

MODERN MATERIALISM:

ITS ATTITUDE TOWARDS THEOLOGY.

A Critique and Defence.

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PREFACE.

IN reproducing the following Essay, I should gladly have divested it of all controversial character. But though in substance it is independent of its immediate occasion, its form has been so far shaped by the necessities of self-defence, as to render the features of its history indelible. Whatever personal element it contains will be found, I trust, strictly relevant to the general argument, and even indispensable to the right conception of the problem discussed. My sole object has been to reduce that problem to its essential factors, and remove the disguises thrown around it by ill-understood words. To the demand for exactitude of method in dealing with the border-land between Natural Knowledge and Theology I willingly submit. It was indeed in the interest of such a method that both this Essay and its predecessor were written : and it is to the want of it that the prevalent misunderstandings are due between the representatives of Science and the interpreters of Religion.

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MODERN MATERIALISM: ITS ATTITUDE TOWARDS THEOLOGY.



AT the beginning of October, 1874, it was my duty, as Principal of a Theological College, to open a new session with an Address, which was afterwards published under the title, "Religion as affected by Modern Materialism." It raises the question whether the free and scientific methods of study insisted on in the College involved results at variance with its theological design. It states accordingly three assumptions hitherto implied in that design: "That the universe which includes us and folds us round is the life-dwelling of an Eternal Mind; that the world of our abode is the scene of a Moral Government incipient but not yet complete; and that the upper zones of human affection, above the clouds of self and passion, take us into the sphere of a Divine Communion." With regard to these assumptions the thesis is maintained that they are beyond the contradiction, because not within the logical range, of the natural sciences. In support of this thesis the mischiefs are shown, both to science and to theology, of confusing their boundaries, and treating the discovery of Law as the negation of God; and the separating line is drawn, that in their intellectual dealings with phenomena, science inves-

tigates the "how" and theology the "whence." Tempted on by two of its indispensable conceptions, *matter* and *force*, science, overstepping this boundary, has of late affected to know not only the order but the origin of things; in the one case starting them from *atoms* as their source, in the other from mechanical *energy*. I try to show that neither datum will work out its result except by the aid of logical illusions. You will get out of your atoms by "evolution," exactly so much and no more as you have put into them by hypothesis. And with regard to force, it is contended that observation and induction do not carry us to it at all, but stop with *movements*; that the so-called kinds of force are only classes of phenomena, with the constant belief of causality behind; that of causality we have no cognition but as Will, from which the idea of "physical force" is simply cut down by artificial abstraction to the needs of phenomenal investigation and grouping; and that, in conceiving of the single power hid in every group, we must revert to the intuitive type, because the only authorized, and to the highest, because alone covering the highest phenomena. The attempt, under shelter of the unity of energy behind all its masks, to make the lowest phase, besides playing its own part, stand for the whole, is described as a logical sleight of hand by which a heedless reasoner may impose upon himself and others.

After this defensive argument to show that the religious positions are not displaced by natural science, they are traced to their real seat in human nature, and treated as postulates involved in the very existence and life of the reason and conscience. In support of their natural claim to our entire trust, it is contended that, for their ethical power, they are absolutely dependent on their objective truth; and further, that our nature, in respect of its higher

affections, compassion, self-forgetfulness, moral obligation, is constructed in harmony with a world Divinely ruled, and in utter conflict with the Pessimist's picture of nature.

The Address thus epitomized has brought upon me the honour and the danger of a critique by Professor Tyndall,* marked by all his literary skill, and rendered persuasive by happy sarcasm and brilliant description. One fault at least he brings home to me with irresistible conviction. He blames my mode of writing as deficient in precision and lucidity. And I cannot deny the justice of the censure when I observe that my main line of argument has left no trace upon his memory, that its estimate of scientific doctrines is misconstrued, that my feeling towards the order of nature is exhibited in reverse, that I am cross-questioned about an hypothesis of which I never dreamt, and am answered by a charming "alternative" exposition of ascending natural processes, which I follow with assent till it changes its voice from physics to metaphysics, and from its premisses of positive phenomena proclaims a negative ontological conclusion. That at every turn I should have put so acute a reader upon a totally false scent, rebukes me more severely than any of his direct and pertinent criticisms; for, smartly as these may hit me, they fall chiefly on incidental and parenthetical remarks which might have been absent, or on mere literary form which might have been different, without affecting the purport of my Address. Whether the force of these minor thrusts is really disabling, or is only a by-play telling mainly on the fancy of the observer, a brief scrutiny will determine.

(1.) In saying that the College which I represent leaves open to all new lights of knowledge "the special studies

* *Fragments of Science*: "Materialism" and its Opponents; and, previously, *Fortnightly Review*, November 1, 1875.

which deal with our sources of religious faith," I expanded this phrase by the words, "whether in the scrutiny of nature or in the interpretation of sacred books." This innocent parenthesis, which simply summarizes the growing-grounds of all actual theology, produces in my critic an effect out of all proportion to its significance. Twice he challenges me to show how any "religious faith" can be drawn from "nature," which I regard, he says, as "base and cruel." It suffices to say that "scrutiny of nature" does not exclude "*human* nature," wherein the springs of religion are afterwards traced to their intuitive seats; and that, in what are called my "tirades against nature" as "base and cruel," I am describing, not my own view of the order of the world, but one which I repudiate as utterly sickly and perverse. Then, again, I am asked how, after giving up the Old Testament cosmogony, I can any longer speak of "sacred books," without informing my readers where to find them. I have occasionally met with scientific men whose ideas about the Bible, if going further than the Creation, came to an end at the Flood, and who thought it only loyal to Laplace and Lyell thenceforth to shelve "Moses and the prophets:" but a judgment so *borné* I should not expect from Professor Tyndall. Can a literature then have nothing "sacred," unless it be infallible? Has the religion of the present no roots in the soil of the past, so that nothing is gained for our spiritual culture by exploring its history and reproducing its poetry, and ascending to the tributary waters of its life? The real modern discovery, far from saying there is no sacred literature, because none oracular, assures us there are several; and, notwithstanding a deepened because purified attachment to our own "Origines" in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, persuades us to look with an open reverence into all writ-

ings that have embodied and sustained the greater pieties of the world. But to my censor it appears a thing incredible that I should find a sanctity in anything human ; or deem it possible to approach religion in its truth by intercepting its errors as it percolates through history, and letting it flow clearer and clearer, till it brings a purifying baptism to the conscience of our time.

(2.) In order to give distinctness to that "religion" in relation to which I proposed to treat of "Modern Materialism," I specified "three assumptions" involved in it, of which the first and chief is the existence of the "Living God." I am reproached with making no attempt to verify them, but permitting them to "remain assumptions" "to the end." Be it so, though the statement is not quite exact: still, in every reasoned discourse assumptions have their proper place, as well as proofs ; and the right selection of propositions to stand in the one position or the other depends on the speaker's thesis and the hearer's needs. My *thesis* was, that natural science did not displace these assumptions, because they lie beyond its range ; and the *proof* is complete if it is shown that the logical limit of inductive knowledge stops short of their realm, and is illegitimately overstepped by every physical maxim which contradicts them. To turn aside from this line of argument in order to "verify" the primary matter of the whole discussion, would have been to set out for Exeter and arrive at York. My *hearers* consisted of the teachers, supporters and alumni of a *Theological* College ; and to treat them as a body of atheists, and offer proofs of the being of a God, would have been as impertinent as for Professor Tyndall to open the session of a *Geological* Society with a demonstration of the existence of the earth.

(3.) A few reluctant words must suffice in answer to the

charge of "scorning the emotions." I say "*reluctant* words:" for to this side of our nature it is given to speak without being much spoken of; to live and be, rather than be seen and known; and when dragged from its retreat, it is so hurt as to change its face and become something else. Here, however, little more is needed than to repeat the words which are pronounced to be so "rash" and even "petulant"—"I trust that when '*emotion proves empty*, we shall stamp it out and get rid of it." Do I then "scorn" the "emotion" of any mind stirred by natural vicissitudes or moving realities—the cry of Andromache, "Ἐκτορ, ἐγὼ δύστηνος," at the first sight of her hero's dishonoured corpse; the covered face and silent sobs of Phædon, when Socrates had drained the cup; the tears of Peter at the cock-crowing; or any of the fervent forms of mental life—the mysticism of Eckhart, the intellectual enthusiasm of Bruno, the patriotic passion of Vane? Not so; for none of these are "empty," but carry a meaning adequate to their intensity. It is for "emotion" with a vacuum within, and floating *in vacuo* without, charged with no thought and directed to no object, that I avow distrust; and if there be an "overshadowing awe" from the mere sense of a blank consciousness and an enveloping darkness, I can see in it no more than the negative condition of a religion yet to come. In human psychology, feeling, when it transcends sensation, is not without idea, but is a type of idea; and to suppose "an inward hue and temperature," apart from any "object of thought," is to feign the impossible. Colour must lie upon form; and heat must spring from a focus, and declare itself upon a surface. If by referring religion to the region of emotion" is meant withdrawing it from the region of truth, and letting it pass into an undulation in no medium and with no direction, I must decline the surrender.

In thus refusing support from "empty emotion," I am said to "kick away the only *philosophic foundation* on which it is possible to build religion." Professor Tyndall is certainly not exacting from his builders about the solidity of his "foundation;" and it can be only a very light and airy architecture, not to say an imaginary one, that can spring from such base; and perhaps it does not matter that it should be unable to face the winds. Nor is the inconsistency involved in this statement less surprising than its levity. Religion, it appears, has a "philosophical foundation." But "philosophy" investigates the ultimate ground of cognition and the organic unity of what the several sciences assume. And a "philosophical foundation" is a legitimated first principle for some one of these; it is a cognitive beginning—a *datum* of ulterior *quæsitæ*—and nothing but a science can have it. Religion then must be an organism of thought. Yet it is precisely in denial of this that my censor invents his new "foundation." Here, he tells us, we know nothing, we can think nothing; the intellectual life is dumb and blank; we do but blindly feel. How can a structure without truth repose on philosophy in its foundation?

But do I not myself carry religious questions, in the last appeal, to the inward consciousness of man, whether intellectual for the interpretation of causality, or moral for the interpretation of duty? Undoubtedly; and Professor Tyndall thinks it "highly instructive" that I "should have lived so long, thought so much, and failed to recognize the entirely subjective character of this creed." If I may omit the word "entirely" (which implies a gratuitous exclusion of "objective truth"), I not only recognize it, but everywhere insist upon it. The fundamental religious conceptions have no deeper validity than belongs to the very

frame of our faculties and the postulates of our thinking. But as this equally holds of the fundamental scientific conceptions, as matter and force have also to retire to consciousness for their witnesses—nay, as objectivity itself is but an interpretation by the subject of its own experience, is it not "highly instructive" that a critic so compassionate of my "subjective" position should be unaware of the ideality of his own? Or has he, perhaps, found some "objective knowledge" which has not to fall back upon a "subjective" guarantee?

If, as I suspect, Professor Tyndall uses the word "subjective," not in its strict sense, for what belongs to the *human subject at large*, but to denote what is special to the feeling of *this or that individual*, the question will then be whether I mistake an exceptional personal experience for a universal form of thought. This question is not settled by saying that many able men find in themselves no such *inner* experience. The eye for correct psychological reading is not secured by great intellect or noble character, but, like the organ of any other art, must be trained to quickness and delicacy of insight; and, while false or over-culture exposes it to the danger of seeing what is not there, a failure of culture may prevent its seeing what there is. Right interrogation and careful comparison alone can sift out the essential from the accidental. Doubtless many a principle once advanced as self-evident and universal survives only in the grotesque museum of philosophers' fancies. But, on the other hand, whatever laws of thought are now admitted as universal were at first propounded, and often long resisted, as the expressions of individual reflection.

(4.) On one point more a personal *éclaircissement* is needed as a condition of any profitable argument. I am said to be "imperfectly informed regarding the position I

assail." If I am sensitive to this remark, it is not that I cannot bear to be reminded of my ignorance, the sense of which is a shadow that never quits my life, but that, as no man has a right to attack doctrines which he has not taken the pains to understand, the statement carries in it a moral imputation, and calls on me either to clear it away or to confess a wrong. What then is the "position" which, under the name of "materialism," I intended to assail, and ought, perhaps, to have fixed by exact definition? Professor Tyndall supposes it to be *his* position, regarding which undoubtedly I am very imperfectly informed; for the indications of it, though clear enough for assent or criticism when taken one by one, appear to me so shifting and indeterminate in their combination, as to afford no means of testing it. Except in the two or three passages where it is quoted, the Belfast Address was no more in my view than the writings to which it referred and others belonging to the literature of the subject; and did not supply the form of doctrine to which my argument was addressed. The only question therefore is whether that form of doctrine really exists. If it can be shown that I have misconceived the materialists' position, and fastened upon them any thesis which is without eminent representative in their school, I must accept my rebuke. But if no part of my sketch is unsupported by adequate authority, it will remain true, though it should conflict with sentences in the "Fragments of Science."

Probably the chief instance of "imperfect information" is this—that I suppose the materialist doctrine to be offered as an *explanation* of the order of things; for my censor contrasts with this "travesty" of the scheme his own statement, that the materialist's "molecular groupings and movements in reality explain nothing," and that "the

utmost he can affirm is the association of two classes of phenomena, of whose real bond of union he is in absolute ignorance." But surely, if this is all that he can affirm, he gives his materialism nothing to do, and is as well off without it as with it: in order simply to see that two series of phenomena run parallel, and correspond term for term, he needs no more than methodized observation, possible and identical on every theory or no theory about the substratum of the phenomena. If the human mind could be content with this spectacle of unexplained concomitance, the very impulse would be wanting from which materialism has sprung. Its fundamental proposition, common, as Lange remarks, to all its forms, ancient and modern—"that the universe consists of atoms and empty space"*—is an *hypothesis* devised for the express purpose of establishing a "bond of union" between lines of succession previously detached—*i. e.* of giving the mind a bridge of passage other than that of "association" from the one to the other—*i. e.* of *explaining* the second by the first. An hypothesis commends itself to us when (*inter alia*) it offers a higher conception from which, as an assumption, we can deduce *both* sets of previously separate facts; and so far as it fails to do this, it is self-condemned. There may be other defects in hypotheses; but if their *data* do not logically lead to the *quæsita*, they break their primary promise; and to see whether they are water-tight throughout, or are leaky at the joints, is an efficient test of their pretensions. A materialist who knows what he is about would not disown the words which I put into his mouth—"Matter is all I want; give me its atoms alone, and I will explain the universe"—but would assuredly be offended were he told,

* Geschichte des Materialismus, 2tes Buch, p. 181.

and that by a "candid friend," that his doctrine "explains nothing."

As it is impossible to come to close quarters with a see-saw doctrine, which now touches solid ground and now escapes it, I naturally addressed myself to thorough-going materialists, without presuming to commit Professor Tyndall to their consistency. That there have been and are such persons—persons who have undertaken, by defining the essence of matter and fixing it in atoms, "to explain the enigmatical by the clear, the intricate by the simple, the unknown by the known"*—he cannot deny, after having himself introduced us to the thesis of Democritus,†

* Lange, *Geschichte des Materialismus*, 1tes Buch, pp. 8, 9.

† In connection with this name there is an historical error in the Belfast Address which I should hardly notice were it not likely to be perpetuated by the just reputation of the author, and did it not apparently fall back for support upon Lange. This writer, noticing that Democritus makes no attempt to explain the appearances of adaptation out of the blind power of natural necessity, adds, "Whether this gap lay in his system itself, or only in the tradition of it, we do not know; but we do know that the source of even this last principle of all materialism—rudely shaped, it is true, yet with perfect precision of idea—is to be found in the philosophic thought of the Hellenic race. What Darwin, with the support of vast stores of positive knowledge, has effected for the present time, Empedocles offered to the thinkers of antiquity—the simple and penetrating thought that if adaptations preponderate in the world, it is because it lies in their very nature to maintain themselves; while that which fails of adaptation has perished long ago." (I. pp. 22, 23.) Misled by the order of this passage, which gives the missing thought *after* naming the "gap" which it might have filled, Dr. Tyndall has described Empedocles as intentionally making good a defect in Democritus—"Noticing this gap in the doctrine of Democritus, he (Empedocles) struck in with the penetrative thought," &c. This is an inversion of the chronology. Empedocles preceded Democritus by at least a generation, being born about B.C. 490, and dying B.C. 430; whilst Democritus, whom we find at Thurii shortly after the foundation of the colony in B.C. 443, died at a very advanced age, B.C. 357.—*Diog. Laert.* viii. 52, 56, ix. 41. *Comp. Arist. Met. A. 4*, p. 985, b. 4.

the reasonings of Lucretius, and the method of Gassendi.* The "atomists," says Lange, "attributed to matter only the simplest of the various properties of things—those, namely, which are indispensable for the presentation of a something in space and time; and their aim was to evolve from these alone the whole assemblage of phenomena." "They it was," he adds, "who gave the first perfectly clear notion of what we are to understand by matter as the basis of all phenomena. With the positing of this notion materialism stood complete, as the first perfectly clear and consequent theory of all phenomena."† If there is any difference between this statement of the problem and my "travesty" of it, I cannot discern it.

The indistinctness of which I ventured to complain in Dr. Tyndall's account of his "primordial" datum, I do not find removed by my pleasant journey with him to the Caribbean Sea and the Alpine snows, or his graceful pictures of Cingalese ferns, and of nascent infant life. The whole exposition appears to be dominated by the tacit maxim, "No matter without force, no force without matter"‡—a maxim which may be true in fact, but does not dispense with the necessity of investigating the relation between two fundamental ideas which are not identical or interchangeable. In the natural sciences no harm is done by running them both together, or resorting in varying proportions to the one and to the other. Experimental research and mathematical deduction may go on undisturbed, by mere use of them as provisional conceptions, and

* Starting from the fundamental assumption, "*Principio ergo Universum ex corpore et inani constat, neque enim tertia natura concipi mente præterea potest.*"—*Phil. Epicur. Syntagma*, Op. T. iii. 11.

† *Geschichte des Materialismus*, i. pp. 8, 9.

‡ Büchner: *Kraft und Stoff*, p. 2 (Aufl. 4).

without even suspecting that they carry in them any ulterior problem. But it is not by thus picking them up *in mediis rebus*, and taking them as they happen to come, that we can reach any philosophical view of the world, or estimate the theories which strive to interpret its unity and meaning. In spite of the cheap wit expended in derision of metaphysics, and the brave preference avowed for *terra firma*, you can escape them only by not knowing where you are. In their embrace you live and move and have your being ; and, however fast your foot may cling to the earth, none the less do you swim with it through the infinite space which, even in its emptiness, is yet the condition of all solidity.

At a first glance, nothing looks more hopeful to the enthusiast for simplification than the reduction of "matter" to "force." Two or three easy equations will carry him through the problem. Matter is known to us only by its "properties," and, relatively to us, is tantamount to them. Its properties, again, are only its ways of affecting ourselves, either directly or through operations on other portions of matter. That is, it is represented to us wholly by the *effects* which it has *power* to produce, and resolves itself into an aggregate of *forces*. Make its essence what you will, —extension with Descartes ; or palpableness with Fechner, —it is still as acting on the eye or the touch or the muscles that this essence reaches our apprehension ; it is the cause of sensations to us, and anything that should cause such sensations would be identical with it. Is it not plain therefore that matter is simply power locally lodged ? and that when pursued to its smallest conceivable elements, it merges into dynamic points, unextended centres of attraction and repulsion ? Such a course of thought has again and again led to theories of dynamic idealism, like Bosco-

vich's, Ampère's, and Cauchy's, in which the dimensions of the atoms whence molecular action proceeds not simply are small relatively to the distances which separate them, but absolutely vanish. Such theories, by isolating the elements needed for calculation, offer advantages for mathematical physics. But there will always be found an irresolvable residue which declines to melt away into force. When you have construed the atom's solidity into repulsion, and reduced its extension to nothing, there remains its *position*, and this "whereabouts" of a power is other than the power itself; and secures to it a *Da-seyn* or objective existence in space. Nor is the conception of motion adequately provided for in these schemes of abstraction. As geometrical points themselves cannot be moved, the phenomenon becomes a translation of a cluster of attractions and repulsions to new centres. But attraction with nothing to be attracted, repulsion with nothing to be repelled, motion with nothing to be moved, are presentable in language only, not in thought. The running of one eddy round another or into another is intelligible so long as there is a *medium*, be it of ether, however rare; but *in vacuo*, not so. A material *nidus* is indispensable as the seat of every motory change. The reason of this lies in the very structure of the human understanding, which supplies us with the category of Attribute or Property only in combination with that of Substance or Thing as its abiding base. The relation between the attribute which speaks to you phenomenally, and the substance which is given intellectually, is indissoluble: and analyze the phenomena as you may, so as to turn them from one type of predicate to another, you cannot cut them off from their persistent and unyielding seat, so as to have left on your hands a set of predicates without any subject. Thus the idea of "matter" vindicates

itself against every attempt to get rid of it by transformation.

The simplification has also been attempted by the inverse method of dispensing with "force," and making "matter" do all the work. In physics, it is said, we know what we perceive or generalize from perception: "we observe what our senses, armed with the aids furnished by science, enable us to observe—nothing more."* *Movements*, however, are all that we perceive, and if at first this fact escapes us when we hear and see, it is because our organs are not fine enough to read the undulations which deliver to them tones and tints. Submit their sensibility to adequate magnifying power, and all that is observable would resolve itself into local changes,—molecular or molar. It is the same in the celestial mechanics as in the scene of daily experience. We say that the moon goes through its lunations, and upheaves the tidal wave on the earth spinning beneath it, by the constant force of gravitation. But the real facts noticed are simply the presence, now here, now there, of two visible and solid globes, and of some piled-up water upon one of them, and a certain rule according to which these changes recur. Were these the only phenomena within our ken, this rule would be all that we mean by the "force" of which we speak. But as there are countless others which we have found to follow the same rule, we cannot speak of it without tacit reference to these, so that the word covers indefinitely more than the facts immediately in view. Still, it takes in nothing in any part of its field but movements and their law. And nothing moves but matter. The natural sciences would thus resolve themselves into a register of co-existent and sequent positions of bodies, expressed in formulas as comprehen-

* "Materialism and its Opponents," *Fortnightly Review*, p. 595.

sive as the state of analysis allowed; and in this form, as Comte and Mill justly insist, they would fulfil all the conditions of phenomenal knowledge, and secure that power of *prevision* which is the crown and reward of scientific labour.

This reduction of everything to matter, motion, and law, would be unimpeachable, were our intelligence somewhat differently constructed. Matter,—as these expositors set out by observing,—speaks to our perceptive senses alone; and we should still know it, had we no more than these, and the ability to retain their vestiges and set them in order. Let us only see how things like and unlike lie and move in place and time, and the history of matter is all before us. For this purpose we need not go, among the forms or data of the understanding, beyond the relations of objectivity, succession, and resemblance. But over and above these, we are subject to another determinate condition of thought,—the principle of causality,—in virtue of which there can be no cognition of *phenomenon*, except as relative to *power* that issues it, any more than there can be a cognition of a *here* without a *there*, or a *before* without an *after*. This intellectual law leaves us unsatisfied with merely reading the *order* of occurrence among the changes we perceive; it obliges us to refer movement to a motor, to look beyond the matter stirred to a force that stirs it, be the force *without*, as in the expansive energy which propels a loaded shell, or *within*, as in that which ultimately bursts it. In any case, you have here a clear dynamic addition to that scheme of regimented and marshalled phenomena which results from the lonely conception of matter. Will you rid yourself of the dualism by insisting, while you concede the power, that it is only a *property* of the matter?—

"See," says Lange, "whether here you are not in danger of a logical circle. A 'thing' is known to us through its properties, a subject is determined by its predicates. But the 'thing' is in fact only the resting-point demanded by our thought. We know nothing but the properties and their concurrence in an unknown object, the assumption of which is a figment of our mind (*Gemüth*), a necessary one it seems, rendered imperative by our organization." *

Another answer may be given thus:—"You may make anything a predicate of matter which you can *observe* in it, *i. e.* all its *movements*; but not what you *cannot observe*, therefore not the *power* which issues the movements; for this is not seen in the phenomenon; it is supplied by a necessity of thought, not as an element in it, but as a condition of it.'

Inasmuch then as both "matter" and "force" are intellectual data (*noümena*), involved respectively in the principle of Objectivity and in that of Causality, neither can be substituted for the other. For ages each has been trying to end the divided sway; but the rival, though often driven from the front, has always found at last an impregnable retreat, whence its rights return to recognition when the usurping rage is past. The present tendency in natural science is so strongly in favour of force as the better known term, that, according to Lange, "the untrue element in materialism, viz., the erecting of matter into the principle of all that exists, is completely, and it would seem definitively, set aside." †

From these two roots have arisen two forms of naturalism, capable no doubt of a balanced co-existence in the same mind, but often unharmonized, and expressing themselves in doctrines doubtfully related to each other. The

* Geschichte des Materialismus, ii. p. 214.

† Ibid. p. 215.

material theory works out the conception of *Atoms*. The *dynamic* relies on that of the *Conservation of energy*. As a means of intellectually organizing ascertained facts, and holding them together in a tissue of conceivable relations, these conceptions possess a high value, and are indispensable to the reaching of any generalizations yet higher. In the one, the multiple proportions of chemistry and the laws of elastic diffusion find an adequate vehicle of expression and computation. In the other, a common measure is set up for variations of heat and mechanical work and chemical decomposition and electrical intensity, bringing several special provinces into a federal affinity. Dr. Tyndall misconstrues me when he imputes to me any disparagement of these conceptions, in their *scientific* use, for formulating, linking, and anticipating phenomena. It is not till they break these bounds, and, mistaking their own logical character, set up *philosophical* pretensions as adequate data for the deductive construction of a universe without mind, that I venture to resist their absolutism, and set them back within their constitutional rights. It is no wonder, perhaps, that many an enthusiast in the study of nature, excited by the race of rapid discovery, should lose count of his direction as he sweeps along, and, mounted upon these hobbies, should fancy that he can ride off into the region of ontology, and finding nothing, because never really there, should mistake his own failure for its blank. But the calmer critics of human thought know how to distinguish between the physical and the metaphysical use of these conceptions.

“There is scarcely a more *naïve* expression of the materialism of the day,” says Lange, “than escapes from Büchner, when he calls the atoms of modern times ‘discoveries of natural science,’ while those of the ancients are said to have been ‘arbitrary

speculative representations.' In point of fact, the atomic doctrine to-day is still what it was in the time of Democritus. It has still not lost its metaphysical character; and already in ancient times it served also as a scientific hypothesis for the explanation of natural processes." *

And respecting the law of Conservation of energy, Lange observes that, taken in its "strictest and most consequent meaning, it is anything but proved: it is only an '*Ideal of the Reason*,' perhaps however indispensable as a goal for all empirical research." † It is from no want of deference for science proper that I pass again under review the competency of these two doctrines to work out, *ab initio*, a blind cosmogony.

I.—THE ATOMIC MATERIALISM.

The *material* hypothesis, as I read it, and as alone I propose to comment on it, maintains that, with ultimate inorganic atoms to begin with, the present universe could be constructed. Before it can be tested, its *datum* (inorganic atoms) must be pressed into more determinate form by an explanation of the word "atoms." "Things which cannot be cut" might be all alike; or they might be variously different *inter se*: and before we start, we must know on which of these two assumptions we are to proceed. The former is the only admissible one, so long as you credit the materialist with any logical exactness. When he asks for *no more than matter* for his purpose, he must surely be understood to require nothing but the *essentials of matter*, the characters which enter into its definition; and to pledge himself to deduce out of these all the

* Geschichte des Materialismus, ii. 181.

† Ibid. p. 213.

accessory characters which appear here and not there, and which discriminate the several provinces of nature. The idea of *atoms* is indeed simply the idea of "matter" *in minimis*, arising only from an arrest, by a supposed physical limit, of a geometrical divisibility possible without end; and the attributes which suffice to earn the one name give the meaning of the other. When in mathematical optics the investigator undertakes, from the conditions afforded by an undulatory elastic medium, to deduce the phenomena of refraction and polarization, he is not permitted to enlarge the data as he proceeds, and surreptitiously import into his ether chemical or other characters unnamed at first. Just as little can one who proposes to show the way from simple atoms to the finished world be allowed to swell the definition of those atoms at his convenience, and take on fresh attributes which change them from matter, ἀπλῶς, and make them now *this* sort of matter, now *that*. Whatever he thus adds to his assumption is filched from his *quæsitæ*, to the relief of his problem and the vitiation of its proof: and if the whole fulness of the *quæsitæ* is so withdrawn, and turned back to be condensed into *datum*, all deduction is given up, and the thesis is simply taken for granted.

In precisely this plight,—unless there is some reasoning between the lines which I am too dull to see,—Professor Tyndall leaves his case. He ridicules me for defining the assumed atoms as "homogeneous extended solids," on the ground that a phrase thus restricted to the "requisites of body" gives only "a metaphysical body."* Everything

* It becomes still more metaphysical in the hands of an eminent teacher of physical science. "L'impénétrabilité," says Pouillet, "c'est la matière. On n'a pas raison de dire que la matière a deux propriétés essentielles, l'étendue et l'impénétrabilité; ce ne sont pas des propriétés,

which you define is, in the same sense, a "metaphysical" (more properly, a "logical") subject. The object of the definition is to specify the attributes which alone are to be considered in giving the name, and in reasoning from it. The atomist who is not content with my account of his premisses should oblige me with a better, instead of stopping short with the discovery that a definition of a class is not a full description of its individuals. When, however, I look about for my critic's correcter version of "matter" or its atoms, it is long before I learn more than that "we must radically change our notions" of it,—an injunction upon which, without further help, it is difficult to act. At length, however, on the concluding page of the critique, the missing definition turns up. "Matter I define as *that mysterious thing by which all this has been accomplished*," i.e. the whole series of phenomena, from the evaporation of water to self-conscious life of man. Need I say that such a proposition is no definition, and dispenses with all proof; being simply *an oracle*, tautologically declaring the very position in dispute, that matter carries in it "the promise and potency of all terrestrial life"? The whole of the picturesque group of descriptive illustrations which lead up to this innocent dictum are only an expansion of the same *petitio principii*: they simply say, over and over again, the force immanent in matter is matter;—they are identical; or if not so as hitherto understood, we will have a new definition to make them so. This is not a process of reasoning, but an act of will,—a decretal enveloped in a scientific nimbus. Nothing can be less relevant than to show (and nothing else is attempted) that the forces of heat, of attraction, of life, of

c'est une définition." And again, "L'impénétrabilité inséparable est ce qu'on appelle un atome."—*Éléments de Physique expérimentale*, Tom. i. p. 4.

consciousness, are attached to material media and organisms, which they move and weave and animate: this is questioned by no one. In the sense of being *immanent* in matter, and manifesting themselves by its movements, they are *material* forces; but *not* in the sense of being derivable from the essential properties of matter, *quâ* matter. And this is the only sense on which philosophies divide, and reasoning is possible.

If the essence of the materialist hypothesis be to start with matter on its lowest terms, and thence work up into its highest, I did it no wrong in taking "homogeneous extended solids" as its *specified datum*, and its *only* one; so that it constituted a system of "monism." Dr. Tyndall asks me "where and by whom" any such datum is "specified." In the CONTEMPORARY REVIEW, June, 1872, Mr. Herbert Spencer contends that "the properties of the different elements" (*i. e.* chemical elements, hydrogen, carbon, &c.) "result from differences of arrangement, arising by the compounding and recompounding of *ultimate homogeneous units*." Here, *totidem verbis*, is the monism which I am charged with "putting into the scheme." As my critic is evidently anxious to disclaim the monistic datum, I conclude that he owns the necessity of *heterogeneous elements* to begin with, and feels with me the insecurity of Mr. Spencer's deduction of chemical phenomena from mechanical. Though I have the misfortune, in the use of this same argument,—that you cannot pass from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous,—to incur the disapproval of two great authorities, it somewhat relieves the blow to find Mr. Spencer at one with the premiss, and Dr. Tyndall ratifying the conclusion.

Before I quit this point I ought perhaps to explain, in deference to Mr. Spencer, why I venture to repeat an argu-

ment which he has answered with care and skill. In common with all logical atomists, he appeals to the case of *isomeric* bodies, and especially to the *allotropic* varieties of carbon and phosphorus, to prove that, without any change of elements in kind or proportion, and even without any composition at all, substances present themselves with marked differences of physical and chemical property. There are several distinct compounds formed out of the same relative weights of carbon and hydrogen. And the simple carbon itself appears as charcoal, as black-lead and as diamond; and phosphorus, again, in the yellow, semi-transparent, inflammable form, and as an opaque, dark-red substance, combustible only at a much higher temperature. In the absence of any variation in the material, these differences in the product are attributed to a different grouping of the atoms; and whatever their form, it is easy, within certain limits, to vary in imagination the adjustments of their homologous sides, so as to build molecules of several types, and ultimately aggregates of contrasted qualities.

I admit that, on the assumption of homogeneity, we may provide a series of unlike arrangements to count off against a corresponding number of qualitative peculiarities, though it is doubtful whether the conceivable permutations can be pushed up through the throng of cases presented by organic chemistry. But the morphological differences, if adequately obtained, contribute no explanation of the observed variations of attribute. What is there in the arrangement $a b c$ to occasion "activity" in phosphorus, while the arrangement $b a c$ produces "inertness"? Where the products differ only in geometrical properties, and consequently in optical, the explanation may be admissible, the form and the laying of the bricks determining the outline and the

density of the structure. But the deduction cannot be extended from the physical to the chemical properties, so as to displace the rule that to these heterogeneity is essential. To treat the cases of allotropy as destructive of a rule so broadly based, and fly off to a conjectural substitute, is surely a rash logic. In these cases certainly we know of no difference of composition. But neither do we know of any difference of arrangement. The first, if we could suppose it latently there, would be a *vera causa* of the unexplained phenomena; the second, though its presence were ascertained, would still rank only as a *possible* cause of them. If, therefore, an inquirer chose to say, "From this difference of property I suspect a difference of composition," what answer could we give him from Mr. Spencer's point of view? Could we say, "We finally know carbon to be simple"? On the contrary, we are warned that "there are no recognized elementary substances, if the expression means substances known to be elementary. What chemists for convenience call elementary substances are merely substances which they have thus far failed to decompose." If we are to stand ready to see sixty-two out of the sixty-three "elements" fall analytically to pieces before our eyes, how can we feel so confident of the simplicity of phosphorus or carbon, as to make it answerable for a hypothetical reconstruction of chemical laws?

Even in the last resort, if we succeed in getting all our atoms alike, we do not rid ourselves of an unexplained heterogeneity; it is simply transferred from their nature as units to their rules of combination. Whether the qualitative difference between hydrogen and each of the other elements is conditional upon a distinction of kind in the atoms, or on definite varieties in their mode of numerical or geometrical union, these conditions are not provided

for by the mere existence of homogeneous atoms; and nothing that you can do with these atoms, within the limits of their definition, will get the required heterogeneity out of them. Make them up into molecules by what grouping or architecture you will; still the difference between hydrogen and iron is not that between one and three, or any other number; or between shaped solids built off in one direction and similar ones built off in another, which may turn out like a right and a left glove. If hydrogen were the sole "primordial," and were transmutable, by select shuffling of its atoms, into every one of its present sixty-two associates, both the tendency to these special combinations, and the effects of them, would be as little deducible from the homogeneous datum as, on the received view, are the chemical phenomena from mechanical conditions. I still think, therefore, that if you assume atoms at all, you may as well take the whole sixty-three sorts in a lot. And this startling multiplication of the original monistic assumption I understand Professor Tyndall to admit as indispensable.

Next, in the striking words of Du Bois-Reymond, I had pleaded the impossibility of bridging the chasm between Chemistry and Consciousness. The sensations of warmth, of sound, of colour, are facts *sui generis*, quite other than the undulations of any medium, the molecular movements of any structure; known on different evidence, compared by different marks, needing a different language, affections of a different subject; and defying prediction and interpretation, on the part of a stranger to them, out of any formulas of physical equilibrium and motion, or of chemical affinity and composition. They, with all the higher mental conditions, belong to a world beyond the bounds of the natural sciences,—a world into which they can *never* find

their way, its phenomena being intrinsically inappreciable by their instruments of research. Here, then, in this establishment of two spheres of cognition, separated by an impassable gulf, we surely have a breach in the continuity of our knowledge: on the one side, all the phenomena of matter and motion; on the other, those of living consciousness and thought. Step by step, the "Naturforscher" may press his advance, through even the contiguous organic provinces; but at this line his movement is arrested; he stands in presence of that which his methods cannot touch;—an intellectual necessity stops him, and that for ever, at the boundary which he has reached. With this doctrine I invited my readers to compare the statement of Professor Tyndall, that, relying on "the continuity of nature," he "cannot stop abruptly where microscopes cease to be of use," but "by an intellectual necessity crosses the boundary," and "discerns in matter the promise and potency of *all* terrestrial life," including, therefore, *conscious* life. *This* statement appeared to me inconsistent with Du Bois-Reymond's "limit to natural science," and still appears so. What is my critic's reply? He cites *another* statement of his own, which is quite consistent with the doctrine of the eminent Berlin Professor and anticipates it; a procedure by which he answers himself, not me;—and, instead of removing the contradiction, takes it home. If, as the earlier passage says, "the chasm between the two classes of phenomena" (physical processes and facts of consciousness) "remains intellectually impassable," the "intellectual necessity of crossing the boundary" is not easy to understand. In order to "discern in matter the *promise*" of conscious life, you must be able, by scrutiny of its mere physical movements, to forecast, in a world as yet insentient, the future phenomena of feeling and thought. Yet this is precisely the transition

which is pronounced "unthinkable;" "we do not possess the intellectual organ, nor apparently any rudiment of the organ, which would enable us to pass, by a process of reasoning, from the one to the other." If between these statements "nothing but harmony reigns," then indeed I am justly charged with being "inaccurate."

How then does the case stand with the atomic hypothesis, as a starting-point of scientific deduction? In Dr. Tyndall's latest exposition we have it admitted—(1) that the monistic doctrine of homogeneous units will not work, and that the assumption must be enlarged to include heterogeneous chemical atoms; (2) that nothing which we can do with this magnified datum will prevent our being finally stopped at the boundary of consciousness. As these two positions are precisely those which I had taken up against the speculative materialist, it is an infinite relief to discover, when the mask of controversy is removed, the features of a powerful ally. The whole argument sums itself up in Sir William Thomson's remark, "The assumption of atoms can explain no property of body which has not previously been attributed to the atoms themselves."

That the totality of sensible and deducible phenomena is produced by a constant amount of forces in a given quantity of matter, is a legitimate principle of modern science, and an adequate key for the interpretation of every proved or probable evolution. And in order to see what is comprised in changes that are intricately woven or fall broadly on the eye, it is often needful to take them to pieces and microscopically scrutinize them. We thus discover more exactly what they are, and how at the moment they are made up; and by doing likewise with the prior and posterior conditions of the same group, we learn to read truly the metamorphoses of the materials before us. But this is

all. To suppose that by pulverizing the world into its least particles, and contemplating its components where they are next to nothing, we shall hit upon something ultimate beyond which there is no problem, is the strangest of illusions. There is no magic in the superlatively little to draw from the universe its last secret. Size is but relative, magnified or dwindled by a glass, variable with the organ of perception: to one being, the speck which only the microscope can show us may be a universe; to another, the solar system but a molecule; and in passing from the latter to the former you reach no end of search or beginning of things. If in imagination you simply recede from the molar to the molecular form of body, you carry with you, by hypothesis, all the properties of the whole into the parts where your regress ceases, and merely substitute a miniature of nature for its life-size, without at all showing whence the features come. If, on the other hand, you drop attributes from the mass in your retreat to the elements, on your return you can never pick them up again: starve your atom down to a hard, geometrically perfect minimum, and you have parted with the possibility of feeding it up to the qualitative plenitude of our actual material forms; for in mere resistance,—which is all that is left,—you have no source of new properties, only the power of excluding other competitors for its place.

Accordingly, the “atom” of the modern mathematical physics has given up its pretension to stand as an absolute beginning, and serves only as a necessary rest for exhausted analysis, before setting forth on the return journey of deduction. “A simple elementary atom,” says Professor Balfour Stewart, “is probably in a state of ceaseless activity and change of form, but it is, nevertheless, always the same.”*

* The Conservation of Energy, p. 7.

"The molecule" (here identical with "atom," since the author is speaking of a simple substance, as hydrogen) "though indestructible, is not a hard rigid body," says Professor Clerk Maxwell, "but is capable of internal movements, and when these are excited it emits rays, the wave-length of which is a measure of the time of vibration of the molecule."* "Change of form" and "internal movements" are impossible without shifting parts and altered relations; and where, then, is the final simplicity of the atom? It is no longer a pure unit, but a numerical whole. And as part can separate from part, not only in thought but in the phenomenon, how is it an "atom" at all? What is there, beyond an arbitrary dictum, to prevent a part which changes its relation to its fellows from changing its relation to the whole,—removing to the outside? Such a body, though serving as an element in chemistry, is mechanically compound, and has a constitution of its own, which raises as many questions as it answers, and wholly unfits it for offering to the human mind a point of ultimate rest. It has accordingly been strictly kept to a penultimate position in the conception of philosophical physicists like Gassendi, Herschel, and Clerk Maxwell, and of masters in the logic of science, like Lotze and Stanley Jevons.

It is a serious question whether, in our time, atomism can any longer fulfil the condition which all the ancient materialism was invented to satisfy. The Ionian cosmogonies sprang from a genuine intellectual impulse; the desire to conquer the bewildering multiplicity of nature, and find some pervading identity which should make a woven texture of the whole; and whether it was moisture, or air, or the ether-fire, which was taken as the universal substratum, it was regarded as a *single datum*, on the

* A Discourse on Molecules, p. 12.

simplicity of which the mind might disburden itself of an oppressive infinitude. The intention of these schemes was to *unify* all bodies in their material, and in some cases all minds as well, so as not even to allow two originals at the fountain-head, but to evolve the All out of the One. This aim was but an overstraining of the permanent effort of all scientific interpretation of the world. It strives to make things conceivable by simplification, to put what was separate into relation, what was confused into order; to read back the many and the different into the one and the same, and so lessen, as far as possible, the list of unattached and underived *principia*. The charm of science to the imagination and its gain to life may be almost measured by the number of scattered facts which its analysis can bring into a common formula. The very sand-grains and rain-drops seem to lose in multitude, when the morphological agencies are understood which crystallize and mould them. The greatness of Newton's law lies in the countless host of movements which it swept from all visible space into one sentence and one thought. No sooner does Darwin supply a verified conception which construes the endless differences of organic kinds into a continuous process, than the very relief which he gives to the mind serves, with others if not with himself, as an equivalent to so much evidence. The acoustic reduction of sounds, in their immense variety, to the length, the breadth, and the form of a wave, is welcomed as a happy discovery from a similar love of relational unity. To simplify is the essence of all scientific explanation. If it does not gain this end, it fails to explain. Its speculative ideal is still, as of old, to reach some monistic principle whence all may flow; and in this interest it is, especially to get rid of dualism by dissolving any partnership with mind, that materialism continues to

recommend its claims. Does it really bring in our day the simplification at which it aims?

Under the eye of modern science, Matter, pursued into its last haunts, no longer presents itself as one undivided *stuff*, which can be treated as a continuous substratum absorbent of all number and distinction; but as an infinitude of discrete atoms, each of which might be though all the rest were gone. The conception of them, when pushed to its hypothetical extreme, brings them no nearer to unity than *homogeneity*,—an attribute which itself implies that they are separate and comparable members of a *genus*. And what is the result of comparing them? They "are conformed," we are assured, "to a constant type with a precision which is not to be found in the sensible properties of the bodies which they constitute. In the first place, the mass of each individual," "and all its other properties, are absolutely unalterable. In the second place, the properties of all" "of the same kind are absolutely identical."* Here, therefore, we have an infinite assemblage of phenomena of Resemblance. But further, these atoms, besides the internal vibration of each, are agitated by movements carrying them in all directions, now along free paths and now into collisions.† Here, therefore, we have phenomena of Difference in endless variety. And so it comes to this, that our unitary datum breaks up into a genus of innumerable contents, and its individuals are affected both with ideally perfect correspondences and with numerous contrasts of movement. What intellect can pause and compose itself to rest in this vast and restless crowd of

* Discourse on Molecules, by J. Clerk Maxwell, M.A., F.R.S., p. 11.

† Theory of Heat, by J. Clerk Maxwell, M.A., LL.D., F.R.SS. London and Edin., pp. 310, 311.

assumptions? Who can restrain the ulterior question,—whence then these myriad types of the same letter, imprinted on the earth, the sun, the stars, as if the very mould used here had been lent to Sirius and passed on through the constellations? Everywhere else the likenesses of individual things, especially within the same "species,"—of daisy to daisy, of bee to bee,—have awakened wonder and stimulated thought to plant them in some uniting relation to a cause beyond themselves; and not till the common parentage refers them to the same matrix of nature does the questioning about them subside. They quietly settle as derivative where they could never be accepted as original. Some chemists think, as Mr. Herbert Spencer reminds us,* that in the hydrogen atom we have the ultimate simple unit. By means of the spectroscope, samples of it, and of its internal vibrations, may be brought from Sirius and Aldebaran—distances so great that light itself needs twenty-two years to cross the lesser of them—into exact comparison with our terrestrial specimens; and were their places changed, there would be nothing to betray the secret. So long as no *à priori* necessity is shown for their quantity of matter being just what it is, and always the same at incommunicating distances, or for their elasticity and time of pulsation having the same measure through myriads of instances, they remain unlinked and separate starting-points; and if they explain a finite number of resemblances and differences, it is only by assuming an infinite.

But even the approach to simplicity which homogeneity would afford fails us. Notwithstanding the possibility, in the case of certain carbonates, of substituting isomorphous constituents for one another, it cannot be pretended that

* *Contemporary Review*, June, 1872, p. 142.

any evidence as yet breaks down the list of chemical elements: and, should some of them give way before further attempts at analysis, they are more likely—if we may judge of the future from the past—to grow to a hundred than to dwindle to one: to say nothing of the probability, already suggested by the star-spectroscope, that in other regions of space there exist elements unknown to us. At present, in place of a single type of atom, we have to set out with more than sixty, all independent, and each repeating the phenomenon of exact resemblance among its members wherever found. Perhaps you see nothing inconceivable in the self-existence of ever so many perfect facsimiles ready everywhere for the making of the worlds, and may treat it as a thing to be expected that, being there at all, they should be all alike. So much the more certain, then, must be your surprise on finding them *not* all alike, but ranging themselves under sixty heads of difference. If the similars are entitled to the position of ἀρχαί, the dissimilars are not: and if neither can prefer the claim, the atomic doctrine, when pushed into an ultimate theory of origination, extravagantly violates the first condition of a philosophical hypothesis.

Nor is its series of assumed data even yet complete. For these sixty kinds of atoms are not at liberty to be neutral to one another, or to run an indeterminate round of experiments in association, within the limits of possible permutation. Each is already provided with its select list of admissible companions; and the terms of its partnership with every one of these are strictly prescribed; so that not one can modify, by the most trivial fraction, the capital it has to bring. Vainly, for instance, does the hydrogen atom, with its low figure and light weight, make overtures to the more considerable oxygen element: the only reply will be,

Either none of you or two of you. And so on throughout the list. Among the vast group of facts represented by this sample, I am not aware of more than one set—the union of the same combining elements in *multiple* doses for the production of a scale of compounds—of which the atomist hypothesis can be said to render an account. Everything else,—the existence of “affinity” at all, its limitation to particular cases so far short of the whole, the original cast of its definite ratios, its preference for unlike elements,—stands unexplained by it, or must be carried into it as a new burden of primordial assumptions. This chasm between the facts of chemistry and its speculations is clearly seen by its best teachers. Kekulé treats the symbolic notation of chemical formulas as a means of simply expressing the *fact* of numerical proportion in the combining weights.

“If to the symbols in these formulas” (he adds) “a different meaning is assigned, if they are regarded as denoting the atoms of the elements with their weights, as is now most common, the question arises, ‘What is the relative size or weight of the atoms?’ Since the atoms can be neither measured nor weighed, it is plain that to the hypothetical assumption of determinate atomic weights we have nothing to guide us but speculative reflection.” *

The more closely we follow the atomist doctrine to its starting-point, and spread before us the necessary outfit for its journey of deduction, the larger do its demands appear; and when, included in them, we find an unlimited supply of absolutely like objects, all repeating the same internal movements,—an arbitrary number of unlike types, in each of which this demand is reproduced, and a definite selec-

* Lehrbuch der organischen Chemie, ap. Lange, Geschichte des Materialismus, ii. p. 191.

tion of rules for restricting the play of combination among these elements,—we can no longer, in the face of this stock of self-existent originals, allow the pretence of simplicity to be anything but an illusion.

Large as the atomist's assumptions are, they do not go one jot beyond the requirements of his case. He has to deduce an orderly and determinate universe, such as we find around us, and to exclude chaotic systems where no equilibrium is established. In order to do this he must pick out the special conditions for producing this particular kosmos and no other, and must provide against the turning up of any out of a host of equally possible worlds. In other words, he must, in spite of his contempt for final causes, himself proceed upon a preconceived world-plan, and guide his own intellect as, step by step, he fits it to the universe, by the very process which he declares to be absent from the universe itself. If all atoms were round and smooth, he thinks no such stable order of things as we observe could ever arise; so he rejects these forms in favour of others. By a series of such rejections he gathers around him at last the select assortment of conditions which will work out right. The selection is made, however, not on grounds of *à priori* necessity, but with an eye to the required result. Intrinsically the possibilities are all equal (for instance), of round and smooth atoms, and of other forms; and a problem therefore yet remains behind, short of which human reason will never be content to rest, viz.: How come they to be so limited as to fence off competing possibilities, and secure the actual result? Is it an *eternal* limitation, having its "*ratio sufficiens*" in the uncaused essence of things; or *superinduced* by some power which can import conditions into the unconditioned, and mark out a determinate channel for the "stream of ten-

dency" through the open wilds over which else it spreads and hesitates? It was doubtless in view of this problem, and in the absence of any theoretic means of excluding other atoms than those which we have, that Herschel declared them to have the characteristics of "manufactured articles." This verdict *amuses* Dr. Tyndall; nothing more. He twice* dismisses it with a supercilious laugh; for which perhaps, as for the atoms it concerns, there may be some suppressed "*ratio sufficiens*." But the problem thus pleasantly touched is not one of those which *solventur risu*; and, till some better-grounded answer can be given to it, that on which the large and balanced thought of Herschel and the masterly penetration of Clerk Maxwell have alike settled with content, may claim at least a provisional respect.

Having confined myself in this section to the Atomic Materialism, I reserve for the next the consideration of the Dynamic Materialism, and the bearings of both on the primary religious beliefs. To those—doubtless the majority in our time—who have made up their minds that behind the jurisdiction of the natural sciences no rational questions can arise, and from their court no appeal be made, who will never listen to metaphysics except in disproof of their own possibility, I cannot hope to say any useful word: for the very matters on which I speak lie either on the borders of their sphere, or in quite another. I am profoundly conscious how strong is the set of the *Zeit-geist* against me, and should utterly fail before it, did it not sweep by me as a mere pulsation of the *Ewigkeits-geist* that never sweeps by. Nor is it always, even now, that physics shut up the mind of their most ardent and successful votary within their own province, rich and vast

* Belfast Address, p. 26. *Fortnightly Review*, Nov. 1875, p. 598.

as that province is. "It has been asserted," says Professor Clerk Maxwell, "that metaphysical speculation is a thing of the past, and that physical science has extirpated it. The discussion of the categories of existence, however, does not appear to be in danger of coming to an end in our time; and the exercise of speculation continues as fascinating to every fresh mind as it was in the days of Thales." *

II.—THE DYNAMIC MATERIALISM.

It is curious to observe how little able is even exact science to preserve its habitual precision, when pressed backward past its processes to their point of commencement, and brought to bay in the statement of their "first truth." The proposition which supplies the initiative is sure to contain some term of indistinct margin or contents; and usually it will be the term least suspected, because most familiar. The student of nature takes as his principle that all phenomena arise from a fixed total of force in a given quantity of matter; and assumes that, in his explanations, he must never resort to any supposed addition or subtraction of either element. In adopting this rule he must know, you would say, what he means by "matter," and what by "force," and that he means two things by the two words. Ask him whence this principle has its authority. If he pronounces it a metaphysical axiom, you may let him go till he can tell you how there can be not simply an *à priori notion* of matter and *notion* of force, but also an *à priori measure* of each, which can guarantee you against increase or diminution of either. As standards of quantity are found only in experience, he will come back with a new

* Experimental Physics, Introductory Lecture, *ad finem*.

answer, fetched from the text-books of science: that his principle is inductively gathered; in one half of its scope—viz., that neither matter nor force is ever destroyed—proved by positive evidence of persistence;—in the other half—viz., that neither is ever created—proved by negative evidence, of non-appearance. If now you beg him to exhibit his proof that matter is indestructible, he will in some shape reproduce the old experiment of weighing the ashes and the smoke, and re-finding in them the fuel's mass: his appeal will be to the balance, his witnesses the equal weights. Weight, however, is force: and thus, to establish the perseverance of *matter*, he resorts to equality of *force*. Again, when invited to make good the corresponding position, of the conservation of force, he will show you how, *e.g.*, the chemical union of carbon and oxygen in the furnace is followed by the undulations of heat, succeeded in their turn by the molecular separation of water into steam, the expansion of which lifts a piston, and institutes mechanical performances: *i.e.* he traces a series of movements, each replacing its predecessor, and leaving no link in the chain detached. *Movements*, however, are material phenomena: so that to establish the persistence of *force*, he steps over to take counsel of *matter*. He makes assertions about each term, as if it were an independent subject: but if his assertion respecting either is challenged, he invokes aid from the other: and he holds, logically, the precarious position of a man riding two horses with a foot on each, hiding his danger by a cloth over both, and saved from a fall by dexterous shifting and exchange.

Nothing can be more unsatisfactory than a scientific proposition, the terms of which stand in this variable relation to each other. The first of them has been sufficiently fixed in discussing the *Atomic* conception. It remains to give

distinctness to the second. In order to do so, it will be simplest to follow into their last retreats of meaning the parallel doctrines of the "Indestructibility of Matter" and of the "Conservation of Energy." If our perceptions were so heightened and refined that nothing escaped them by its minuteness or its velocity, what should we see, answering to those doctrines, during a course of perpetual observation?

1. We should see the ultimate atoms; and if we singled out any one of them, and kept it ever in view, we should find it, in spite of "change of form," "always the same." "A simple elementary atom," says Professor Balfour Stewart, "is a truly immortal being, and enjoys the privilege of remaining unaltered and essentially unaffected by the most powerful blows that can be dealt against it."* Here, then, we have alighted upon the "Matter" which is "indestructible."

2. These atoms might have been stationary; and we should still have seen them in their "immortality." But they are never at rest. They fly along innumerable paths: they collide and modify their speed and their direction: they unite: they separate. However long we look, there is no pause in this eternal dance: if one figure ceases, another claims its place. As in the atoms, so in the molecules which are their first clusters, there is a "state of continual agitation," "vibration, rotation, or any other kind of relative motion;"† "an uninterrupted warfare going on—a constant clashing together of these minute bodies."‡ In this unceasing *movement* among the "immortal" atoms we alight upon the phenomenon, or series of phenomena, de-

* The Conservation of Energy, p. 7.

† Theory of Heat, by J. Clerk Maxwell, p. 306.

‡ Conservation of Energy, by Dr. Balfour Stewart, p. 7.

scribed by the phrase "Conservation of Energy." So far as the law thus designated claims to be an observed law, gathered by induction from experience, this is its last and whole meaning. We have only to scrutinize its evidence with a little care, in order to see that it simply traces a few transmutations of the perpetual motions attributed to atoms and molecules.

If we chose to shape it thus: "For every cancelled movement or element of movement there arises another, which is equivalent;" everything would be expressed to which the evidence applies. Had we to look out for a proof of such a proposition, we should first consider what it is that makes two movements equivalent: and, in the simplest case,—of homogeneous elements,—we should find it in equal numbers with the same velocity; so that the direct demonstration would require that we should count the atoms and estimate their speed. As we cannot count them, one by one, we *weigh* them in their masses;—an operation which has the advantage of reckoning at one stroke, along with their relative numbers, also the most important of their velocities. The atoms being all equal, the greater mass expresses the larger number. And weight is only the arrested velocity with which, in free space, they move to one another: it is prevented motion, in the shape of pressure. In order to measure it, *i.e.* to express it in terms of space and time, we might withdraw the prevention, and address ourselves to the path that would then be described. But it is more convenient to test it by taking it in reverse, and trying what other prevented motion will avail to stop it and hold it ready to turn back. Thus even statical estimates of equilibrium are but a translation of motion into more compendious terms.

If this is a true account of common weights, it still more

evidently applies to the process which gives us the *foot-pound*, or "unit of work;" for this is found by the actual *lifting* of one pound through one vertical foot, *i.e.* by *moving* it through a space in a time. And as in this, which is the standard, so in all the changes which it is employed to measure, the fundamental quantity is simply *movement*, performed, prevented, or reversed.

This fact is easily traced through the proofs usually offered of the Conservation of Energy. The essence of them all is the same:—for each extinguished "unit of work," they find a substituted equivalent movement, molar or molecular. Dr. Joule, for instance, establishes for us a common measure of heat and mechanical work. How does he accomplish this? By applying the descent of a weight to create in moving water friction enough to raise the temperature 1° Fahrenheit; and finding that this result corresponds with a fall of the water through 772 feet. Here, on one side of the equation, we have the movement of the mass through its vertical path; on the other, the molecular movement that constitutes heat, measured by a third movement of an expanding liquid in the thermometer. Where the first is arrested, the second takes its place: and to double one would be to double both.

If heat is made to do chemical work, its undulations are similarly expended in setting up a fresh order of movements; of atomic combination, when burning coal unites with oxygen; of separation, when the fire of a lime-kiln drives its carbonic acid from the chalk. The friction which parts the electricities, the spark which attends their reunion; the crystallization of liquids by loss of temperature, and their vaporization by its increase; the waste of animal tissue by action, and its replacement by food; all reduce themselves to the same ultimate rule,—the exchange

of one set of movements or resistances (*i.e.* stopped movements) for another, which, wherever calculable, is found to be an equivalent.

To a perfect observer, then, able to follow the changes of external bodies, in themselves and among one another, to their last haunts, nothing would present itself but consecutions and assortments of phenomena, and arrests of phenomena. And if he had noticed, and could name, what on the subsidence of each group would emerge to replace it, he would be master of the law of Conservation. The sciences would distinguish themselves for him by taking cognizance each of its special set of phenomena; as acoustics tell the story of one kind of undulations, optics of another, thermotics of a third. And the law in question would only carry his glance, as it chased the flight of change, across the lines of this divided work, and show him, on the desertion of *this* field, a new stir in *that*.

Though the whole objective world has thus been laid bare before him, and he has read and registered its order through and through, he has not yet, it will be observed, alighted on a single *dynamic* idea: all that he has seen (and nothing has been hid from him) may be stated without resort to any term that goes beyond the relations of co-existence and sequence. The whole vocabulary of causality may absent itself from the language of such an observer. Were it even given to him, it would carry no new meaning, but only tell over again in fresh words the old story of regular time succession. He might, as Comte and Mill and Bain truly contend, command the whole body of science, including its latest law, without ever asking for the origin (other than the phenomenal predecessor) of any change.

By no such ideal interpreter of nature, however, have

our actual books of science been written. Never more than now have they abounded in the language which, we have seen, would be superfluous for him. The formula of the new law contains it: for it is the conservation of "Energy," or the correlation of "Forces," which it announces. Are these then some new-comers that we have got to know? or, have we encountered them before under other names, and only found out some new thing about them? "Energy," says Professor Balfour Stewart, "is the power of overcoming obstacles or of doing work."* I see a flash of lightning pierce a roof and kill a man, and plunge into the earth: the obstacles overcome, the work done, are visible enough; but where is the "power"? what does it add to the phenomenon, over and above these elements? Besides the flash of lightning first, and then the changes in the roof and the man, is there something else to be searched for, and entered, as an object of knowledge, under a separate name? If there be such a thing, by what sense am I to apprehend it? through what aids of art can I penetrate to it? It is obvious that it has no perceptible presence at all; and that its name stands in the definition and in every inductive equation, as an x , an unknown quantity, which itself has to be found before it can add any new relation to the known. "Force," says Professor Clerk Maxwell, "is whatever changes or tends to change the motion of a body, by altering either its direction or its magnitude."† The shot fired from a gun at a moderate elevation is scarcely out of the muzzle before it quits the straight line for the parabola, and slackens its initial velocity, and soon alights upon the ground. We say the deflection is due to "gravitation." But, if so, this is an invisible part of the fact: no more is observable than

* Conservation of Energy, p. 13.

† Theory of Heat, p. 83.

the first direction and subsequent curvature of the ball's path, the changing speed, and the final fall, in presence of the earth. The "force" which we superadd in thought is not given in the phenomenon as perceived: and if we know the movements accomplished, prevented, modified, we know everything that is there.

One interpretation, indeed, may be given to these mysterious words, which makes them not superfluous, in a methodized account of the order of nature. "Gravitation" perhaps may mean only the *rule of happening* which, along with the deflection of the shot, describes also several other cases of movement; and if it enables us to advert to these while in presence of the immediate fact, it performs a truly scientific function. It is plain, however, that this is not what our Dynamic writers mean. A rule does not "change the motion of a body," does not "overcome obstacles and do work;" nor would any one dream of attaching such predicates to mere similarities of occurrence.

Our instructors then suppose themselves acquainted with more than phenomena, more than the laws of them; and believe that inductive analysis has carried them behind these to "the hiding-place of *power*." They tell us, with much ease and unanimity, what they have found there: so that the story is familiar to every advanced schoolboy, and reproduced in hundreds of examination papers every year. They have found, as sources of the phenomena, a considerable number of "Energies" of nature, which they distinguish from one another in various ways, as "strong" or "weak," as stretching far or keeping near, as demanding the unlike or content with anything, as single or splitting into opposites, as inorganic or organic. In every text-book of science a complete list of these is presented; and the student, as he learns how to discriminate them, cannot

doubt that he is dealing, in each instance, with a separate unit of objective knowledge, which is the inner fountain of a definite set of outward changes. He thus is brought to conceive of nature as having many springs. Its multitudinousness is commanded by a senate of powers.

Further, it is impossible, on looking at the faces of these assembled forces, to assign the same rank to all, or miss the traits of graduated dignity which make them rather a hierarchy than a committee. The delicate precision with which chemical affinity picks its selecting way among the atoms, is an advance upon the indiscriminate grasp of gravitation at them all. The architecture of a crystal cannot vie with that of a tree. The sentiency of the mollusk is at an immeasurable distance from the thought which produces the *Mécanique Céleste*. Hence, in the company of powers that conduct the business of nature, a certain order of lower and higher establishes itself, which, without settling every point of precedency, at least marks a few steps of ascent, from the mechanical at the bottom to the mental at the top. All equally real, all equally old, they are differenced by the quality of the work they have to do.

On the imagination thus prepared, a new discovery is now flung. Keenly watch the face of any one of these forces; its features will change into those of another. You cannot fix its identity in permanence; it migrates from species to species. Now it is mechanical energy; in a minute it will be heat; if a tourmaline is near, it will turn up as electricity; and so on; for no part of the cycle is closed against it. You look, in short, upon a row of masks, behind which the "unknown power," slipping from one to another with magic agility, seems to multiply itself, but is found, on closer scrutiny, never to quit its unity. The senate of nature does but administer a monarchy.

And so, the plurality of forces disappears from the ultimate background, and comes to the front as a mere semblance. This brings up a new problem. What stands in the dynamic place thus vacated? How is it related to the disguises it assumes? Do they in any way represent it? or do they only hide it? To this question there are three answers given. (1.) The One Power is indifferently related to all its masks, but is like none of them; they are opaque and let no lineament shine through. (2.) The "phases" are not on an equal footing, but consecutive in their genesis, the *lowest* being the oldest. With *that* the One Power was at first identical, and *that* is what truly represents its essence. (3.) The "phases" are consecutive in their genesis, the *highest* being the oldest. With *that* the One Power is for ever identical; all else is its action, but not its image. The second of these is the materialist's answer. His preference for it is mainly determined by two reasons. In the first place, since the several forces, A, B, C, D, &c., are all interchangeable, it suffices to allow A (the mechanical), and all the rest are provided for. In the second place, the traces of actual evolution follow this order, conducting us back past the dawn of life, and even the combinations of chemistry, to a period of purely mechanical energy. In estimating these reasons I will step for a moment on to their own ground, and postpone all objection to the theory of "energies" on which they rest.

It is true that, among a number of interchangeables, if the first be given, the others are potentially there. But it is no less true that if the last be given, or any intermediate, there is provision for the rest. The possibility of reciprocal transmutation all round, determines no preference of any member as having priority over the rest, and cannot be

pleaded as an excuse for selecting the rudest mask of nature as the most faithful likeness of its inner essence. The law of Conservation is impartial, and tells in both directions, exhibiting the elements of the world, here living up into the self-conscious, there dying down into the inorganic, and suggesting, rather than any initial point, circling currents of crossing change.

But further, there is not the slightest ground, in the present transmutations, for treating the lowest phase of force as adequate to the production of the highest. Though mechanical energy, now that it stands in presence of the several chemical elements, may pass into chemical form, it does not follow that it could do so in their absence; for this would be to predicate of homogeneous atoms what we know only of heterogeneous. And the same consideration applies to the phases higher in the scale. *Given*, the existing materials and conditions of life and mind, and the circulation and equivalence of forces may take place as alleged; but that the order could be inverted, and the equivalence avail to provide the conditions, cannot be inferred. Take, on the other hand, any higher "phase" as first, and it carries all below it. Chemical force presupposes mechanical (as cohesion), and acts at its expense; and vital presupposes and modifies the inorganic chemical. In this order of derivation, therefore, the original *datum* would yield what is required by divesting itself of certain conditions admitted to be there, while in the opposite order it would have to take on fresh conditions assumed to be absent at its start. If, in choosing from the phases of force the fittest representative form, we are to be guided by the possibility of deduction, the supreme term must surely be taken as First.

The second plea of the "materialist," viz. that the vista

of evolution recedes into the simply mechanical, and is intersected at dimly seen stages by entering lights, first of chemical affinity, then of life, and finally of consciousness, it is the less necessary to qualify as a statement of fact, because it is destitute of logical cogency. Granted that at successive eras these new forces appeared upon the scene, this supplies the "when," but not the "whence" of each. Something more is needful, if you would show that it is the product of its predecessor. Instead of advancing from behind, it may have entered from the side. You cannot prove a pedigree by offering a date. Since these several forces are but secondary phases of a Unitary Power, what obliges us to derive them one from another, instead of letting them all stand in equal and direct relation to their common essence? On this point the first answer to the inquiry after the One Power has a conclusive advantage over the second.

Such, it seems to me, would be the logical position of the materialist's case, on the assumption that separate kinds and transmutations of energy are known to us, over and above the resulting phenomena, as discoveries of natural science. That assumption, hitherto conceded, I must now withdraw. No "energy" has ever come under human notice, and disclosed its marks, so as to discriminate itself from others, similarly apprehended. This is not simply true thus far as a matter of fact: it is true permanently as a matter of necessity. We might watch for ever the relations of bodies and their parts *inter se*, and though we had eyes that ranged from the microscopic minimum to the analysis of the milky way, we should fetch no force into the field of view: and the whole story of what was laid open to us would be a record of interminable series and eddies of change. What are called the "transmutations of

energy" are nothing but transitions from one chapter of that record to another. A certain catena of phenomena runs to an end; the first link of a new one is ready to take its place: a body's fall is stopped; its temperature rises: the thermometer in the kettle ascends to 212° Fahrenheit and stays there; the water turns to steam: this is observed, and no more than this. And the list of metamorphosed energies deceives us, if we take it for anything beyond an enumeration of these junctures between class and class of consecutive movements. Did we bring to the contemplation of nature no faculties but those which constitute our scientific outfit, I see no reason to believe that it would come before us under any other aspect; or that we should ever be tempted to paint its picture or tell its history in dynamic terms.

Are such terms then illusory? Are they susceptible of no meaning? or of only a false meaning? Far from it. The thought that is in them we cannot indeed fetch out of nature; but we are obliged to carry it into nature. To witness phenomena, and let them lie and dispose themselves in the mere order of time, space, and resemblance, is to us impossible. By the very make of our understanding we refer them to a *Power* which issues them: and no sooner is perception startled by their appearance than the intellect completes the act by wonder at their source. This "power," however, being a postulate intuitively applied to phenomena, and not an observed function found in them, does not vary as they vary, but mentally repeats itself as the needed prefix to every order of them: and though it may thus migrate, now into this group, now into that, it is the dwelling alone which changes, and that which is immanent is ever the same. You can vary nothing in the total fact, except the collocations of material conditions;

out of which, as each new adjustment emerges, the persistent Power elicits a different result. Instead of first detecting many forces in nature and afterwards running them up into identity, the mind imports one into many collocations ; never allowing it to take different names, except for a moment, in order to study its action, now here, now there. If this be true, if causality be not seen, but thought, if the thought it carries belongs to a rule of the understanding itself, that every phenomenon is the expression of power, two consequences follow : the plurality of forces disappears : and, to find the true interpretation of the One which remains, we must look not without but within ; not on the phenomena presented, but on the rational relations into which they are received. Power *is* that which *we mean by it* ; nor have we any other way of determining its nature than by resort to our self-knowledge. The problem passes from the jurisdiction of natural science to that of intellectual philosophy. Thither let us follow it.

I have already hinted that if we were mere passive, though thinking, observers of the world around us, we should witness phenomena without asking for a power : the principle of causality would remain latent in the intellect : the occasion would be wanting which permits it to awake. That occasion is furnished by the active side of our nature, by our own spontaneous movement from its inner centre out upon objects near its circumference. Being conscious as originators of the exercise of power, we admit as recipients its exercise upon us : nor is causality conceivable except upon these meeting lines of action and reaction ; any more than, in the case of position, a *here* is conceivable without a *there*. Both pairs, the dynamic and the geometrical, are functions of the same fundamental antithesis, of subject and object, which is involved in every

cognitive act. Till we disengage ourselves from nature, we do not think, though we may feel: and when we disengage ourselves from nature, we are self-conscious subjects and objects of causal operation. The idea of power coming in this dual form, as out from us and on to us, its two sides are reciprocally related; and that which the inner side is to the *object*, the same is the outer side to the *subject*. With the inner side, however, we are intimately familiar: it is the one thing which we immediately know; unless, indeed, it sits so near our centre as rather to regulate our knowing than stand off enough to become itself the known: but in any case we have to mark it by a name, as the inmost nucleus of dynamic thought: we call it living *Will*. This is our causality; it is what we mean by causality: in the absence of this, no other source for the idea—in the presence of this, no other meaning for it, can be found. It is true, that of the reciprocal propositions, “We push against the wind,” “The wind pushes against us,” we know the force named in the first with a closeness not belonging to our knowledge of the other. We cannot identify ourselves with the wind as our own *nisus* is identified with us. We go out on an energy: we return home on a thought. But that thought is only the reflex of the energy; it has, and can have, no other type. Our whole idea of *Power* is identical with that of *Will*, or reduced from it. That which, in virtue of the principle of causality, we recognize as immanent in nature, is homogeneous with the agency of which we are conscious in ourselves. Dynamic conceptions have either this meaning, or no meaning: cancel this, and you cut them at the root, and they wither into words; and your knowledge, cast out into dry places, has to take refuge again with co-existences and successions. Whatever autho-

rity attaches to the law of causality at all, attaches to it, presumably at least, in its intuitive form,—phenomena are the expression of living energy ; and cannot be reduced within narrower limits, unless by express disproof of coincidence between its natural range and its real range. Till that disproof is furnished, the One Power stands as the Universal Will.

I am aware what courtesy it would require in a modern *savant*, whether of the Nescient or of the Omniscient school, to behave civilly to such folly as this must seem to him : nor can I pretend to find his laughter a pleasant sound : for I honour his pursuits, and sorrowfully dispense with his sympathy. It makes amends, however, that even among the most rigorous scientific thinkers, some curious testimony or other from time to time turns up to the correctness of the interpretation just given of the idea of power. Even Gassendi, the modern Epicurus, the eager disciple of Copernicus and Galileo, cannot refrain from resorting to living and conscious action in explanation of physical. To render the earth's attraction intelligible, he has two favourite devices. He lays it down that every whole nature has a sort of clinging affection for all its parts, and resists their being torn or kept away from it ; so that the earth sends out invisible arms or tentacula to fetch back objects detached from it : and hence the fall of the rain, the hail, the stone from the sling.* And he institutes a double comparison ;—first assimilating the earth to a magnet ; and then the magnet's force to the fascinating or repulsive influence of objects upon the senses,—the sweetness of the rose, which draws us to it, the noisome-

* De motu impresso a Motore translato, xii. Opera, Lugd. 1658, tom. iii. p. 491.

ness of a drain, that drives us away.* In this appeal to "sympathy" and "antipathy" we see again, as already in the *φιλία* of Democritus, how inevitably the imagination, even when most intent on keeping within physical limits, is betrayed into mental analogies. Not a few, indeed, of the most clear-sighted men of science have been well aware of the real source of our dynamic conceptions; in some cases accepting it as authoritative, in others being ashamed of it as a mere occasion of superstition. Redtenbacher, in his "Principles of Mechanical Physics," refers our knowledge of "the existence of forces to the various effects which they produce, and *especially to the feeling and consciousness of our own forces.*"† And in conversation with Fechner, Professor E. H. Weber laid stress on the fact, that in the will to move the body occurs the only case of immediate consciousness of power operative on matter; and he accordingly identified the essence of power with that of will, and from this principle worked out his religious ideas.‡ That it is not, however, in the mere interest of a religious theory that this doctrine finds its strength, is evident from its hold on Schopenhauer, who, in virtue of it, would call the inward principle of nature nothing but *will*, though striking out from that name whatever makes its meaning divine. Herschel's judgment, often criticised but never shaken, was deliberately pronounced:—

"That it is our own immediate consciousness of *effort* when we exert force to put matter in motion, or to oppose and neutral-

* Syntagma Philos. Phys. sect. iii. mem. I. lib. iii. p. ii. Op. 132; and De motu impresso, xiii. tom. iii. p. 492.

† Das Dynamidensystem, Grundzüge einer mechanischen Physik, p. 12, ap. Lange; Gesch. d. Materialismus, ii. p. 205.

‡ Fechner, Ueber die physikalische und philosophische Atomenlehre; 2te Aufl., p. 132 (note).

ize force, which gives us this internal conviction of *power* and *causation* so far as it refers to the material world, and compels us to believe that whenever we see material objects put in motion from a state of rest, or deflected from their rectilinear paths and changed in their velocities if already in motion, it is in consequence of such an *effort somehow* exerted, though not accompanied with *our* consciousness."*

With the tone of this memorable statement it is interesting to compare the feeling of one who, owning the same psychological fact, treats it as an infirmity, instead of accepting it as a guide.

"Power, regarded as the cause of motion, is nothing," says Du Bois-Reymond, "but a more recondite product of the *irresistible tendency to personify* which is impressed upon us;—a rhetorical artifice, as it were, of our brain, snatching at a figurative turn of thought, because destitute of any conception clear enough for literal expression. In the notions of Power and Matter we find recurring the same dualism which presents itself in the ideas of God and the world, of soul and body; the same want which once impelled men to people bush and fountain, rock, air, and sea, with creatures of their imagination. What do we gain by saying it is reciprocal Attraction whereby two particles of matter approach each other? Not the shadow of any insight into the nature of the process. But, strangely enough, our inherent quest of causes is in a manner laid to rest by the involuntary image tracing itself before our inner eye, of a hand which gently draws the inert matter to it, or of invisible tentacles, with which the particles clasp together, try to seize each other, and at last twine together into a knot."†

This outburst of exasperation against all dynamic conceptions,—for to that length it really goes,—is justified if the human mind has nothing to do but to become an accomplished Naturforscher. It is quite true that "insight into

* Treatise on Astronomy, 1833; Ch. vii. § 370.

† Untersuchungen über thierische Electricität; I. Bd. Berlin, 1848. Vorrede, S. xi. ap. Lange's Gesch. d. Materialismus, ii. 204.

the nature of a process" is gained only by a closer reading of its steps in their series and in their analogies, and is in no way aided by passing behind the movements they comprise. What then? Shall we be angry at our propensity to look behind them, and tear it from our nature under vows to reach a stainless intellect? We shall but emasculate the mind we wish to purify: for what is the nerve of its vigour but the very Wonder which is for ever seeking an unattainable rest? If we incessantly press into nature, it is in hope of finding what is beyond nature: and all that we have learned of the finite world indirectly comes from our affinity with the embracing Infinite. It would be strange if the Causal appetency, which no disappointment wears out, should be at once our greatest strength and our most fatal illusion. It is admitted to be "irresistible:" it is admitted to carry the belief of personality: but these features, which induced Herschel to yield to it and trust in it, are reasons with Du Bois-Reymond for resisting and despising it. I need hardly say that, when he calls its language "figurative" and its conception a "personification," he oracularly assumes the very point at issue. To "personify" is to invest with personality that which has it not: and to tell any one with Herschel's belief that he does this, is only to contradict him. So again, if you know that there are two things of different type, living power and dead power, and then transfer to the second the marks of the first, your language is "figurative:" but if to you the types are identical, the second coinciding with the first, you speak with literal exactitude; and to charge you with rhetoric is only to beg the question in dispute. Probably the writer was the less conscious of any dogmatism here, from his thoughts already running upon the stock example

of belief in the Pagan gods of "rock and air and sea,"—fairly enough adducible as a departed superstition. But the dying-out of Polytheism is misconceived if it be regarded as an expulsion of every Conscious Presence from venerated haunts, and the substitution of a dead for a living world. It was a fusion, not an extinction, of Will: as the little cantons of nature, once under independent guardians, melted into ever wider provinces, and clans of men clustered into confederated nations, the detected harmony of the kosmos and the felt unity of humanity carried with them the enthronement of a single Divine Mind in place of the vanished local gods. It is not that other and other powers have been discovered, but that fewer and fewer have been needed, till the plurality is lost in One Supreme. And as, with the widening scope of the natural order, the many wills lapsed into one, so, among monotheists, did the many motives of that One, once so freely attributed, more and more merge themselves in the recognition of an all-comprehending scheme, whose thoughts were not acts but laws, and whose purpose flowed into the inlets of individual life from an ocean of universal relations. By this surrender of providences *in exiguis* we drop the quest of design in events taken one by one, and learn to speak of the power which produces them, and to divide it into lots, not according to their supposed aims, but according to their visible kinds: and thus it is that by suspending the idea of an end in view, the full-bodied notion of Will is attenuated to that of Force. How imperfectly, even then, the life is driven out of it, may be seen from Du Bois-Reymond's expostulation with it. And the suspended idea only flits away to settle upon a higher point. Instead of having discovered that *purpose is not*

there, we have simply learned that purpose takes in more; and the little pulses of separate volition are lost in the mighty movements of Eternal Thought.

In the remarkable passage which I have quoted, and in the argument of which it forms a part, Du Bois-Reymond puts Matter and Force on the same footing, and discharges the former as well as the latter from the realm of reality, by reducing it also to an empty abstraction. He is led to this position by that just logical appreciation which gives to his writings, as to those of Helmholtz, a high philosophical rank, in addition to their value as models of scientific exposition and research. The equipoise, true enough, is perfect, in respect to validity, between the ideas of Matter and of Power; and the only question is, whether both are to be dismissed as illusions, or both retained as intuitive data of thought, the conditions of all construed experience. To reject them both is practically impossible, though logically necessary if you part with either. To retain them both is simply to accept the fundamental relation of object and subject under its two constitutive functions, instead of treating our only modes of knowing as snares of ignorance. The existence of a Universal Will and the existence of Matter stand upon exactly the same basis—of certainty if you trust, of uncertainty if you distrust, the *principia* of your own reason. For my part, I cannot hesitate. Shall I be deterred by the reproach of "anthropomorphism"? If I am to see a ruling Power in the world, is it folly to prefer a man-like to a brute-like power, a seeing to a blind? The similitude to man means no more and goes no further than the supremacy of intellectual insight and moral ends over every inferior alternative: and how it can be contemptible and childish to derive everything from the highest known order of power rather than the lowest, and

to converse with Nature as embodied Thought, instead of taking it as a dynamic engine, it is difficult to understand. Is it absurd to suppose mind transcending the human? or, if we do so, to make our own Reason the analogical base for intellect of wider sweep? How is it possible to look along any line of light traced by past research, and, estimating the contents which it reveals, and leaves still unrevealed, to remember that along all radii to which we may turn, a similar infinitude presents itself to any faculty that seeks it, and yet to conceive that this mass of truth to be known has only our weak intelligence to know it? And if two natures know the same thing, how can they be other than like? Nay, Du Bois-Reymond himself takes up the magnificent fancy of Laplace, of a "mind cognizant of all forces operating in nature at a given moment, and all mutual relations among the beings composing it. Such a mind, if in other respects capacious enough to subject these data to analysis, would comprise in the same formula the movements of the greatest masses in the universe, and of the lightest atom. Nothing would be uncertain to him; and to his glance future and past would alike be present. The human understanding presents, in the perfection to which it has brought astronomy, a feeble image of such a mind."* Here is reproduced the very thought which, in his ignorance of differential equations, Plato expressed by saying that God was the supreme Geometer; simply taking to the summit-level the analogy which Laplace leaves floating at some indefinite height above the human. Is the conception, then, vitiated because it is "anthropomorphic"? Let Du Bois-Reymond answer: "Wir gleichen diesem Geist, denn wir begreifen ihn."† If to have the

* Ueber die Grenzen des Naturerkennens, p. 6.

† Ibid. p. 10.

idea of a diviner nature is to resemble him, and if resemblance must be reciprocal, what can be more futile than the reproach that men attribute to God what is highest in humanity ?

It may be doubted, indeed, whether the analogy might not be pressed further, without overstraining its truth. If the collective energies of the universe are identified with Divine Will, and the system is thus animate with an eternal consciousness as its moulding life, the conception we frame of its history will conform itself to our experience of intellectual volition. Its course is ever from the indeterminate to the determinate ; and as the passage is made by rational preference among possibilities, *thought* has its intensity at the outset, and *action* in the sequel. It is in origination, in disposing of new conditions, in setting up order by differentiation, that the mind exercises its highest function. When the product has been obtained, and a definite method of procedure established, the strain upon us is relaxed, habit relieves the constant demand for creation, and at length the rules of a practised art almost execute themselves. As the intensely voluntary thus works itself off into the automatic, thought, liberated from this reclaimed and settled province, breaks into new regions, and ascends to ever higher problems : its supreme life being beyond the conquered and legislated realm, while a lower consciousness, if any at all, suffices for the maintenance of its ordered mechanism. Yet all the while it is one and the same mind that, under different modes of activity, thinks the fresh thoughts and carries on the old usages. Does anything forbid us to conceive similarly of the kosmical development ; that it started from the freedom of indefinite possibilities and the ubiquity of universal consciousness ; that, as intellectual exclusions narrowed the field, and

traced the definite lines of admitted movement, the tension of purpose, less needed on these, left them as the habits of the universe, and operated rather for higher and ever higher ends not yet provided for; that the more mechanical, therefore, a natural law may be, the further is it from its source; and that the inorganic and unconscious portion of the world, instead of being the potentiality of the organic and conscious, is rather its residual precipitate, formed as the Indwelling Mind of all concentrates an intenser aim on the upper margin of the ordered whole, and especially on the inner life of natures that can resemble him? I am aware that this speculation inverts the order of the received kosmogonies. But, in advancing it, I only follow in the track of a veteran physiologist and philosopher, whose command of all the materials for judgment is beyond question,—the author of “*Psychophysik*.” Fechner insists that protoplasm and zoophyte structure, instead of being the inchoate matter of organization, is the cast-off residuum of all previous differentiation, stopping short of the separation of animal from plant and of sex from sex, and no more capable of further development than is inorganic matter, without powers beyond its own, of producing organization.* And, far from admitting that the primordial periods had few organisms, which time increased in number, he contends that the earth was formerly more rich in organisms than now, and that the inorganic realm has grown at the expense of the organic.†

The resolution of all power into Will is met by the thorough-going objection, that Mind is not energy at all, and can never stir a particle of matter. “Were it possible,”

* Einige Ideen zur Schöpfungs-und Entwicklungsgeschichte der Organismen, p. 73.

† Ibid. pp. 77, 78.

says Lange, "for a single cerebral atom to be moved by 'thought' so much as the millionth of a millimetre out of the path due to it by the laws of mechanics, the whole 'formula of the universe' (*i.e.* as imagined by Laplace) would become inapplicable and senseless."* "Suppose," he adds, "two worlds, both occupied by men and their doings, with the same course of history, with the same modes of expression by gesture, the same sounds of voice, for him who could *hear* them—*i.e.* not simply have their vibrations conveyed through the auditory nerve to the brain, but be self-conscious of them. The two worlds are therefore to be absolutely alike, with only this difference: that in the one the whole mechanism runs down like that of an automaton, without anything being felt or thought, whilst the other is just *our* world; then would the formula for these two worlds be completely the same. To the eye of exact research they would be indistinguishable."†

So much the worse, are we not tempted to say, for "exact research"? If, with all its keenness and precision, it misses half the universe, and identifies diametrical opposites, it will be a calamity rather for it than for us, that its "formula" should prove less applicable than had been supposed. The extension to man, in an exaggerated form, of Descartes' doctrine of animal automatism marks, perhaps, the lowest point which the falling barometer of philosophy has reached. By him it was propounded for the express purpose of finishing off the mechanical modes of action, even when strained to their maximum, short of the human characteristics; and of opening in these a second and sharply contrasted world, containing another hemisphere of phenomena, with their own lines of causality and

* Geschichte des Materialismus, ii. p. 155.

† Ibid. ii. p. 156.

relations of affinity. Though by his absolute separation of matter and mind he cut the problem of the world in two, he at least embraced the whole of it, and attempted to solve it by a double formula. But his modern interpreters do not see why one half of his theory should not be stretched to do the work of the whole: they have only to ignore his unmechanical part of the world and leave it out in the cold, and in place of his contrast they will get an identity. For his maxims,—Movement is the cause of movement, Thought of thought, but neither of the other,—they substitute the rule, that Movement is the cause of both, but Thought of neither: so that there is no longer any counterpart to the mechanism of nature, or any work done beyond it; and whatever puffs of thought and screeches of feeling there may be, it is only that the engine is blowing off its steam: nothing comes of it, and it may be treated as waste. This theory is founded on the analysis of reflex action in the nervous apparatus, in which the sensory conductor having delivered its stimulus in the ganglion, the motory takes up the sequence and contracts the muscles requisite for action in response. If the brain be kept from interfering, the circuit is completed in unconsciousness; and its series, though determining the subject to all sorts of clever and congruous movements, is composed of molecular changes unattended by feeling or design. When the scene is transferred to the brain or connected with it, the story, we are assured, is still the same, only with the added phenomenon of consciousness. In the one case, the subject acts: in the other, he acts and knows it. But this new fact is inoperative, and leads to nothing: were it absent, he would figure away as a molecular automaton all the same, and not a scene or a word would be altered in the five-act comedy of life. Comparing in this

view the reflex and the cerebral activities, we might say that the former resembles a clock with *one beat*—viz., movement only; the latter, a clock with *two beats*—viz., movement *plus* consciousness.

By the extent of this increment, the second does more work than the first. What, then, becomes of the difference? Where are we to look for it at its next stage? We are expressly told it has no next stage, and things will go on exactly as if it had not been there. Then a portion of work has perished, and the Conservation of energy is contradicted.

The only escape from this conclusion would be by denying that consciousness produced is "work done." This, however, is to admit that it is not an effect of molecular forces; to exempt it altogether from the range of physical law; and to throw it into an independent world of its own, beyond the jurisdiction of the natural philosopher. Such a position would be an unconditional relapse into the two-armed embrace of Descartes, from which the whole doctrine is a struggle to escape.

It is said that if thought can move a single molecule, the law of causality is at an end. Why is it not equally at an end if, conversely, molecular movement can wake a single thought? Either way, causality alike steps out of the material series, and crosses over to the other, now last, now first. And only on the assumption that, being a monopoly of Physics, it cannot do this, has the objection any sense.

This doctrine, that the most important elements of life,—all that constitute experience, and embody themselves in language, art, religion,—are so much *surplusage*,—that the mental phenomena are collectively a *cul-de-sac*, leading no-whither,—comes with a singular irony from men who by

force of intellect, knowledge, and character, are in many ways changing the conceptions of their time, and whose most signal triumph it will be to convince us that, if they never felt or thought at all, or stirred emotion and idea in us, it would make no difference to our history, and the senseless pantomime of our life would fit into the same niche in the world's "formula." Such paradoxical triumphs are occasionally won by planting the old nightmare of necessity closely on our breast. But not for long: and the first of us that, feeling cold, spreads his hands before the fire, or, struck with grief, wrings them over the lifeless features of a friend, will here break the spell, and restore the faith that to be conscious, to think, to love, is to have power.

But then, it is said, this mental power, even if we concede it, is found only in connection with definite material conditions; in the absence of which, as in the structure of plants, we have no grounds for admitting any conscious life.

"What can you say then to the student of nature if, before he allows a Psychical principle to the universe, he asks to be shown, somewhere within it, embedded in neurine and fed with warm arterial blood under proper pressure, a convolution of ganglionic globules and nerve-tubes proportioned in size to the faculties of such a Mind?"*

"What can we say?" I say, first of all, that this demand for a Divine brain and nerves and arteries comes strangely from those who reproach the Theist with "anthropomorphism." In order to believe in God, they must be assured that the plates in "Quain's Anatomy" truly represent him. If it be a disgrace to religion to take the human as measure of the Divine, what place in the scale

* Du Bois-Reymond, Ueber die Grenzen des Naturerkennens, p. 37.

of honour can we assign to this stipulation? Next, I ask my questioner, whether he suspends belief in his friends' mental powers till he has made sure of the contents of their crania? and whether, in the case of ages beyond reach, there are no other adequate vestiges of intellectual and moral life in which he places a ready trust? *Immediate* knowledge of mind other than his own he can never have: its existence in other cases is gathered from the signs of its activity, whether in personal lineaments or in products stamped with thought: and to stop this process of inference with the discovery of *human* beings, is altogether arbitrary, till it is shown that the grounds for extending it are inadequate. Further, I would submit that, in dealing with the problem of the Universal Mind, this demand for organic centralization is strangely inappropriate. It is when mental power has to be localized, bounded, lent out to individual natures and assigned to a scene of definite relations, that a focus must be found for it and a molecular structure with determinate periphery be built for its lodgment. And were Du Bois-Reymond himself ever to alight on the portentous cerebrum which he imagines, I greatly doubt whether he would fulfil his promise and turn Theist at the sight: that he had found the Cause of causes would be the last inference it would occur to him to draw: rather would he look round for some monstrous *creature*, some kosmic megatherium, born to float and pasture on the fields of space. The great "energies" which we recognize as modes of the Universal Power are not central but ubiquitous: gravitation reports itself wherever there is a particle of matter; heat and light spread with the ether whose undulations they are; and electricity, at one moment gathered into poles, at another sweeps in the aurora over half the heavens. But if still

my questioner cannot dispense with some visible structure as the organ of the Ever-living Mind, I will ask him, in his conception of the brain, to take into account these words of Cauchy's:—

"Ampère has shown . . . that the molecules of different bodies may be regarded as composed each of several atoms, the dimensions of which are infinitely small relatively to their separating distances. If then we could see the constituent molecules of the different bodies brought under our notice, they would present to our view sorts of constellations; and in passing from the infinitely great to the infinitely small, we should find, in the ultimate particles of matter, as in the immensity of the heavens, central points of action distributed in presence of each other."*

If then the invisible molecular structure and movement do but repeat in little those of the heavens, what hinders us from inverting the analogy, and saying that the ordered heavens repeat the rhythm of the cerebral particles? You need an embodied mind? Lift up your eyes, and look upon the arch of night as the brow of the Eternal, its constellations as the molecules of the universal consciousness, its space as their possibility of change, and the ethereal waves as the afferents and efferents of Omniscient Thought. Even in the human nerves, the solid lines are but conductors, and the granules but media of movement; and science is ever on the search for some subtler essence that is thus sheathed and transmitted. In the kosmos, then, think of that essence as unsheathed and omnipresent, with light for its messenger and space for its scope of perception, and your material requisition is not wholly a dream.

Quite in the sense of Du Bois-Reymond's objection was the saying of Laplace, that in scanning the whole heaven with the telescope he found no God; which again has its

* Cited from Moigno's *Cosmos*, tom. ii. p. 374, by Fechner: *Atom-enlehre*, xxvi. p. 232.

parallel in Lawrence's remark that the scalpel, in opening the brain, came upon no soul.* Both are unquestionably true, and it is precisely the truth of the second which vitiates the intended inference from the first. Had the scalpel alighted on some perceptible $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$, we might have required of the telescope to do the same ; and, on its bringing in a dumb report, have concluded that there was only mechanism there. But, in spite of the knife's failure, we positively know that conscious thought and will were present, yet no more visible, yesterday : and so, that the telescope misses all but the bodies of the universe and their light, avails nothing to prove the absence of a Living Mind through all. If you take the wrong instruments, such quæsitæ may well evade you. The test-tube will not detect an insincerity, or the microscope analyze a grief. The organism of nature, like that of the brain, lies open, in its external features, to the scrutiny of science : but, on the inner side, the life of both is reserved for other modes of apprehension, of which the base is self-consciousness and the crown is religion.

The contempt or sorrow with which the claim of *design* is struck out from the interpretation of the world, results in like manner from a false start in construing the dynamic idea. We are supposed to have made acquaintance, in the laboratory, the botanic garden, the aquarium, and among the stars, with a set of blind forces, to which a happy hit and a stupid blunder are indifferent and possible, alike ; and then, by way of supplement to these, to introduce into the thus prepared scene the action of intellectual purpose. The former is treated as the sphere of determinate caus-

* Both these dicta I quote from memory, without at the moment being able to verify the citations. An equivalent passage to the latter occurs in the "Lectures on Physiology, Zoology, and the Natural History of Man," p. 8, 1819.

ality ; the latter, of teleological government. It is plain that, under these conditions, nothing is left to the second agency except the residue unexplained by the first ; nor does anything suit its character except the fitnesses which (*inter alia*) are not impossible to the other also. Unless, therefore, it invades and interrupts the series otherwise inevitable, it is liable to be deposed and "mediatized" by advancing knowledge ; its troop of anomalies filing off by degrees into the drilled army of necessity ; and the adaptations it had claimed being traced to the forces which cannot think. With these logical preconceptions, it is no wonder that the naturalist directs a professional enmity against the doctrine of design, and meets it as the opponent he is for ever beating back : and as he is certainly not only in his right, but at his duty, in pushing to the utmost his researches into the physical history of the forms and phenomena he studies, it is a venial impatience with which he resents attempts to stop him by "supernatural phantoms" across his path. If he can display the mechanism by which the heliotrope turns to the sun, or the chemistry by which in a few hours the turbot assumes the colour of the ground over which it swims, or tell the whole story which, beginning with a jelly-point tingling in the sunshine, ends with the completed human eye, let his work have all sympathy and honour. But if he imagines that he is displacing Thought from nature by discovering causality, he is the subject of the very same illusion which would cry him down and arrest his course. The cases do but present the two sides of one superstition.

The dispute between acting Force and intending Mind is as unmeaning as the quarrel of a man with his own image. The two are identical,—expressions, now in all dimensions, now in some, of the same nature. Causal power other than Will being an unknown quantity, nay,

absolutely out of the sphere of thought, teleology and causality are incorporated in one; and mechanical necessity, instead of being the negation of purpose, is its persistence,—the declining, no doubt, of this or that possible diversion to minor ends, but in subservience to the stability of a more comprehensive order. The inexorability of nature is but the faithfulness of God, the maintenance of those unswerving habits in the universe, without which it could train no mind and school no character: and that it is hard and unbending to us does not prevent its being fluid to Him. To affirm *purpose*, therefore, in the adjustments of the world, is not to set up a rival principle outside their producing force, but to plant, or rather to leave, an integrating thought within it. And, conversely, to trace those adjustments to their “physical causes,” is not to withdraw them from their ideal origin, but only to detect the method of carrying the inner meaning to its realization. Who will venture to say, what nevertheless is constantly imagined, that to find how a change comes about is to prove that it was never contemplated? If it *were* contemplated, it would have to be executed *somehow*; if, the moment you read the machinery provided for this purpose, the purpose itself is quenched from your view, is this the discovery or the loss of a reality?

This treatment of determinate causation as incompatible with conscious aims is the more curious, as proceeding from a school which, as necessarian, is constantly labouring to show the co-existence of the two in human nature. If man is only a sample of the universal determinism, yet forms purposes, contrives for their accomplishment, and executes them, definite causality and prospective thought can work together, and the field which is occupied by the one is not pre-occupied against the other.

The frequent plea, “See, there is no mind here, for all is

necessary causation," tacitly concedes that, in order to have mind, there must be exemption from necessity; and can be consistently urged only by one who attributes this exemption to the human will. Is the argument conclusive from his point of view? It would be so, were it possible to prove his premiss, viz., the universality in the kosmos of necessary causation. But this is plainly out of the question, because his amplest science carries the induction, such as it is, only skin-deep into the universe; because he would have to show that the present fixity was not determined by a past exercise of will; because Mind, in proportion as it is orderly and exact in its methods, may assume the semblance of necessity, and be the less suspected that its freedom works by rule. He knows how he himself, though conscious of self-disposal as well as of subjection to nature, presents to the determinist the aspect of a machine; and how can he be secure against a similar illusion in his interpretation of the world? What is to prevent the same combination of free and necessary causality which he finds in himself from existing also beyond? Nay, if there were only mind-excluding force in nature, how could there arise a force-resisting mind in him? He could not carry in himself new causal beginnings, if in the kosmos whence he comes the lines of possibility were definitely closed.

I revert, then, after weighing these objections, to my "unwiderstehlicher Hang zur Personification," and persist in regarding that which the natural philosopher calls *force*, and Professor Tyndall raises to an immanent *life*, as Causal Will, manifesting itself, not in interference with an established order, but in producing it. As it builds and weaves and quickens all matter, and could not otherwise work before us at all, the structures and growths of the material world are its seat, and their phenomena its witnesses: so that the very story,—of saline crystals, and ice-stars, and

fern-fronds, and human birth,—which Professor Tyndall tells in order to exclude it, is to me a continuous report of its agency and laws. He asks, what else is there here than matter? I answer, the *movements* of matter, with their disposing and “formative power,” the attracting and repelling energies, which, *dealing with* molecules and cells, *are not* molecules and cells. “Mens agitat molem.” Whoever finds this incredible, will soon have to make friends with some abstraction which is but a ghastly mimicry of it; for *some* conception over and above that of “pure matter,” is indispensable to the accurate representation of the simplest facts. If in the typical “oak-tree” the vitality suddenly ceased, the “matter” of it would at the next moment still be there, as certainly as that of a clock which had run down: it would weigh the same as before, and so stand the admitted test of the indestructibility of matter. Yet *something* is gone which was previously there, and that something has to be described otherwise than in terms of “matter.” The droll “hypothesis” which my critic amuses himself with conjecturally attributing to me, “of a vegetative soul,” wedded to the tree at a definite date, and quitting it when its term was up, certainly does not help us; and is set up on my behalf, I presume, simply from the facility of knocking it down. But are we any better served by the “alternative” conception of a “formative power,” long latent and “potential,” *i.e. not* forming anything, but only *going to do so*? I see that the conception contradicts Büchner’s dictum, “A power not expressing itself has no existence;” yet am at a loss to know how, during its latency, its presence is ascertained, and to exercise with regard to it “that *Vorstellungs-fähigkeit* with which, in my efforts to think clearly, I can never dispense.” Whilst it lies in wait behind the scenes,—before the time for the deposit of the crystal or the germination of the acorn,—

where is it? behind what molecules does it hide? through what space is it invisibly present? What shape has it, enabling it to lay its building particles and to agglutinate cells? How does it know the right moment of temperature for stepping on to the stage, and declaring itself without further reserve? In short, all the questions addressed to me respecting the "formative soul" invented for me, I refer back to be answered on behalf of my critic's "potential power." "Potentiality" is an intelligible fact in a being consciously able to act or to refrain. But when the idea is carried into a system of necessitated phenomena, it means nothing in *them*, but something in *us*, as their observers—viz., that we conditionally anticipate a future change, foreseeing a distant term of a series which would be certain, provided the nearer ones were not obscure. To plant this subjective suspense out into the field of nature to do objective work there, now alighting visibly upon the earth, and then hidden again in "an ambrosial cloud," is a sort of intellectual illusion which modern logic might have been expected to cast out.

In truth, the nearer I approach the Power which Professor Tyndall pursues through nature with so subtle and brilliant a chase, and the more I try, by combining the predicates which he gives and withholds, to think it out into the clear, the less distinct does this "ideal somewhat" become, not simply to the imagination, but to intellectual apprehension. A power which is not Mind, yet may be "potential" and exist when and where it makes no sign; which is "immanent" in matter, yet *is* matter; which "is manifested in the universe," yet is not "a Cause," therefore has no effects; presents to me, I must confess, not an overshadowing mystery, but an assemblage of contradictions. I have always supposed that "Power" was a relative word, and that the correlative was found in the "work done:"

take away the latter by denying the causation, and the term drops into five letters which might as well be arranged in any other order.

Yet elsewhere this negative language is balanced by such large affirmative suggestions that I almost cease to feel the interval between my critic's thought and my own. Of the inorganic, the vegetable, and the animal realms, he says—

"From this point of view all three worlds would constitute a unity, in which I picture life as immanent everywhere. Nor am I anxious to shut out the idea that the life here spoken of may be but a subordinate part and function of a higher life, as the living, moving blood is subordinate to the living man. I resist no such idea, as long as it is not dogmatically imposed. Left for the human mind freely to operate upon, the idea has ethical vitality; but stiffened into a dogma, the inner force disappears, and the outward yoke of a usurping hierarchy takes its place."*

Bidding God-speed to this sudden flank-attack upon usurping hierarchies and dogmas, I pursue only the main line of march in the free "idea." Whither does it lead me? It shows me the three provinces which make up our kosmos blended into one organism by an all-pervading life, which conducts all their processes, from the flow of the river to the dynamics of the human brain. This alone brings me to a pause of solemn wonder,—a single power through the whole, and that a living one! But there is more behind. This power, co-extensive though it is with nature, is not all: beyond her level we are to think of a "higher life," to which her laws and history do but give functional expression. May we then really think out this "idea" of a life "higher" than what is supreme in the world,—higher, therefore, than the human? But scale of height above that point we do not possess, except in gradation of intel-

* *Fortnightly Review*, November, 1875, p. 596.

lectual and moral sublimity; and either that Ideal Life must cease to live, or must come before our thought as transcendent Mind and Will, on a scale comprehending as well as permeating the universe. With any guide who brings me hither I sit down with joy and rest. It is the mountain-top, which shows all things in larger relations and through a more lustrous air; and every feature,—the great build of the world close at hand; the thinning of the everlasting snows, as they stoop and melt towards human life; the opening of sweet valleys below the earlier and wilder pines; and the final plains, teeming in their silence with industry and thought,—is better understood than from level points of view, where the scope is narrowed or the calm is lost. But my guide seems less content than I to rest here, and deserts me, not, so far as I can trace him, to reach a brighter point, but rather to descend into the mists. To the “higher life,” transcending our highest, he dares not give the predicate “Mind,” or apply the pronoun of Personality.* On *what* scale, then, is it “higher”? If not on the intellectual and moral, then there is that in man which rises above it; for the power of attaining truth and goodness is ideally supreme. If Professor Tyndall can reveal to us something which is higher than Mind and Free Causality, by all means let us accept it at his hands and assign it to God. But in order to profess this, and therefore to deprecate as an “anthropomorphism,” the ascription of mind to Him, one would have, I think, to be one’s self something *more than man*. Only such a one could cast a look above the level of Reason, to see whether it was overtopped: and so, this fashionable reproach against religion is virtually an arrogating of a superhuman position. As we cannot overfly our own zone, no beat of our wings availing to lift us out of the atmosphere they press, surely,

* *Fortnightly Review*, November, 1875, p. 596.

if that "higher life" speaks to us in idea at all, it can only be as Perfect Reason and Righteous Will. Those who find this type of conception not good enough for them,—do they succeed in struggling upwards to a better? Rather, I should fear, does a persistent gravitation gain upon them, till they droop and sink into the alternative faith of blind force which leaves their own rank supreme.

Professor Tyndall sets the belief in "unbroken causal connection" and the "theologic conception" over against each other as "rivals;" and says that an hour's reasoning will give the first the victory.* The victory is impossible, because the rivalry is unreal. Why should not a Mind of illimitable resources,—such as "the theologic conception" enthrone in the universe,—conduct and maintain "unbroken causal connection"? Is not such connection congenial with the relations of thought and the harmony of intellectual life? Do not you, the student of nature, yourself admire it? Is it not the theme of your constant praise? Do you not speak with contemptuous aversion of alleged deviations from the steadfast tracks of order? and would you not yourself maintain those tracks, if you were at the head of things? To this attitude you are impelled by a just jealousy for the coherent beauty and worth of science as a whole. If, then, these unswerving lines so dignify the investigating intellect which regressively traces them up, how can it be out of character with the Mind of minds to think them progressively forth?

In the discussion which here reaches its close, my object has been simply defensive,—to repel the pretension of speculative materialism to supersede "the theological conception," by tracing that pretension to an imperfect appreciation of the ultimate logic of science. But the idea of Divine Causality which is thus saved, though an essential

* *Fortnightly Review*, November, 1875, p. 596.

condition, is not the chief strength of religion ; giving perhaps its measure in breadth, but not in depth. Were the physical aspects of the world alone open to us, we should doubtless gain, by reading a divineness between the lines, for beauty a new meaning, for poetry a fuller music, for art a greater elevation ; but hardly a better balance of the affections or more fidelity of will. It is not till we cross the chasm which stops the scientific continuity, not till we make a new beginning on the further side, that the "idea of a higher life," emerging now in a far different field, can claim its "ethical value." The *self-conscious* hemisphere of inner experience,—which natural philosophy leaves in the dark,—*this* it is which turns to its Divine Source ; and finds, not in any vacant "mystery," but in the living sympathy of a supreme Perfection, "the lifting power of an ideal element in human life." Only by converse with our own minds can we—to use the words of Smith of Cambridge—"steal from them their secrets," and "climb up to the contemplation of the Deity." * It is but too natural that this inner side of knowledge, this *melior pars nostri*, should be unheeded by those who look on it as the mere accessory fringe of an automatic life, gracefully hanging from the texture, but without a thread of connection beyond ; and that with them the word "subjective" should be tantamount to "groundless." They confess the "mystery" of this interior experience only to fly from it and refuse its light. Yet here it is that at last light and vision lapse into one, and supply the ἡλιοειδέστατον τῶν ὀργάνων † for the apprehension of the first truths of physical and the last of hyper-physical knowledge. Till we accept the "*faiths*" which our faculties postulate, we can never *know*

* Discourse iii. p. 66, ap. Tulloch's Rational Theology, vol. ii. p. 158.

† Plato de Rep. 508, A.

even the sensible world ; and when we accept them, we shall know much more. Short of this firm trust in the bases whereon our nature is appointed to stand,—a trust which, if destroyed by a half-philosophy, must be restored by a whole one,—the grandest “ideas” flung out to play with and turn about in the kaleidoscope of possibilities, or work up as material of poetry and rhetoric, can no more “lift” a human will than the gossamer pluck up the oak on which it swings. Unless your “ideal” reveals the real, it has no power, and its “ethic value” is that of a dissolving image or a passing sigh. You must “*believe*,” ere you can “remove mountains :” if you only fancy, they sit as a nightmare on your breast. And if man does nothing well, till he ceases to have his vision, and his vision rather has him and wields him for action or repose ; and if then he astonishes you with his triumphs over “nature” and her apparent real, is he the *only* being who thus rides out upon a thought, and makes the elements embody it ? Have not these elements already learned their obedience, and grown familiar with the intellectual mandate to which they yield ? A man truly possessed, ethically moulded by the pressures of reverence and love, you can never persuade that the beauty, the truth, the goodness which kindles him is but his private altar-lamp : it is an eternal, illimitable light, pervading and consecrating the universe. Unless it be so, it fires him no more : and, instead of utterly surrendering his will to it in trust and sacrifice, he begins to admire it as a little mimic star of his own,—a phosphorescence of matter set up by the chemistry of nature, not to see things by, but to glisten on the darkness of himself. It is vain to expatiate on the need of religion for our nature, and on the elevation of character which it can produce, and in the same breath bid it begone from the home of truth and seek

shelter in the tent of romance. If its power is noble, its essence is true. And what that essence comprises has been worked fairly out in the long experiment of Christianity on human nature; which has shown that, in its purest and strongest phase, religion is a variety and last sublimity of *personal affection* and living communion with an Infinitely Wise and Good and Holy. The expectation that anything will remain if this be dropped, and that by flinging the same sacred vestments of speech round the form of some empty abstraction you can save the continuity of piety, is an illusion which could never occur except to the outside observer. Look at the sacred poetry and recorded devotion of Christendom: how many lines of it would have any meaning left, if the conditions of conscious relationship and immediate converse between the human and the Divine Mind were withdrawn? And wherever the sense of these conditions has been enfeebled, through superficial "rationalism" or ethical self-confidence, "religious sterility" has followed. To its inner essence, thus tested by positive and negative experience, Religion will remain constant, taking little notice of either scientific forbearance or critical management; and, though left, perhaps, by temporary desertions to nourish its life in comparative silence and retirement, certain to be heard, when it emerges, still speaking in the same simple tones, and breathing the old affections of personal love, and trust, and aspiration.