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ORDINARY MEETING, MARCH 3, 1884.

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE A. S. AYRTON, IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the last Meeting were read and confirmed, and the following addition to the Library was announced :—

“Proceedings of the United States Geological and Geographical Survey.” (Ten volumes.) *From the Same.*

The following paper was then read by the Author :—

ON PESSIMISM, AND ITS MODERN CHAMPIONS.

By W. P. JAMES, Esq.

1. **T**HE present age is one of almost unbounded toleration. Especially is this the case in the world of literature. It is the fashion to speak with bated breath and formal courtesy of the most fantastic and extravagant creeds. Both sides of great questions are discussed in magazines, often with a total absence of earnestness, and with the cruel flippancy of the ready writer. The evil results of this idle spirit of curiosity are too patent to require notice. The mind accustomed to this stimulating process acquires the habit of playing with subjects which it is too indolent to take up seriously. Amongst our cultivated classes, it is possible that many readers are acquainted, in this superficial way, with Pessimism. They may have seen a favourable account of it, which was written, perhaps, in honest ignorance of its darker and more repulsive features. If such be the case, in common fairness, they cannot object to a further discussion of this extraordinary phase of nineteenth-century thought. Nor, unfortunately, does the question only concern the educated sections of our complex social fabric. It is astonishing, in these days, how speculative difficulties, which take their rise in the bleak and icy mountain-peaks of metaphysics, filter down to the lower strata of literature, and come to the surface again in the hateful productions of the atheistic propaganda. The object of this

paper will be fully attained if it should help one distracted soul to cling more firmly to the belief in the infinite goodness of the Maker of the world.

2. We shall now proceed to inquire (I.) What is Pessimism? (II.) What is the philosophical standpoint of its modern champions, Schopenhauer and von Hartmann, and, consequently, what authority may be claimed for their utterances? and (III.) What are some of the facts in the constitution of the world which have given rise to this literature of despair? As the various kinds of evil pass in review before us, it will be most convenient to state, at the same time, the reasonable answers that may be made, at any rate, to some of the difficulties which occur in this province of speculation.

(I.) *Definition of Pessimism.*—3. Pessimism, strictly speaking, is intended to be the exact antithesis to Optimism. Both words are now used with a certain amount of latitude. An Optimist ought to mean one who believes that the world (by which is meant, in this connexion, the universe, the sum total of created things) is the best of all possible worlds. It is now extended to include any one who holds that the good, on the whole, predominates over the evil. Similarly, a Pessimist should mean one who believes the world to be the worst of all possible worlds, but is also used of one who considers that the balance, on the whole, is on the side of evil. We need not trouble ourselves about merely literary outbursts of spleen or melancholy, but confine our attention to thinkers who bring forward more or less weighty arguments. As Pessimism is a reaction or protest against Optimism, it is as well to begin with a definite account of the latter doctrine. Optimism may be said to have been, until lately, the prevailing creed among philosophers of very different schools. Thinkers, for instance, so remote from each other as Aristotle, Augustine, and Spinoza, can all be classed as Optimists; but the first formal treatise on the subject is due to Leibnitz (born 1646 A.D., died 1716), and is entitled *Theodicæa; or, a Vindication of God with reference to the Problem of Evil*. In this work, the author asserts that the world (*i.e.*, universe), “as the work of God, must be the best of all possible worlds,” where by *possible* he means *practicable* or *feasible*. A better universe might be *conceived*, he would say, but could not be *realised*, under the conditions of actual existence.* His proof is an *à priori* one, drawn from

* Ueberweg's *History of Philosophy* (translated by Morris. Ed. 1880.), vol. ii. p. 112. The writer begs to acknowledge, once for all, his obligations to this admirable book, which combines impartiality and accuracy with the utmost brevity attainable in such matters.

the attributes of God; for, as God's wisdom is infinite, He must have *foreseen* the best possible world; as His goodness is infinite, He must have *wished* to bring it into existence; and, as His power is infinite, He must have *been able* to do so. In dealing with the existence of evils, Leibnitz divides them into three classes, which he calls metaphysical, physical, and moral. Metaphysical evils arise from the limitations which are the conditions of all finite existence, such as ignorance, weakness, &c.; these he looks upon as inevitable. Physical evils he regards as useful, either as merciful punishments for sin, or as instruments of moral training and discipline. Moral evils he considers as inseparable from the freedom of a self-determining will. To appreciate the range of Leibnitz's reasoning, it must be remembered that he embraces the whole universe. The sufferings and sorrows of our small planet might, from his point of view, be conceived of as a slight discord in the general harmony of a vast scheme, which requires for its full development the countless worlds which fill the immeasurable depths of space.

(II.) *Stand-point of Schopenhauer and von Hartmann.*—4. It would not be easy to find a flaw in Leibnitz's reasoning, if we once grant his postulate, *i.e.*, the existence of a Personal God with the assigned attributes,—in other words, if we are Theists. The Theist may criticise his train of thought as an attempt to pass beyond the limits of our finite intelligence, but he can hardly help assenting to its conclusions as in accordance with their premises. But the modern champions of Pessimism are not Theists: they do not admit the Personality of a Deity; they do not ascribe goodness to the strange Power, or rather Impotence, which they substitute for the Living God. It thus becomes necessary to state, with as much precision as is attainable, the central ideas of the philosophy of which Pessimism is only one of the consequences.

Schopenhauer (born 1788, died 1860), an able, though crotchety, thinker, ascribes the origin of the phenomenal world around us to the mysterious working of what he calls the Will. But he uses this word in an arbitrary sense, peculiar to himself. By Will we generally understand the determinations of a conscious agent; but Schopenhauer extends it not merely to the actions of the lower animals, but to the unconscious life of plants, and even to the forces of the inorganic world. Thus he looks upon such attributes of matter as gravity, impenetrability, rigidity, fluidity, elasticity, and such forces as electricity, magnetism, and chemical action, as the lowest stage of the clothing of the Will in

objective forms. The Will is more fully realised in plants and animals up to man, in whom it attains to consciousness of itself. As far as the word Will has any meaning, when applied to matter, it must be looked upon as equivalent to what earlier writers have called *Anima Mundi*, or the energising Soul of the World; but no reason can be given why the single attribute of Volition should be chosen to the entire exclusion of Intelligence and Power. With this hazy Pantheism Schopenhauer incorporated Buddhistic notions about the evils of active life, and the blessedness of absolute repose. Accordingly, as the desire to live on the part of the Universal Will has only produced misery and failure, the highest duty of man is the free renunciation and annihilation of his own Individual Will to live. It is rather singular that Schopenhauer combines with his half-Eastern philosophy the Platonic Theory of Ideas. Between the Universal Will and the individual objects stand the Ideas. These are intermediate stages in the process by which the Will becomes objective: "imperfectly expressed in numberless individuals, they exist as the eternal forms of things, not entering themselves into space and time, immovable, unchangeable, uncreated, eternal"* (a bit of pure Platonism).

Eduard von Hartmann is still alive, and may yet edify the world with fresh developments of doctrine. His system, also, is a kind of coarse Pantheism, influenced for the worse by the crude and arrogant Materialism which is the plague of this generation. He prefers to call it Monism, *i.e.*, a philosophy which denies the reality of separate individual beings, but affirms the existence of a Universal-One (in German, *All-Ein*), which is at first unconscious in the world of matter, but becomes partaker of transitory consciousness in transitory individuals, and, as a result of the unsatisfactory nature of this experience, yearns to return to its former state of unconsciousness. This Universal-One is not a Person; it is not, as in Schopenhauer's system, the blind, irrational Will, but it is Will and the Idea combined. It seems that this extraordinary Entity is intensely miserable. We are not told how an Unconscious Being can be aware either of pain or pleasure. But let that pass. Transcendental philosophers must not be profanely cross-examined like other people. Nor are we told how the individual von Hartmann learned the terrible secret of the intense misery of the Absolute Existence. However, it appears that this wretched Being, in order to

* Ueberweg, vol. ii. p. 263.

relieve his pain, gave birth, in some unexplained way, to the Universe.* Our sympathy, it seems, is due to these pathetic efforts of the Infinite Sorrow to annihilate itself! But enough of this grotesque blasphemy, which it is to be hoped that the accomplished author will yet live to repudiate. Many of these outrageous paradoxes appear, to a disinterested observer, to arise more from a morbid thirst for notoriety than from a sober love for truth.

It will appear from these statements of the central ideas of the philosophical systems of Schopenhauer and von Hartmann, that they are both Pantheists of an unusually nebulous description. The mere knowledge of this fact is enough to indicate what authority is due to them on moral questions. Those thinkers have no especial claim on the attention of the world whose deepest speculations about Existence and Personality have resulted in a fantastic self-contradictory scheme, founded partly on baseless assumptions, partly on ascribing real existence to mental abstractions, and partly on the most perverse misinterpretation of facts. Those who attach importance to clearness of thought and to consecutive reasoning, naturally decline to be taught by a man who can confound together the literal and metaphorical meanings of the word Will, and, when he has thus formed an abstract conception, which corresponds to no objective Thing, can ascribe to it real existence, nay, more than that, can assert that it is the only real existence, that which underlies all apparent personal existence. This word-juggling may perhaps be useful as a mental discipline, but from every other point of view it is merely an intellectual curiosity. The same remarks apply to von Hartmann. To combat their views effectively it would be necessary to begin at the very centre and work outwards, to demonstrate the baselessness of any form of Pantheism, and to show how, in its essence, it is always built up upon confusion of thought, upon the fallacy of investing mental abstractions with real existence,† whether it is Neo-platonism,

* Those who care to see how far the bad taste of the original surgical metaphor employed by von Hartmann is softened down in the text may consult Barlow's *Ultimatum of Pessimism*, p. 81, note. The influence of Buddhism is here very evident: for Gautama is said to have foregone Nirwana, and suffered ineffably in successive births in order "to attain the Buddhahip, and thereby gain the power to free mankind from the misery of existence."—*Globe Encyclopædia*, sub voc. "Buddhism."

† Every form of Pantheism is guilty of the vicious process known in the technical language of Mental Science as *hypostatizing abstractions*. See Ueberweg's refutation of Spinoza's system, apparently so logical.—*Hist. of Phil.*, vol. ii. p. 60 *et seq.*

or the system of Spinoza, or that of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. Now, I do not conceive that such a task lies within the scope of this paper, and I shall accordingly pass on to the consideration of the facts in the Universe by which Pessimistic theories appear to be supported. In discussing them, I shall do so from a Theistic point of view, as I think it is a waste of time to be combating Pantheistic fancies and paradoxes at every turn. Assuming, therefore, the truth of Theism, we will now proceed to see how far the existence of Evil in the world may be reconciled with the Divine attributes.

(III.) *Problem of Evil.*—5. We admit at once that the Problem of Evil is a great difficulty. In its essence it is this: How could a God of infinite goodness allow Evil to begin in any form in a universe which He Himself called into being? Various answers have been given to this question, and probably always will be given. First, however, we may address ourselves to the actual facts which form the starting-point for discussion. We have seen above that Leibnitz divided evils into three classes,—metaphysical, physical, and moral. It is perhaps more usual now to consider the two heads of physical and moral as exhaustive, and to neglect his group of metaphysical evils.

6. Let us begin then with physical, such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, inundations, drought, carnivorous animals, parasites both animal and vegetable, and similar facts. Now, the first thing that strikes us in reflecting upon them is that they form a class which it is the tendency of advancing knowledge to bring more and more under the dominion of law, and so of benevolent and harmonious order. We see at a glance, that this is true about thunder and lightning. Primitive races of men still regard these phenomena with unmixed terror, and not without reason. We, on the contrary, have learned by slow degrees that these terrible disturbances of the atmosphere are probably inevitable incidents in the vast circulation of water and air which is in incessant activity on the outside of our globe. To that circulation we owe our very existence, as it provides us with the indispensable fresh water by evaporation from the sea-surfaces and subsequent distribution by winds. In this elaborate and sensitive mechanism with its perpetual oscillations of barometric pressure, of temperature, and of moisture, a mechanism, the ultimate motive-power of which is the sun, storms and tempests, tornadoes and hurricanes, the roll of thunder and the flash of the lightning are moments of intense energy, which are quite lost sight of when we consider the normal smoothness and efficiency with which its vast operations are

conducted. When we know more about electricity, we may see with greater clearness, perhaps, that it plays some indispensable part in the economy of the inorganic world.

Earthquakes and Volcanoes.—Earthquakes and volcanic eruptions are confessedly the most awful and destructive of the forces of nature that we know. We have all read of the shock to man's oldest associations when he feels the solid earth reel under his feet, of the danger from the very buildings which he had reared for convenience or protection, of the hopelessness of escape from almost instantaneous and far-reaching ruin. Of the immediate causes of these phenomena we are profoundly ignorant. Still, we have advanced a little on the road to understanding them since 1755, the date of the earthquake at Lisbon, which destroyed at least 60,000 lives. Voltaire, in most respects an Optimist, took that disaster as a text for a tirade against the doctrine of Leibnitz, in *Candide, ou Sur l'Optimisme* (published in 1757). I am afraid that the attack had then the best of it. Much, however, has happened since. The science of Geology has thrown a new light upon the earth's crust. Amidst doubtful theories, it has accumulated a vast array of solid facts as a basis for future speculation. It would teach us that earthquakes and volcanoes are connected together, and that both represent forces, or a force, that once acted with greater energy. The favourite hypothesis about the formation of the crust of the earth at the present day is that of Elie de Beaumont, which supposes our globe to be a cooling, and consequently a contracting body. By this process can be plausibly explained the ridging up of mountain-chains, and the consequent depressions, or ocean-beds, between the main lines of elevation. For some time, geologically speaking, the earth appears to have entered upon a period of comparative tranquillity. It may thus be said that earthquakes and volcanoes are gentle symptoms, or, for all we know, inevitable accompaniments of the same tremendous elevating forces which, by their past energetic action, rendered the world habitable at all. I assume that no one will dispute the assertion, that without the upheaval of mountain-chains and continental ridges the surface of the globe might have been reduced to a plain, level with the sea. Elevating forces, whether identical with the contraction of the outer skin of the globe, or not, have played a great part in preparing its surface for man's habitation. It must be admitted, then, that more may be said now than in Voltaire's day to reconcile even earthquakes with our partial comprehension of nature as a scheme of Perfect Wisdom and Perfect Love.

Nor should it be forgotten that, as far as man is concerned,

volcanoes give him ample warning; that their periods of activity are often interrupted by very long intervals of repose; and that the extreme fertility of the soil formed by volcanic dust has, as an attraction, always induced a dense population voluntarily to brave the dangers of an occasional outbreak.

7. *Carnivorous Animals*.—Let us now consider the case of carnivorous animals alleged to be inconsistent with the Divine Benevolence. A great deal of sickly sentimentalism has been expended upon this subject by writers very imperfectly acquainted with the facts. Disgusting pictures have been drawn of the “carnage” of Nature. Mill, with the passionate bitterness which he showed in his attacks upon Natural Religion, speaks of “the lower animals (meaning, apparently, all except man) as divided, with scarcely an exception, into devourers and devoured.” Now this is not the case. The vast majority of land-animals are vegetable-feeders. So probably are those which people fresh water, if we may draw inferences from the universal presence of a rich sub-aqueous vegetation. The sea, it is true, offers a difficulty, because of the difficulty of observation; but the analogy of Nature would lead us to believe that there, too, the vegetable-feeders are the most numerous. Of the immense number of molluscs, insects, as well as of mammals and birds that consume a vegetable diet, only a small proportion, probably, have their simple existence of animal enjoyment cut short by their carnivorous foes. How monstrous the assertion of Mill is will also appear from familiar instances of great aggregations of animals in free nature. Who has not heard of the immense herds of bison that once roamed the prairies of North America, of the innumerable flocks of pigeons that, in the same country, darken the skies for days in their migration, of the mighty hosts of vegetable-eating mammals in South Africa? These are all cases where animals neither devour others nor are devoured in their turn to any appreciable extent. I presume my opponent will not have recourse to the subterfuge of saying that the ox or the elephant massacres minute insects in the grass or plants he eats. In the first place, the fact is doubtful: blades of grass, as a rule, are not favourite habitats of insects, as any entomologist will tell us; and secondly, we must really neglect minute and microscopic life in an argument of such generality as this.

Paley was probably right in saying that the vast multitudes of vegetable-feeders lead a life of complete enjoyment. But their tendency to multiply is so great that there must be some check upon their numbers. In a state of nature, no better check can be found than that of carnivorous animals, a

mechanism which is self-adapting and elastic, consisting as it does of predatory creatures, that increase and decrease in number in exact proportion as their prey increases or decreases; in other words, just as they are wanted. •Who has ever heard of objectors suggesting any better plan, or, indeed, any alternative at all? Under the circumstances they might, perhaps, “protest a little less.”

Now, if the carnivorous animals are indispensable as Nature’s executioners, it is as well that they should be as perfect instruments of destruction as possible. No one, then, need shrink from contemplating the lithe limbs, the terrible teeth, the furious rage of the tiger; or the powerful flight, the fierce beak, the hooked talons of the eagle; or even the noiseless gliding form, the poisonous fangs, the crushing folds of the snake. If they have to destroy life, at any rate let them do it effectively.

Another point deserves attention. Do the animals that are killed suffer pain, or are they not probably in a kind of mesmeric trance induced by the shock to the nervous system? According to Dr. Livingstone’s recorded experience of his sensations when a lion was crunching his arm, there would seem to be much to be said for this latter view. A vast number of facts have convinced entomologists that insects scarcely feel at all.

Again, it is well to remember that the reign of the carnivora, as far as the larger animals are concerned, is only preparatory to man’s appearance. Civilised man gradually takes upon himself the entire charge of the domestic animals, which are mostly vegetable-feeders, and the carnivorous mammals then die out, unless artificially preserved. One more point in this connexion. Those assailants of the benevolent purposes of Nature who have dilated so largely upon the carnivorous forms of life have been strangely silent about the scavengers. There can be no cruelty in feeding upon the dead. Now there are whole genera belonging to various divisions of the animal series whose function is that of clearing away all decaying organic matter. Not only are there the vultures and similar carrion-eating birds, the hyænas, jackals, crocodiles, and so on, but an enormous number of insects which, either in their larval or perfect form, are expressly adapted to feed upon putrefying animal matter. It is unnecessary to dilate upon the useful part they play in the economy of the world. Every one who is accustomed to country walks knows how rare a sight a dead animal is in Nature, except it has been killed by man.

8. *Vegetable and Animal Parasites.*—There is, no doubt, at

first sight, something very staggering in the existence of parasites, animal and vegetable; by which we mean organisms adapted to live at the expense of other organisms. Our imaginary opponent may well say, Why have horses, and oxen, and sheep, and dogs, and poultry, and even wild birds their several insect plagues, as well as still more hideous tormentors of the class *Vermes*? Do you know, he may say, the repulsive history of some of the *Entozoa*? For instance, how, in the case of the Tape-worms, the egg-stage of these loathsome creatures is adapted to be passed in the alimentary canal of one animal, and the adult form in that of another? Have you never read of the extraordinary life-cycle of the Flukes, which finally find their way into the livers of sheep, or of the *Trichinæ*, which are often fatal to man? Even the fish swimming in the depths of ocean have their minute Crustaceans clinging to various parts of their bodies—unbidden and life-long guests. Man himself is liable to be attacked by a great many forms, some of which, however, as the Guinea worm, are, it is true, rare and local. I reply that I am aware of all these facts, and freely admit that the existence of parasites is a very serious problem, and it is one that no one can pretend to have solved satisfactorily.

It is, therefore, with extreme diffidence that the following considerations are offered:—

Vegetable and animal parasites can hardly be separated. Now, in the case of Fungi, a class wholly parasitic, we know of at least one useful function. A vast number of minute Fungi are the scavengers of the vegetable world. Whatever falls to the ground in the woods, be it leaf, branch, or tree, is at once attacked by various species, which help to restore it again to its native soil in a form adapted for further use. But on the other side must be placed the terrible havoc caused by those species which attack living plants and animals, and are too familiar to us under the dreaded names of rust, mildew, smut, blight, potato-disease, &c. We must confess our profound ignorance of the benevolent aspect of these inflictions. Possibly they form one of Nature's stern warnings against over-crowding. She seems to tell us that, if we cover square miles of land with one crop—if we bring together enormous aggregations of one animal—nay, even if we interfere in the balance of life by over-stocking moors and salmon-rivers, we must expect some of her checks on over-population to make their appearance. This, however, I repeat, is offered as a mere suggestion for what it is worth. A ray of light may be thrown upon animal parasites by the now favourite conjecture that they are not original creations, but

deviations from an ancestral type, which was not parasitical.* The parasitic habit is thus looked upon as an acquired one. But still, after all, as we must suppose that the Creator implanted in animals this capacity for variation, we do not seem to advance much nearer a solution of the problem by this consideration.

9. *Diseases and Death.*—Some diseases are so intimately connected with moral evil that they cannot be considered as purely physical consequents of purely physical antecedents. Many are the direct result of vicious habits, or of neglect of the laws of health, or of ignorance, if not on the part of the individual sufferer, yet on that of the community at large. That this class of evils is gradually passing more and more under man's control is an undoubted fact, and we may hope for still greater progress in this direction. Still, though we may lengthen the average duration of human life, and prolong the existence of the weak and sickly, death must come sooner or later—the greatest evil of all to those who have not the Christian hope of immortality. But, surely, the Pessimists ought to welcome it as their best friend, if they really believe life to be so intolerable. The fact that Arthur Schopenhauer lived to be seventy-two, and wanted to live till eighty, seems to show that even Pessimists resemble ordinary mortals in not always acting up to their creed.

10. *Moral Evil.*—If the problem of Evil in general is a difficulty, that difficulty is enhanced tenfold when we come to the origin of Moral Evil or Sin. How could a God of infinite goodness permit this source of misery to originate among His creatures, and why did He do so? That it has originated somehow is a fact of experience, witnessed to by our individual consciousness, and by the unanimous voice of history. Whence did it come? *Unde malum et quare*, as Tertullian succinctly puts it. Plutarch (born about A.D. 50, died A.D. 125) thus clearly states the difficulty in a passage of his work, *De Iside et Osiride*, 45:† “For if nothing can be produced naturally without a cause, and the Good can not act as the cause of Evil, it is necessary that the natural development of evil also, as well as of good, must have its own generation and cause.” Many attempts were consequently made to assign this cause. In the dreamy East the ancient Persians assumed the existence of two great

* To give one instance out of many, Dr. Bastian thinks that the Guinea-worm is merely an accidental parasite, and that formerly it was a free or non-parasitic Nematoid.—*Globe Encycl. sub voce* “Guinea-worm.”

† *Ἐὶ γὰρ οὐδὲν ἀναίτιως πίπτει γενέσθαι, αἴτιαν δὲ κακοῦ τὰγαθὸν οὐκ ἂν ἀράσχοι, δεῖ γένεσιν ἰδίαν καὶ ἀρχὴν, ὡσπερ ἀγαθοῦ, καὶ κακοῦ τὴν φύσιν ἔχειν.*

World-rulers: Ormuzd, the source of Good; Ahrimanes, the source of Evil.* These are in continual conflict, but Good will finally triumph. Mani (about A.D. 240) combined this Zoroastrian doctrine with a corrupt form of Christianity, and gave rise to the famous sect of the Manichees.

Another explanation of the origin of Evil was to ascribe it to matter as opposed to spirit. Matter, according to this view, is too untractable to obey the behests of spirit, and from its imperfections and shortcomings it gives rise to all kinds of evil, Another solution is that of Pantheism which practically ignores Moral Evil. All so-called individual beings are but transient embodiments of the Universal Impersonal Existence, when it submits to the conditions of time and space. All actions alike are really Divine, and it is absurd to speak of them as good and bad. Logical Pantheists are thus driven to extenuate Moral Evil as much as possible, to speak of it as imperfection or ignorance. As many of the modern exponents of Pantheistic or semi-Pantheistic views are widely read from the originality of their ideas, or poetical charm of their style, it is well to remember that they are all liable to this grave charge of under-rating the power and the effects of Moral Evil.

11. We now come to Christian writers. The Christian Revelation presupposes the existence of Moral Evil in the world, for it claims to be essentially the Divine remedy for that evil. But it is silent on the mysterious question of its origin. Christian philosophers, nevertheless, have attempted to answer it, and in so doing have produced much valuable speculation. Origen, Augustine, and Eckhard, may be taken as representing—the first, the Eastern Church; the second, the Western; and the third, Mediæval Mysticism. In making these quotations I do not, of course, accept the responsibility of every statement contained in them, but adduce them as specimens of philosophic thinking.

Origen (born A.D. 185, died 254) has the following passages bearing upon the subject of the origin of evil †:—"The goodness of God could never remain inactive, nor His omnipotence be without objects for His government: hence the creation of the world cannot have been begun in any given moment of time, but must be conceived as without beginning. . . . God did not find matter already in existence, and then merely communicate shape and form to it, but He Himself

* It is now denied that this Dualism was part of the original teaching of Zoroaster, but if it is an additional development, it is at any rate one of great antiquity. Its date, however, does not affect the argument in the text.

† Ueberweg, *Hist. Phil.*, vol. i. p. 217.

created matter; otherwise a Providence, older than God, must have provided for the possibility of His expressing His thoughts in material forms, or a happy accident must have played the rôle of Providence. . . . Evil is the turning away of the creature from the fulness of true being to emptiness and nothingness, hence a privation. The cause of evil is neither God nor matter, but that free act of turning away from God, which God did not command, but only did not prevent."

Augustine (born A.D. 354, died 430) says *:—"The cause of evil is to be found in the will, which turns aside from the higher to the lower. . . . The evil will works that which is evil, but is not itself moved by any positive cause; it has no *causa efficiens*, but only a *causa deficiens*. Evil is not a substance or nature (essence), but a marring of nature (the essence) and of the good, a 'defect,' a 'privation,' or 'loss of good.' An absolute good is possible, but absolute evil is impossible [against the Manichæan doctrine]. Evil does not disturb the order and beauty of the universe; it cannot wholly withdraw itself from subjection to the laws of God; it does not remain unpunished, and the punishment of it is good, inasmuch as thereby justice is executed. As a painting with dark colours rightly distributed is beautiful, so also is the sum of things beautiful for him who has power to view them all at one glance, notwithstanding the presence of sin, although, when considered separately, their beauty is marred by the deformity of sin."

Eckhart (born after 1250) was a Dominican monk, who was one of many examples of the extreme boldness of speculation which prevailed under the guise of ecclesiastical forms in the Middle Ages. His remarks on the subject of evil are interesting. "The relation of evil,"—says Dr. Adolf Lasson, in the interesting sketch of German mysticism which he has contributed to Ueberweg's book,†—"to the absolute process is not clearly explained by Eckhart. It was impossible that this should be otherwise, since Eckhart conceded to evil only the character of privation. As denoting a necessary stadium in the return of the soul into God, evil is sometimes represented by Eckhart as a part of the Divine plan of the universe—as a calamity decreed by God. All things, sin included, work together for good for those that

* Ueberweg, *ut supra*, p. 343.

† Ueberweg, *Hist. Phil.*, vol. i. p. 481. It is, perhaps, well to repeat here the caution already given that the writer of the paper does not accept unconditionally, or ask others so to accept, the views of Eckhart. The mere fact that he was brought before a tribunal of the Inquisition at Cologne in 1327, and that twenty-eight of his doctrines were condemned by a Papal

are good. God ordains sin for man, and for those most of all whom He has chosen for great things. For this, also, man should be thankful. He should not wish that he had not sinned. By sin man is humiliated, and by forgiveness he is all the more intimately united to God. Nor should he wish that there might be no temptation to sin, for then the merit of combat and virtue itself would no longer be possible. Regarded from a higher standpoint, evil is not evil, but only a means for the realisation of the eternal end of the world. God could do no greater harm to the sinner than to permit or predestine him to be sinful, and then not send upon him suffering sufficiently great to break his wicked will. God is not angry at sin as though in it He had received an affront, but at the loss of our happiness, *i.e.*, He is angry only at the thwarting of His plan in regard to us."

12. The lines of thought indicated in these extracts have been more or less followed by subsequent Christian apologists. At the present day, whether rightly or wrongly, we are more disposed to put aside such questions as insoluble. We think we have not sufficient data to form premises for such conclusions. If such inquiries do not transcend our finite capacities, they are at any rate beyond the sphere of human experience, human duty and human responsibility. But it does not follow from this speculative limitation that we are in any doubt as to our practical relation to Evil. The Christian view of life is as reasonable as any, that which regards it as a scene of probation, a stage of training for a higher existence. Evil is around us and within us; but, when looked at as the instrument of discipline and progress, it loses half its sting. How benevolent, for instance, is the natural punishment of sin, acting as a call to amendment and a solemn warning of the danger of continuance in wrong-doing! But, some will object, many innocent and excellent persons are visited with affliction, and pain, and poverty. The vindication of this apparent anomaly lies in the infinite importance of right moral action. A noble deed, an instance of unselfish devotion to duty or to the higher interests of others, the meek suffering of undeserved calamities are the supreme moments in the history of our race which counterbalance its prevailing frivolity and carelessness. But such acts are only possible, as a rule, in the presence of Evil. The common instinct of humanity has recognised the quality

Bull in 1329, would be *prima facie* in his favour. But there is no doubt that great devoutness and blamelessness of life were, in his case, combined with daring speculation which verged upon Idealistic Pantheism; indeed, he appears to have anticipated Schelling in claiming for the human intellect the immediate intuition of the Absolute.

of *heroism* as of higher value than any amount of material prosperity, of intellectual progress, of artistic sensibility. The personalities that have touched and will continue to touch the universal heart to the end of time are the patriot dying on the field of battle, or murdered by the political assassin, or toiling for the relief of human suffering; the prophet and the martyr giving their testimony to the sacred rights of conscience; ay, and thousands more of brave men and single-hearted women, who in the path of duty cheerfully face death in order to benefit others. Such acts as these could hardly be conceived apart from the existence of Evil; and may go for something in the educative value of suffering in the history of the human race.

13. If we take very much lower ground, we find that the Pessimists are confuted by ordinary experience. They say that life is so miserable that it is not worth having. But the vast majority of mankind do not think so. They are quite content to live. Indeed, they are very reluctant, as a rule, to leave off living. Life is evidently desired for its own sake, even where there is no high standard of religious faith, or indeed no religion at all. The Esquimaux in their snowy deserts, the savage African under the blazing sun of the equator are all attached to life, where the motives for living seem so much less powerful than in the case of cultivated races. This love of life in itself is a fact, which the Pessimists are bound to account for. As it is so universal, it must spring from universal causes and may perhaps be partially explained by (1) the strong instinct of self-preservation, which makes itself felt by us all in momentary danger, (2) the satisfaction and self-approbation arising from doing honest work, (3) the pleasure of property, even in small things, (4) the happiness of married life and the sweet love of children, (5) the hope of improving one's condition. These ordinary motives, apart from higher ones, are, probably, quite strong enough to counteract in practice all the fine-spun theories of the Pessimist.

14. *War*.—Pessimists have said some hard things about war. This opens up such a wide field of discussion that it is, perhaps, presumptuous to treat it in a cursory manner. But a few words may be said in answer to the wild exaggerations current on this subject. We may ask how else can the religious and political liberties of one state be defended against the encroachments of another. European culture would have perished in the bud, if the little band of small Greek states had not combined together against the vast aggregate of the Persian Empire. And in modern times the overwhelming supremacy,

first of Spain, which involved the establishment of the Inquisition and the debasement of religion, and afterwards of France, which aimed at the political subjugation of all Europe, could only have been broken by long-continued wars.

15. *General Course of History.*—To Schopenhauer, the history of humanity is aimless. One can only understand this assertion by remembering that, to a hazy Pantheist, the rise and progress of the Christian religion—the central fact of all history—must appear an unintelligible delusion. Ordinary thinkers, on the contrary, not misled by the love of paradox or the affectation of originality, have agreed in tracing a great plan through the centuries of recorded time. All the nations of antiquity that have contributed to the development of culture were finally absorbed into the great world-empire of Rome. We see here a preparation for the reception of Christianity in the enforced peace and political unity thus imposed upon a vast extent of populous territory, in the breaking down of national religions and modes of thought, and in the very general diffusion of the Greek language. Most historians agree with Merivale that the conversion of the Roman Empire under Constantine is the most astonishing moral revolution recorded in history. From causes, however, which lay apart from the new faith, and were in operation before its triumph, the mighty Colossus of the West slowly grew weaker and weaker, and ancient civilisation disappeared for a time under the successive waves of barbarian invasion. From the chaos thus induced, the great states of modern Europe have slowly emerged. And it seems to be their mission, in turn, to extend to the uttermost parts of the earth the culture and religion which have given them their pre-eminence in the world. Nothing but perverse blindness can fail to see a connected and far-reaching plan in this very brief sketch of the results of historical study.

In conclusion, I must express my consciousness of the temerity which induced me to treat of so profound and mysterious a subject. The Problem of Evil meets us in many provinces of thought, and reaches in its origin and results from past eternity to that which is to come. To attempt to do justice to a theme so awful and fascinating would require a volume and powers of intellect to which I lay no claim, and I can only naturally expect to be told that my brief treatment of many parts of this tremendous subject has been inadequate. But, when a mischievous delusion is abroad, an imperfect exposure of it is better than none at all, and may lead the way to its more complete refutation by one better fitted for the task.

The CHAIRMAN (Right Hon. A. S. Ayrton).—I am sure we are all obliged to Mr. James for having brought this subject under our notice. It is now open for any present to take part in its discussion.

Rev. F. S. COOK, D.D.—There are some opinions which, although very much opposed to revealed truth, we are bound to treat with respect ; but with regard to this scheme of pessimism, I, for one, cannot admit it to be a system of philosophy. It is contradicted by experience ; and it must, indeed, be a strong system of philosophy that can maintain itself against the whole weight of human experience. In all past ages, as well as that in which we live, we have the strongest testimony to what is advanced by the author of this paper—namely, the desire to live, which is implanted in the breasts of all human beings. We can see, as Christians, how strongly God has bound us to our places in this world ; and, although we find that, even with this incentive to live, men occasionally go out of the world by their own hands, we may fairly ask how many more suicides would there be if mankind were not bound to life by so strong a tie ? But the pessimist view is contrary to all that we are conscious of in human nature. The desire to live is a universal instinct. Not only is it our experience that men express themselves to this effect, but we all carry a strong witness to the truth of the instinct of self-preservation in our own bosoms. If there be an inborn consciousness in each of us, we require no evidence beyond that which has been set in our own hearts—namely, the desire to live. If, then, there be this grand and universal fact of consciousness and desire to live, no system of philosophy (and, as I have said, I do not call this pessimism a philosophy) can maintain itself against it. We have in the Word of God clear testimony to the value of life ; and, with regard to the great problem of moral evil, although no one can give an exact and definite statement about it, it is quite clear that we can get, for all the requisite purposes of thought and Christian philosophy, and for all the practical purposes of life, a sufficient theory thereon.

Mr. J. HASSELL.—As Christians, we must never forget that God has given us a perfect remedy for the moral evil which is found in this world. The more closely man walks with God, the less there will be of moral evil. Moral evil is the result of ignorance and sin ; and, as Christians, it is our duty to set before our brethren its true remedy, and that remedy is conformity with the will of God. I should like to say a few words with reference to paragraph 8, as to “parasites.” Here again, while we must admit there are these parasites, we ought not to forget that these creatures, whether the *epizoa* or the *entozoa*, are the natural punishment of ignorance and neglect of the laws of Nature. For instance, man violates the natural law of absolute cleanliness, and *epizoa* are the result. Man breaks some of the laws of cookery, and *entozoa* are the result. If we have cleanliness and good cookery we do away with these things ; therefore, the remedy is more or less in our own hands. Take, again, the case of the salmon. Is it not a notorious fact

that we have polluted the waters of our rivers to such an extent that the salmon, becoming infested with *entozoa* and *epizoa*, have been made to suffer through the folly of man? We ought, therefore, to endeavour to act with prudence and conscientiousness in regard to all such matters, and thus bring to the lowest possible minimum these physical evils. If we, as Christian pioneers, and missionaries, only succeed in making our people cleanly, thoughtful, and sober-minded, we shall do much to minimise physical as well as moral evil, and may bring about a better state of things by co-operating with God in preparing for that grand and glorious time, when evil shall be abolished, and truth and righteousness will be established to the happiness and advantage of our country and of the whole world.

Mr. W. GRIFFITH.—One explanation of the difficulties is that, as there is a moral Governor of the Universe, we must accept and admit the conclusion that justice will be administered to all, and that, therefore, in the long run, evil will not predominate. There is force in this proposition; but, *à priori* reasoning hardly satisfies the practical mind of the present day. We look around us and witness an enormous amount of evil, and the problem we have to solve is, how are we to explain and reconcile this, not on mere abstract grounds, but on such as may convince the majority of our fellow-creatures? The author of the paper has quoted a very important passage from Leibnitz, whose writings for some generations have largely influenced the philosophic mind of Germany. We ought to feel greatly obliged to the author for having brought forward many arguments which refute the minor propositions of Schopenhauer, Von Hartmann, and other writers of that school of pessimists which denies the existence of a moral supreme government. But it is hardly necessary to use the *à priori* argument as to the existence of a moral Governor, in order to explain some of the evils that exist. It can hardly be said that, because one order of beings possess great powers of happiness and intellect and other faculties, it is, therefore, an evil that inferior animals, without such faculties, should exist. Such animals may exist and enjoy life, and their happiness may be great, not only in the individual, but the sum of happiness, in the whole, may be very considerable. As a question of society we must expect in the different orders of beings that some must be superior to others, and, without taking the *à priori* argument, it is clear that, if we have in the universe a society of men and animals, there must be some that are superior to others. The metaphysical argument is advanced by Leibnitz in his first position, but I think the truth establishes itself independently of metaphysics. We must remember that man is at the head of creation, and it is his duty to use the powers of intellect he possesses for the purposes of civilisation. He does so use those powers, and, according to the way in which they are exercised, evil may diminish, and the happiness of his race be enlarged. If he does not exercise them, he is in fault. But this is only on the ground that the powers given him for subduing nature are not properly exercised; the barbarism thereby produced being

the punishment due to his own fault. The great difficulty before us is, however, moral evil. Undoubtedly, as far as we as individuals are concerned, the Christian Revelation does explain it. We have the remedy offered, and if we do not accept it, it is our own fault.

The CHAIRMAN.—I may perhaps be allowed to bring the discussion to a close. I confess I have been very much struck by many of the remarks that have been made, and that I fully appreciate their importance and value. It seems to me to be one of those results that must necessarily spring from the doctrines which have recently prevailed, and which have culminated in a renunciation of the existence of a God at all, that certain people now undertake to put themselves in the place of God, and are disposed to consider whether they could not manage the affairs of the universe better than they are managed by the Creator. These men, having taken on themselves this mission, have assumed the ability to determine how the world should have been made—of how, indeed, the worlds embracing the universe ought to have been constructed, and how this portion of the universe should have been provided with everything which ought to exist on the face of the earth. This, no doubt, is a very considerable work for any man, or any set of men, to take in hand ; and it is quite possible that they have got enough to do when they come to the conclusion that they could have done it all much better themselves if they had undertaken the task. To compare small things with great, I have always regarded it as a very sound principle, in judging of the acts of human beings in this world, that when they undertake anything with the modest belief that they are able to perform what they have engaged to do, the most unwise thing we can do is to form a definite judgment on what they have done, without first communicating with the workers themselves, and ascertaining their reasons for what they undertook, and the mode in which they have performed their task. Because, if we endeavour to judge of what people have done without knowing why they did it, the probability is we may make a very grave mistake in coming to a conclusion adverse to their mode of procedure ; at all events, they may be able to show that, if we have our idea, their way is at least as good as ours, and, perhaps, on comparison, a great deal better. If, then, we bring ourselves to this state of feeling, we shall see the extravagant absurdity of putting ourselves in a position to arraign the great work of the creation and preservation of this universe. (Hear, hear.) We have no means of ascertaining, and still less of determining, what was the exact scheme in view, and what were the processes of the creation and preservation of the world. We presume to say that this and that are evils, but we do not know ; in fact, we have absolutely no knowledge of the grounds, if I may speak in conventional language, on which the relations of things have proceeded. We do not know, when told that animals prey upon each other, what was the purpose for which one creature was so constituted in relation to another that it should make the other its prey. The more we reflect as to what we ought to know, in order to be able to form a

judgment on the whole work of creation, the more conscious we become of our total ignorance of the subject, and of our incapacity to form any judgment at all. I remember having heard a very intelligent author assert that bodily pain was one of the evils of this world. I, for one, was rather startled by the suggestion. I had always thought that bodily pain was a beneficent messenger from the part afflicted, intended to give an intimation to the mind that something wrong was going on in one's existence. As it is, the smallest departure from healthy existence is attended by bodily pain, which necessarily attracts attention to the part affected; and it is our own fault if we neglect the warning thus given, and do not consider what is the most appropriate remedy for dealing with and getting rid of the affliction. Therefore, we find that bodily pain is a means to the preservation of health and life; and that, far from being an evil, it is a most beneficent thing in connexion with our existence, when looked at from this point of view. I have merely given this as an illustration of the necessity of examining these things from different points of view. In saying, then, whether a thing is good or evil, we have to go, not only to the immediate cause, but to other and more remote causes, and to view it in all its complicated relations to other things before we can arrive at the means of forming anything like a definite judgment. If we take a hasty view of the first apparent cause of any given effect we may think it bad; but, by going deeper, we may discover that it was a very good thing it happened just as it did. So it is with any attempt to survey the world; and I believe, with regard to the existence of moral evil, and the recognition of the Almighty as a Creator actuated by beneficent views, that there is ample and conclusive proof of what may be termed a moral governance of the world, so perfect in its nature that every human being knows he has a moral consciousness which is part of his mind; and that if every one in the world has been so created that he possesses moral sentiment, it is clear that this is the result of the moral sense of his Creator, and a recognition of the morality of that Creator as evidenced throughout the human race. But it is said that if this be so, why has the Creator permitted evil? Here, however, it must be remembered that He has allowed us a moral mind; that He has given us, at the same time, certain impulses and passions which are necessary for our existence. The question, then, arises, whether there is such a thing as immorality, unless it springs from the immoral thoughts of human beings themselves; whether, in point of fact, there is such a thing as immorality in the world, except as far as that evil thoughts make evil deeds. (Hear, hear.) If these evil thoughts are our own thoughts, and the sum of the evil in the world is the sum of all the evil thoughts of those who exist upon its surface, and if, also, we have a moral sense, and, therefore, know those thoughts to be evil, how can it be said that people who do immoral things are not themselves responsible for the evil, and that it is not their own creation? What right, in that case, have they to ascribe it to the Creator? They have no such

right. The two things we have been speaking of thus become separable, and the immorality which exists in the world, and the suffering that is the consequence of immorality, are entirely the result of the acts of humanity itself. Any one who reflects on this subject will, I think, admit that what is termed happiness, or enjoyment, is only a relative term. I was remarking the other day what a bore it must be to be as rich as a person then mentioned. He cannot have a moment's peace or comfort. It must be a terrible worry to him to deal with his fortune ; in fact, this is more than he can do, and he is obliged to hand over to others the task of managing it for him. I take it that I am just as happy as he, without possessing his fortune ; and I am not quite sure that I am not a great deal happier, because I have not so much trouble to think about. It is, at any rate, clear to me that, in the cottages where we find the humblest form of human existence, there is as much happiness, provided there is a good moral sense, as is to be found among the wealthy owners of the soil. The whole question resolves itself into what is the condition of a man's mind—whether he rejoices in the morality of human existence, or whether he chooses to rejoice in the vices of human existence, vices which bring with them their own retribution, and make the lives of those who practise them, however rich they may be, more miserable than that of the poorest person who leads a moral life. Looked at from this point of view, one rejects the notion that Providence is to be burdened with the immorality of the world. (Hear, hear.) For my part, I repudiate the idea that God is to be held responsible for evil. He has given us a perfect conception of good, and if we choose to follow up that conception we shall have no evil. Therefore, it is we—that is to say, humanity at large, which is responsible for evil, and not God. God is responsible for the goodness of the world, which man is taught to practise. There are many things that can be regarded in the same light, and when so regarded all this superstructure of human vanity which is displayed in undertaking the reorganisation of the world, and in determining the object with which it has been created, vanishes before us, and we are left in full possession of that power which is given us, if we choose to exercise it, of seeing the presence of the Creator everywhere, and of recognising His supremacy in all He has done for the benefit of mankind. (Applause.) I have only now to tender the thanks of this meeting to the author of the paper, and to ask whether he has anything to say in reply to the speeches that have been made.

Mr. W. P. JAMES.—With many of the remarks that have been offered upon my paper I cordially agree ; but I do not think they can be regarded as criticisms, while some of the speakers appear to have slightly misunderstood the object with which the paper was written. It was intended as a refutation of a particular system of philosophy, namely, that which goes by the name of "Pessimism." This system may be very detestable and very dreadful ; but, nevertheless, it exists, although one or two of those who have spoken to-night seem not to have realised it. As such a system of scepticism

does exist, I have deemed it possible that I might, in an humble way, render a service to some of those who may have been tempted to favour this form of disbelief, by endeavouring in some measure to refute it. Some of the remarks that have been made would have been relevant to my paper if the speakers had pointed out in what respect they considered me to have failed in my refutation. As to the Origin of Evil I have expressed myself with the greatest care, recalling the old line that "fools rush in, where angels fear to tread," and have confined myself, in a great measure, to bringing forward the opinions of others, my own views being conveyed in these two or three very guarded sentences:—"At the present day, whether rightly or wrongly, we are more disposed to put aside such questions as insoluble. We think we have not sufficient data to form premises for such conclusions. If such inquiries do not transcend our finite capacities, they are, at any rate, beyond the sphere of human experience, human duty, and human responsibility." All the rest is quoted. I have adopted this course from excess of caution, because I did not consider that the scope of the paper required me to give any views of my own upon the point. The paper, as I have stated, is intended to refute a system of philosophy called "Pessimism," now prevalent in Germany. Von Hartmann, one of its greatest champions, is still alive, and has many disciples there; and, as his doctrines are discussed in the *Fortnightly* and *Contemporary Reviews*, as well as in other magazines published in England, and as books have also been written upon the subject in this country, representing Pessimism from a very favourable point of view, I thought it possible that some, whose faith may have been staggered by reading these things, might be helped by this paper, and I have been anxious to know if I have failed to meet the positions taken up by the Pessimist School. I am much obliged to Mr. Griffith and our Chairman for their remarks. I think that few are aware of the wide extent to which Pessimist views have spread, or, at any rate, of the toleration that has been accorded to the extremely rash statements the Pessimists have made. Von Hartmann's theory I have stated with a good deal of softening down from the original, because, not to put the matter too finely, the system he expounds is, really, a system of blasphemy. (Hear.)

The meeting was then adjourned.

REMARKS BY THE REV. CANON W. SAUMAREZ SMITH, D.D.

(PRINCIPAL OF ST. AIDAN'S THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE, BIRKENHEAD).

Mr. James's paper is a useful one, however "inadequate" such "a brief treatment" of such a vast subject may, and must, be. It is suggestive, and lays down clear lines upon which rational discussion may proceed. And the need of such discussion, as the writer points out at the commencement of his paper, is found in the very hasty way in which superficial notions about science and philosophy are taken up and diffused; so that what may be termed an "anti-traditional" and "anti-religious" bias is created on insufficient grounds, and is often regarded as a sign of courage and culture!

With reference to Mr. James's first question, it is well to remember that of *absolute* "Optimism" and "Pessimism" no finite creature can possibly be an adequate judge. No one save an Infinite, Self-existent Being, prior to, and the ultimate cause of, all finite existences, can be omniscient; and without omniscience who can say what system of things is *best* or *worst*? In defining, then, for purposes of discussion, Pessimism, and its antithesis, Optimism, we mean the respective theories that all things tend to *evil*, and that all things tend to *good*. Which of these theories is the more reasonable and philosophical? If we take a merely materialistic,—*i.e.*, an essentially atheistic,—basis for speculation, we shall find it hard to defend any Optimistic theory; but if we are Theists, we shall be able to contend (i.) that it is reasonable to expect good from God; (ii.) that God must be the better judge of the whole scheme of things than finite man can be; and, if we are *Christian* Theists, we can add (iii.) that God has given us a series of Revelations which inform us of a remedial and restorative purpose which dominates the history of human development—revelations which, while they recognise a mystery of evil, unfold a greater mystery of good.

To all who want suggestive thoughts about Pessimism let me commend an admirable lecture upon the subject in Professor Flint's *Antitheistic Theories*. Very clearly does he show that Schopenhauer and Hartmann's doctrines are "essentially Buddhistic," setting forth "a modified Buddhism without Buddha"; and that, while they thus make the Nihilistic theory less extravagant and legendary, they at the same time render it barren, abstract, and repellent. By eliminating the personal element which mingles with all the teaching of Buddhism they take away the sole support of an *emotional* character which, as it were, clothes with a positive garb an essentially negative creed.

Mr. James points out that Schopenhauer and Hartmann are "both Pantheists of an unusually nebulous description"; and assuredly, when we try to represent to ourselves the "alogical" Will by whose endless strivings Schopenhauer asserts this evil world to have been brought forth, and to be maintained in misery; or the "*unconscious* (mind?)" in which Hartmann

discovers a creative, and providential, and continually operative force underlying all sentient and non-sentient phenomenal existences, and tending towards annihilation,—that is, the reproduction of that “primitive harmony of the unconscious,” where nature and conscious life are non-existent; when, I say, we try to represent to ourselves these “hypostatized abstractions,” we shall most certainly conclude that we are in a speculative cloudland where there is no firm ground on which we can build either reason or faith.

All Pantheism, even the most poetical, and still more this pseudo-metaphysical stuff, is antitheistic and atheistic in its ultimate issues; but I should myself refuse to call Schopenhauer and Hartmann *Pantheists* at all. They might perhaps be termed “fatalistic *Pandynamists*”; and when men who are really searching after truth find that this permeating *δύναμις* is “blind will,” or a sort of “unconscious mind,” they will probably concur with Professor Flint, that they “do not need to occupy time in criticising fancies so arbitrary and self-contradictory.”

What we do need to consider in respect of any Pessimistic theories is, what bearing they have upon natural and revealed religion.

For myself, I think there is often an exaggerated idea of pain and death as *physical* evils; and in the animal and vegetable world, regarded apart from man, I do not find that “cruelty” and “carnage” are of such significance as to induce me to blame Nature, or God. In the field of physical research we can not seldom perceive how death is but part of the cycle of life, and how much that seems violent and calamitous is needed for the general good. But when we turn from “physical” science to mental philosophy and ethics, and to the personal and social factors of human life, we see much to perplex and to sadden; and our self-conscious nature, with all the discursive and introspective faculties of our complex personality, makes us susceptible to apprehensions, and fears, and hopes which will not be soothed or satisfied by any mere physical theory of the universe, but reach forward, hither and thither, with the questions, Where is happiness? Who will show us good? In this *moral* (or spiritual) aspect of matters, “the Pessimist view of existence can only be met by a religious view of existence.” And have we not in all Pessimistic theories (whether of poets, novelists, or philosophers) a strong testimony to the truthfulness of those views of human nature, and of its moral and spiritual needs, which the Bible sets before us? Everywhere there is a consciousness of evil; everywhere there is an aspiration after happiness,—that is, after what is good and harmonious. Everywhere there is some felt need for a remedial interposition; and even amid variously formulised utterances of despair there is recognisable a persistent hope of deliverance.

All this corroborates the reasonableness of an anti-materialistic view of the universe.

Neither *Hedonism* on the one side, nor *suicide* on the other, can satisfy our spiritual instincts; and these instincts cannot be inherent in man as

being either *from* nothing or *for* nothing. A *positive basis* exists somewhere. Human nature cannot content itself with philosophical *Nihilism* any more than it can with agnostic,—i.e., practically atheistic,—“*Positivism*” (so called). Faith in the existence of a Personal God, as the Beginner and Goal of all things, is the $\pi\omicron\upsilon\ \sigma\rho\omega$ which gives the only sufficient starting-point for satisfying and elevating search after truth in Nature, Mind, or History. Believing in this, we believe in the possibility of special revelations, which make history intelligible, however many difficulties, not to be solved by finite minds, remain for the philosophical thinker; and in accepting the Christian Revelation we have a refuge from our ignorances and our sorrows in the certain conviction that God is love, and that the *resultant* of all things is not evil, but good.
