against the crude haste displayed in the effort to array the doctrine of the “conservation of forces” against theism, and to thrust evolution into the false attitude of atheism.

Suppose matter itself in its final analysis is force, as some of our most profound and philosophic theists have held and taught. Then, certainly, upon any well-defined and consistent view of creation, there is, in the very nature of the case, a conservation of forces.

Suppose all the primary forces which constitute elemental matter are ultimately reducible to “gravity and heat,” or “the antagonistic and diremptive,” or “the centripetal and the centrifugal,” or “the potential and the actual.” Does this thorough analysis array the doctrine of forces against theism? Certainly not. Some of our ablest theologians have insisted upon this very analysis, anticipating Mr. Spencer and his disciples both in the classification and the conservation of forces.

But “the correlation of forces,” it is sometimes defiantly

demande, — does not this disprove theism? It may, according to the logical rules of the objector; but not according to the logical rules of Aristotle and Bacon, of Hamilton and Mill, not according to the ordinary process of induction or deduction. If the forces, when they are gravity and heat, do not disprove theism, it is difficult to understand how, by any known logic, they can disprove theism when they become correlated or converted into heat and gravity. Thus far we have referred to material forces only. Whether all the forces which are implied in a living body may be correlated or converted into gravity and heat in a lifeless body — whether all the forces which are implied in an organic, living, thinking man may be correlated or converted into gravity and heat of an unthinking, lifeless, inorganic stock or stone may, at least a little longer, remain an open question. It should be borne in mind that mature and earnest champions of the doctrine of “conservation and correlation of forces” admit that entire correlation is an open question. Even Professor Barker, incidentally, and so the more strongly, admits this very state of the question: “Can we longer refuse to believe that even thought is in *some mysterious* way correlated to the other natural forces? And this even in face of the fact that it [thought] has never been measured?” Scientists, then, know of no way in which thought and material force can be correlated; they cannot weigh nor measure thought? Is not this, then, an open question? We commend the question to “positive science,” as one which deserves and demands additional (scientific) research. And we suggest to the eager philosophic sceptic, impatient to publish the decisive oracle to the long-desired confusion of theism, that he cultivate patience, lest he run upon a fool’s errand.

At the scientific reunion in Insprück, M. Mayer, a prominent physicist of Germany, who has directed especial investigation to the correlation of forces, made an address. Repudiating the hypothesis that thought is only a form of chemical force, and cognition the result of free phosphorus in the brain, he declared it “a great error to identify

molecular activity and intellectual action, which may be *parallel*, but are not *identical*. As what the telegraph says — the contents of the despatch — could never be regarded as a function of the electro-chemical action, . . . . so the brain is only the machine. It is not thought; intelligence, which is not a part of sensible things, cannot be submitted to the investigations of the physicist and anatomist." In the mean time, let the eager philosophic sceptic carefully consider his logic, lest, if the oracle announce correlation of forces as demonstrable, the atheistic herald even then should run upon a fool's errand. The question of forces, their conservation and correlation and analysis, falls far within the comprehensive question involved in this discussion — the question of a God and of faith in God.

These are but a few of the many theories proposed to account for and explain the system of things. In these manifold and diverse theories, old and new and old renewed, there is involved not only an admission of the importance and difficulty of answering these great questions of the soul, but also the admission of inherent weakness in the theories themselves. They are mere hypotheses. Even the very positive Westminster Review (Oct., 1872) says of Darwin's theory: "The case of man's descent does not yet admit of proof. The same may be said of the origin of any other species, of Darwin's hypothesis in general, and of the hypothesis of special creations which it denies."

La Place, while he would dispense with the theism of Newton, — La Place, bold among the boldest scientific investigators, offers his "Exposition du Système du Monde" as an hypothesis, and as such presents it with becoming diffidence: "Je presente avec la *dé fiance* que doit inspirer tout ce qui n'est point un resultat de l'observation, ou du calcul." But not only are these theories of "exact" science mere hypotheses concerning the questions at issue; they are made, it should be remembered, with the provisional admission that "science cannot find a first cause."<sup>1</sup> Whatever

<sup>1</sup> Comte.

science may answer to the soul's irrepressible and comprehensive challenge, it refers to method only, not to origin. Transcending, as well as comprehending, the field of its investigations are evermore the questions, Whence? and Why? The positive philosophy affirms truly, and must perpetually affirm: "Science cannot find a first cause." Science evermore traces, and can only trace, the *manifestations* of the first cause. Whatever it be—material or spiritual—science studiously traces the manifestations of the first cause in the order or law which it discovers, and which it seeks to generalize. Retracing specific to more general laws, it classifies evermore in higher and still higher generalizations, steadily extending its knowledge as it reaches a larger unit. This it makes the point of a new departure, forever asking, What is? and the higher question, How? or in what order, or by what law it is.

And here—to conclude this Article—we reach the comprehensive admission that science seeks to trace all effects to unity—that philosophy would unify its knowledge by retracing all phenomena to one common origin. Each particular science seeks this unity for itself, and "universal science seeks after absolute unity." To this ultimate result all its processes tend. To seek this unification it is authorized; nay, it is compelled. It is claimed, on the one hand, that this final unification may consist in matter, and not in mind; that matter exists by a reason in itself; and that matter is the beginning, the originator. But how do we get a notion of any beginning? Is it not by the power (the energy) of our own minds putting forth new activities, producing effects, originating phenomena? What, we ask, is matter, that it should be the originator, the beginning? Does scepticism reply, "It is force"? Again we ask, Is force an abstraction, independent and unrelated? Does not force itself originate in mind?

These and similar questions confront the theory of materialistic unity.

On the other hand, it is claimed that multiplicity in the

universe may be reduced to pantheistic unity; that there is not only theism, but pantheism. God is all, and all is God. But, as no one else will believe that the pantheist is God, and as each knows for himself that he is not God, the excess of pantheistic admission is apparent.

The fault is not in the attempt at unification; for this is unavoidable. Atheist, pantheist, and theist, materialist and spiritualist, are alike compelled to it by the very law of thought. The admission is inevitable. The fault lies in the principle and the process of unifying. Is the principle right? Is the process broad enough? Here is the point of divergence. Which is the true course? Which is the false? These questions remain to be considered.

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#### ARTICLE IV.

#### THE "GENERAL PHILOSOPHY" OF HERBERT SPENCER.

BY M. STUART PHELPS, PH. D., NEW HAVEN, CT.

HERBERT SPENCER defines philosophy as "knowledge of the highest degree of generality."<sup>1</sup> "Knowledge of the lowest kind is un-unified knowledge" [whatever that may be]. "Science is partially unified knowledge. Philosophy is completely unified knowledge."<sup>2</sup> "Knowledge has obviously not reached its limits, until it has united the past, present, and future histories into a whole."<sup>3</sup> "Philosophy, then, has to formulate this passage from the imperceptible into the perceptible, and from the perceptible into the imperceptible."<sup>4</sup>

The system of philosophy which Spencer gives us is, then, an attempt to explain the ultimate *a priori* laws of the universe. By its success or its failure in that attempt must it be judged true or false philosophy.

NOTE. — References, unless otherwise specified, are to Spencer's "First Principles of Philosophy" (2d edition). New York: D. Appleton and Co. 1872.

<sup>1</sup> p. 131.

<sup>2</sup> p. 134.

<sup>3</sup> p. 278.

<sup>4</sup> 280.