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ARTICLE IV.

SOCIOLOGICAL MORALS.

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REGARDING the morals of sociology, like intellects and horses having been evolved from lower types, they may sometimes hark back to ancestral forms. Indeed, Herbert Spencer and other sociologists have encouraged such reversions. Says Spencer: "Great mischief has been done by the repellent aspect habitually given to moral rule by its expositors, and immense benefits are to be anticipated from presenting moral rule under that attractive aspect which it has when undistorted by superstition and asceticism." "Nor does mischief result only from this undue severity of the ethical doctrine bequeathed us by the harsh past. Further mischief results from the impracticability of its ideal. In violent reaction against the utter selfishness of life as carried on in barbarous societies, it has insisted on a life utterly unselfish."[1] There may prove to be, however, some higher, greater alcyone than sociology, around which the universe revolves.

SOCIETY NOT AN ORGANISM.

If it were a fact that society is an organism, it might dull the sense of personal responsibility. Corporations are soulless.

Let us review a childhood lesson in lexicography. Life is the only attribute common to all organisms. It occupies the

[1] Data of Ethics, Author's Preface.

whole house. To put two lives into one organism would create a trust or a pair of Siamese twins. Society is an analogue, not an aggregate corporation. In the sixteenth century, Theophrastus Bombastus Hohenheim, with his microcosm, saw society more fairly — a little world. When Mr. Lynch entered the following in his notebook, he was supposed to be sane: "There is a composite creature called king-rat. It is not common, but it is to be seen in many museums. It appears that rats, which are very fraternal creatures after a fashion, associate with one another in such a way that their tails get fastened together, and there are sometimes as many as twenty rats making up one king-rat. Their heads are all stretched outwards in a circle, and their tails compacted and agglutinated together, nobody knows exactly how. It is a compound creature, the heads all outwards ready to run different ways, the tails amalgamated in this queer fashion."[1] An advanced sociologist might safely be warned not to mistake a compound-rat for a social organism. They are not identical, though they suggest each other. The agglutinated-rat is not a chemical union, much less dynamic or psychological. The rat is only twenty, and the organism a billion. There is a suggestion, too, of Spinoza's great aphorism: "One in all." Is it moral or apotheosis?

CONDUCT IS NOT AN EVOLUTION.

A quotation from Herbert Spencer will determine the brand of this evolution. In fact, except in the coinage of an unneeded word for natural growth, evolution always involves and claims God's sole prerogative of bridging the gulf between being and nothing. This is the quotation: "We have become quite familiar with the idea of evolution throughout

[1] Mornington Lecture.

the ascending types of animals. To a considerable degree we have become familiar with the thought that an evolution of functions has gone on *pari passu* with the evolution of structures. Now, advancing a step, we have to frame a conception of the evolution of conduct, as correlated with the evolution of structures and functions."[1] The dictum is general; every chair teaches it, every platform rings with it, and Ward prints it. The three sentences are conglomerate. President Wayland warned the old boys not to listen, voluntarily, to falsehood. It would hurt their characters. Borrowing a trope from geology, what would he say to Spencer's pudding stone?

Conduct is like soul. It is a perfume of a fragrancy, or it is offensive. It escapes a dictionary, an evolution, and a scalpel. It is a concert after the audience has been dismissed and the singers have gone home. How could it be evolved? Where is it? You can remember the notes and re-sing them, a phonograph may repeat them, but they are dead. Life evolves, but neither silence nor darkness.

How long is "now" between the future and the past? To separate and subtract the present from the future and the past, have reduced it to nonentity.[2] Present time, lying between the nearest past time and the nearest future, is infinitely brief. "Now" lacks even the one attribute of a geometrical point — location. We deal with infinities. All things that are thus related to time as the present and the future, are nowhere. But there is no such place as "nowhere." It is a self-contradiction, and no entity was ever evolved there.

[1] Data of Ethics, p. 7.

[2] Kant says, "Take objects as they are in themselves, time is nothing." His remark is too broad. Surely, past time is something to the Omnipresent. Critique of Pure Reason, part i. p. 74.

As for a choice between evolution and creation, we are shut up to creation. All evolution is impeached. There is no necessary continuity of duration. The past bears one relationship to us, behind us; we know the present as lying between the past and the future, and the future is ahead of us. The past is infinitely long and the future infinitely short. The continuity seems to have been broken when God made the first conscious creature. Life is conditioned on time, as we infer from germ, cell, and fetus. The first instant of existence was lost in the past, the next was future. The very thought of an evolution from the beginning of anything, is abnormal. It is crowded out of time, which, like the Egyptian "Seb," mixes time and eternity. Any "now" would have been too narrow for evolution to stand on; nor is it strange that He to whom past and future are an eternal present, who can create a cell, with all its conditions and possibilities of growth and development, can create a universe at any time. Recalling this, we can dismiss evolution without further comment. "The mill will never grind with the water that is past." It is a scientific certainty that the future never arrives, the present never halts, and the past has already gone — past, present, and future — there is no other duration. Is conduct evolved, or is anything conditioned on duration ever evolved?

These considerations against constructive evolution are sound, simple, and unanswerable. All possibilities are exhausted. Neither type, structure, nor conduct, being essentially what they are, do more than grow. God, by successive creations, providences, miracles, deteriorations, makes the world. Consciousness can be depended upon; evolution could never have taken the first step on the absolute vacuum of

present time. It would have been a creative act of the Omnipresent God.

PROMISCUOUS BIOLOGY.

We demur to the assumption of Small and Vincent, that biological terms — to be immediately disregarded and dismissed — are especially adapted to human conditions. But bare terms are useless. The biological conception of sociology roots itself in the notion that there is no essential difference between a man and a brute. They look alike and are alike. It is a short cut to dethrone God and degrade a soul — a noble synthesis. To indiscriminately mix a biology of brutes and human beings is immoral. Listen! "Not for the human race only, but for every race, there are laws of right living. Given its environment and its structure, and there is for each kind of creature a set of actions adapted in their kinds, amounts, and combinations to secure the highest conservation its nature permits. The animal, like the man, has needs for food, warmth, activity, rest, and so forth, which must be fulfilled in certain relative degrees to make its life whole. Maintenance of its race implies satisfaction of special desires, sexual and philoprogenitive, in due proportions. Hence there is a supposable formula for the activities of each species, which, could it be drawn out, would constitute a system of morality for the species."[1] Is this Herbert Spencer's tender regard for God's morality, or for that of brutes?

STANDARDS OF MORALS.

The unconditional love of God, including utility and happiness, "is the chief end of man." Popular sociology has fallen wholly short of God's will. Lester Ward lies prone on his face before utility, and Herbert Spencer, like Epicurus,

[1] Data of Ethics, p. 152.

at pleasure. The Westminster Confession means rightly, and when, at some supreme moment, God's Spirit has lifted us, we feel it, we see it, and are incontestably assured of the ineffable end. "It was remarked," says Ward, "that man seeks happiness as the object of his existence, and that this constitutes individual utility, but we must go a step further and maintain that happiness is the only object of human effort." "The standard of conduct is so much higher than that which the controllers of conduct can themselves live up to, resulting always in the punishment of the weak and the poor for the same transgressions as are daily committed with impunity by the rich and influential, that the lowest miscreant feels that there is some fundamental wrong underlying the entire social fabric, though he cannot tell what it is. All this must be regarded as the legitimate consequence of the undue supremacy of dogmatic ideas and teleological conceptions in society. So far from favoring morality, they are the direct cause of the most dangerous form of immorality, viz., a mutinous revolt against too severe and unnatural moral restraint." [1]

Having once learned that right is gauged only by pleasure, our youth can hardly divest themselves of the notion, in later days. They thought it Deianira's love charm, and find it a shirt of Nessus. Cæsar Augustus banished Ovid to Tomi, claiming that his verses were licentious. The poet confessed to the verses, but claimed that his life was pure. His contemporaries doubted it. It is self-evident that a standard of morals must be absolutely pure, or vicious. Phaëthon is madly driving the chariot of the sun, and may set the world afire. A tainted philosophy is rotten clear through.

[1] Dynamic Sociology, vol. ii. pp. 24, 133.