

# **THE SPECTRUM OF TRUTH**

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The Spectrum of Truth by A. B. Sharpe & F. Aveling

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**A. B. SHARPE & F. AVELING**

**THE SPECTRUM  
OF TRUTH**



**Nihil obstat :**

**J. CANONICUS MOYES, S.T.D.,**  
*Censor deputatus.*

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# THE SPECTRUM OF TRUTH

BY A. B. SHARPE, M.A.

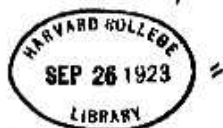
AND

F. AVELING, D.D.

"Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,  
Stains the white radiance of Eternity."  
—SHELLEY, *Adonais*.

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## THE SPECTRUM OF TRUTH

"PHILOSOPHY is the science of principles": it deals, that is to say, not with any particular branch of knowledge, nor even with knowledge as a whole (which, indeed, in these days of specialisation would be somewhat difficult), but with the background of all knowledge, or the ultimate principles which underlie all knowledge, and on which is formed that kaleidoscopic experience of mankind, both outward and inward, which is, so to speak, its raw material.

Hence the difficulty and obscurity of philosophy; and hence its manifold and apparently inexhaustible variety. For philosophy, unlike other sciences, cannot be brought to the test of experiment; the subjects with which it deals are few and simple, but capable of being considered from indefinitely numerous points of view. And it is upon the point of view adopted that the value of any particular philosophical system chiefly depends. Thus it can hardly be said of any system that it is either true or false as a whole; the question is rather whether its standpoint is such as to give a full view of all

the facts which need to be considered, or whether the influence of a *parti pris* gives undue prominence to some, while, consequently, obscuring the full value of others. Each system has its own value, as throwing new light on one or more aspects of truth, and each has its special limitations and weaknesses; and though the proportions of strength and weakness vary greatly, it is impossible to classify systems in order of merit, as one might classify a grocer's samples. The attitude of a well-balanced mind towards philosophy as a whole, must more and more tend to become eclectic; and it is probably, to a very great extent, in consequence of this inevitable tendency that few, if any, new systems of philosophy (as distinct from experimental science) have appeared during the last hundred and fifty years.

To the compilers of this little work, however, it appears that the scholastic system has, in its main features, a permanent value which belongs to none of the others, and which is due first to the modesty of its aim, which is mainly to analyse the natural and universal modes of human thought, and thereby to impart to it precision and accuracy; secondly, to the exhaustive thoroughness with which this narrow territory is examined; and lastly, to the careful adjustment of scholastic philosophy to the truths of Divine Revelation, which from the first have not merely added to the sum and sphere of human knowledge, but have safeguarded its progress from individual extravagance to an extent which is only now beginning to be clearly perceived.