

**MONISM AND MELIORISM:
A PHILOSOPHICAL
ESSAY ON CAUSALITY
AND ETHICS. PP. 1-82**

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Monism and Meliorism: A Philosophical Essay on Causality and Ethics. pp. 1-82 by Paul Carus

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PAUL CARUS

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MONISM AND MELIORISM,

A
PHILOSOPHICAL ESSAY

ON

CAUSALITY AND ETHICS.

BY

PAUL CARUS,

PH. D. (TUBINGEN).

*Ζηλοῦτε δὲ τὰ χάρισματα τὰ κρείττονα
καὶ ἔτι καθ' ὑπερβολὴν ὁδὸν ἡμῶν δεῖκνυμι.*
1 Corinth. xii. 31.

NEW YORK:
F. W. CHRISTERN, 37 WEST TWENTY-THIRD STREET.
1885.

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PREFACE.

I DELIVER to the American public a philosophical system, comprised under the name of *Monism and Meliorism*,* two words which have been used by different philosophers, and which, for some time, have indicated, as it were, the direction of the development of philosophic thought.

Monism is the ideal which no one hitherto has been able to realize satisfactorily, though many have tried to do so. It has become, therefore, the watch-word of diverse parties, who lacked the solid basis, on which to erect the building of such a conception of the world, as might be well founded in its cornerstone and harmonious in its structure.

The cornerstone to be chosen is *causality* and the only criterion by which any philosophical theory can be tested and verified, is given in its doctrine of *ethics*. But on both subjects the greatest confusion prevails, both of them being problems, which still wait for a definite solution. And after so many attempts, a new solution, in consonance with modern science, by which the old controversies may be reconciled, is extremely desirable.

The novelty of the solution here proposed does not consist in bringing forward new and startling views; quite the contrary! The

* We define *Monism* as a conception of the world which traces all things back to one source, thus explaining all problems from one principle; and *Meliorism* as a contemplation of life, which refusing optimism as well as pessimism, finds the purpose of living in the aspiration of a constant progress to some higher state of existence; in one word, in perpetual labor for amelioration.

true philosopher must endeavor to avoid originality as much as possible, and cling with full concentration of mind to impartial investigation. Original ideas often allure and dazzle with a fine brilliancy, but they are treacherous owing to the very subjectivity which renders them so attractive. Objectivity in philosophical research does not create a sensation, as it does not take men's fancy; yet, its results, if true, will stand forever. And this disinterested, impartial objectivity will shed a new light on questions, which, difficult in themselves, have been confounded and entangled by the hatred and struggle of obtruding and intervening interests.

The latest step taken by the progressive party in philosophy, is the theory of the *Positive School*, founded by M. Auguste Comte, supported by Mr. John Stuart Mill and in closest relation to the system of Mr. Herbert Spencer. These gentlemen say that positivism has taken its stand on positive facts. But Comte forgot the main point. He did not give any touchstone, which would enable us to distinguish, whether we have to deal with positive facts or with illusions. Kant did not overlook this difficulty, and it was through no mere child's play that he took such a seemingly round-about way. If he did not succeed, it was merely because he lost himself in the intricate paths and windings of his strange idealism and abandoned the problem of *causality*, from which alone the solution of philosophical questions can be expected.

Convinced of the importance of this topic, I venture an attempt at unravelling its Gordian knot. Cutting the knot will not do in philosophy, as it certainly would in politics; and so we have to disentangle its intricacies carefully and patiently, in hope that after all they may be simpler than they seem to be.

The present essay contains the chief points of my argument and I sincerely trust that I have succeeded so far as to have realized what David Hume and Immanuel Kant planned, and to have brought to

a certain consummation what they intended to do. I hold that this *philosophy of Monism and Meliorism* will prove the natural outcome of former systems and will clear away many difficulties seemingly insurmountable.

The plan of this little essay contains five articles, the first of which is on Kant, being merely an introduction, and, so to say, the pedestal of the others, in which the new theories are propounded. *Causality* is the beginning, *ethics* the aim and end of this philosophy. These two points being fixed, the whole system is sketched in its outlines. All other questions are of minor importance and may find their answers by simply drawing inferences from what has been stated on causality and ethics.

It is superfluous to crave indulgence, where I may possibly have been mistaken. The task is difficult and greater men than I have erred regarding the same topics which I treat in this little pamphlet.

If Kant compared his work to that of Copernicus, I may fairly liken mine to that of Kepler who filled out the Copernican system and reduced the law of motion of planets to simple mathematical formulæ. The future will show whether my confidence is justified or not. Should it prove excessive, I hope, at least, that this essay will do something to further and give impulse to the solution of the deepest, the most important and the most difficult problem of life, so that my work shall not have been entirely in vain, nor my labor altogether wasted.

NEW YORK, 1885.

THE AUTHOR.

KANT'S PHILOSOPHY.*

§ I. KANT'S REVOLUTION IN THE EMPIRE OF PHILOSOPHY.

KANT'S greatness need not be praised ; it is known and acknowledged wherever philosophy is studied, and its enormous influence on the development of Germany directly and of humanity indirectly may be perceived in literature as well as in the policy of Church and State.

Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* marks the beginning of a new era and, at the same time, the conclusion of a period longer than a thousand years. What Luther did for religion, and Copernicus for science, Kant has done for philosophic thought. He is the representative of the revolutionary spirit of the eighteenth century, which produced new humanitarian ideals and a new arrangement of society. In France the old throne of the Bourbons was overturned, and in America, for the first time, a republic was founded on the basis of individual freedom and human rights. A deep, wide ocean lies between the quiet town of Königsberg, where the German philosopher dwelt, and the shores of New England. But in spite of the distance, in spite of the physical gap, the movements on both sides were the result of the same cause ; and, occurring in the same century, were, at the same time, psychically connected with each other. However, while the revolution in France was social, and that of America political, the revolution inaugurated by Kant was philosophic.

* This Lecture is not intended to explain the system and argumentation, but merely the drift and tendency of Kantian philosophy.

The earthquake of the French revolution was on the surface ; that of Germany lay deeper, though its results were not perceived so quickly as those experienced under the terrorism in the noisy capital on the banks of the Seine. Kant reversed the basis, on which human knowledge and the ideas of "*Soul, World and God*" rested. He reversed it, and, *pari passu*, gave the development of human thought a new direction. Therefore he was more than a mere revolutionist. Robespierre and his gang destroyed, but were unable to build anew.

Kant cleared the place where the rotten edifice of metaphysics had stood so long, and at the same time contrived a plan for constructing another and a better building, which, as expressed by himself, would not prove so lofty a structure, as the dome of ontologic thought had been, the bold spire of which was raised to the clouds. The edifice he proposed to build could be likened to a mansion, neither high nor grand, without steeples or battlements, but simple and plain, just fit to live in. The systems of philosophy before Kant, though divine and magnificent, like the Gothic cathedral of the Middle ages, were castles in the air, enchantingly splendid, but unsubstantial and transient like the *Fata Morgana*. Kant's philosophy is neither showy nor pretentious, but as a compensation it has the great merit of solidity.

Before I enter into details, let me mention that such a subject as Kantian philosophy can scarcely be exhausted. If I venture on so broad a field, devoting no more space to it than one article allows, I shall have to limit myself, or we shall be lost in the innumerable windings of a labyrinth. I shall confine myself, therefore, to one of the principal points, which, though openly laid down in Kant's works, has been hitherto rather too much neglected. I mean his *dualism*; it, I maintain, has been overlooked, under-