

**PERSONALITY.THE BEGINNING
AND END OF METAPHYSYCS
AND A NECESSARY
ASSUMPTION
IN ALL POSITIVE PHILOSOPHY**

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Personality.the Beginning and End of Metaphysics and a Necessary Assumption in All Positive Philosophy by Alfred Williams Momerie

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PERSONALITY.



"WE have taken up the fact of this universe," says Thomas Carlyle, "as it is not. We have quietly closed our eyes to the eternal substance of things, and opened them only to the shows and shams of things. We believe this universe to be intrinsically a great unintelligible Perhaps. Extrinsicly, clear enough, it is a great, most extensive cattle-fold, with most extensive kitchen-ranges and dining-tables, whereat he is wise who can find a place. All truth of this universe is uncertain; only the profit and loss of it—the pudding and praise of it—are and remain very visible to the practical man. There is no longer any God for us. God's laws are become a greatest happiness principle, a parliamentary expediency. The

heavens overarch us only as an astronomical time-keeper,—a butt for Herschel's telescopes to shoot science at. Man has lost the soul out of him, and now after the due period begins to find the want of it."

There is much truth in this, except, perhaps, that the last seven words are rather premature. Many of the leaders of thought believe and teach that God and the soul are no more. One of our most distinguished psychologists tells us that "the ego is a pure fiction, coined from nonentity:" and another celebrated *littérateur* is so anxious to show the absurdity of believing in, or even hoping for, a God, that he always writes the word with a small "g." The universe has been resolved into a set of phenomena, whose sequences exhibit only such meaningless regularity as may be observed in the drawing of balls out of a ballot-box; and the skilful analysts, by way of *coup de grâce*, have ended by resolving *themselves* into a set of similar phenomena. There are only appearances without us, and nothing to be seen behind the appearances; only appearances within us, and nothing by which the appearances can be seen. "The Universe = Phenomena." This is to be the gospel of the future. And when every man believes it,—when men come to recognise themselves as merely series

of sensations, and the external world as only the abstract possibility of sensation in which custom has taught them to believe,—above all, when they come to feel that there is absolutely no chance of ever discovering any *meaning* in anything, then the true golden age will have been reached. In other words, when the search after reason has been given up, the true reign of reason will have begun.

To those who think thus, metaphysics is, of course, a remnant of barbarism, only a little removed from the fetishism that flourished in the infancy of the race; or, at the best, it is but a puerile amusement which, when one becomes a man, that is a Positivist, ought to be put away. Now it is the purpose of the present essay to offer some suggestions tending to show that this estimate of metaphysics is incorrect—that its failures in the past have been chiefly due to false methods and illegitimate starting-points—and that pure phenomenalism, without some admixture of metaphysical elements, is an unthinkable absurdity.

It would be well at the outset clearly to distinguish between three words,—viz., Psychology, Philosophy, and Metaphysics, which are frequently used as more or less synonymous. Language is poor enough at the best, and it is to be deplored when it is made poorer by any avoidable ambi-

guities. Schwegler's definition of philosophy is this: "It is the thinking of the entire empirical finite in the form of an intelligently articulated system." Now, if we omit the word "intelligently," this definition will apply to the Positive philosophy, which denies the possibility of metaphysics, and restricts itself to the laws of sequence and coexistence that exist among phenomena. And as the term philosophy is always applied to the systems of Hume, Comte, and others—that is, to systems which are pre-eminently anti-metaphysical—it is better to define it so that it will distinctly include phenomenologists. Philosophy, then, should mean the search for those ultimate generalisations which will embrace, without necessarily seeking to *account for*, the narrower generalisations of the separate sciences.

Positivism deserved the name of philosophy because it aimed at constructing a "hierarchy of the sciences," thus transforming them into an organic whole, in which each part would depend on all that preceded, and determine all that succeeded. Lewes returns to the use of the word metaphysics in his 'Problems of Life and Mind.' "The object of the sciences is laws," he says; "the object of metaphysics the laws of laws. Metaphysics is objective logic, or the logic

of the cosmos, or the codification of the laws of cause. If we understand metaphysics in its primitive sense as τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά, that which comes after physics, it will embrace the ultimate generalisations of research, and become the name for the science of the *most general conceptions*." Here, however, he stops short. He goes a little further than Hume and Comte, since Comte denied the legitimacy of the word cause, and Hume maintained that "the highest end of human reason is to reduce many particular effects to a few general causes, such as electricity, gravity, cohesion, &c." But Lewes does not enter into the region of metaphysics properly so called, a study which he now proposes to designate metempirics.

Again, I think it would be well to draw a sharp distinction between psychology and metaphysics, because the legitimacy of psychology is admitted by anti-metaphysical writers, such as J. S. Mill and Lewes. I do not, therefore, deem it expedient to make psychology, as Mansel does, a branch of metaphysics concerned with the facts of consciousness as such, the other branch being termed ontology, or that which is concerned with the facts of consciousness in relation to the realities of which those facts bear testimony. If there be an entity, call it vital principle, ego, or what