

# **PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY AND SOCIAL EVOLUTION**

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Philosophy of History and Social Evolution by Hugh Doherty

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**HUGH DOHERTY**

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BY

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## INTRODUCTION.

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WHAT is the philosophy of history and social evolution? a narrative of events; battles lost and won; or governments and empires overthrown? It has been an awful tragedy, but not without a lesson for mankind.

Are famine, pestilence, and war necessary means to an end in the economy of nature? They have been hitherto, but that does not imply there is to be no end of famine, pestilence, and war. We are told in Scripture that "wars shall be no more," when man shall be raised from the animal to the human state of moral and social perfectibility: When is that to be? Scripture *seems* to contradict known facts of nature, but is there any real contradiction?

The same Almighty will created animals and men; wolves to prey on lambs, and men to slay each other. Tigers are impelled by nature to slaughter timid animals, and one race of mankind has been commanded to exterminate another. Herein the Author of nature and of revelation is not in contradiction with Himself; but does it follow that wars shall never cease because they have not been abolished yet? Will nature always be exactly what it has been and is now? Is there no evidence of evolutive transformations to tally with changes in the written Word? Is human nature now in Christendom what it was in prehistoric ages, and is still in savage tribes? Is there not in history abundant



evidence of progress and perfectibility? And is not the end foretold from the beginning in Holy Writ? Nature and inspiration, then, bear witness to the facts and laws of metamorphic social evolution; and that is the philosophy of history.

But why do unbelievers admit the authenticity of nature, and deny the authority of Scripture? Is it not because they have a special work to do in "science" which has been neglected by believers? Maybe; but that is no reason why they should be deemed infallible, or allowed to undermine the faith of Christians. Admitting the importance of their conscientious labours, we reject their inconclusive philosophy, and endeavour to give a connected view of the metamorphic evolution of humanity as a collective social organism, predestined to create and control a powerful body of artificial instrumentalities, to cultivate and improve the realms of nature.

How predestined? by Providence? or by "natural selection?" This has become an "open question" in many minds, with regard to social evolution. If "one organic cell" be the "origin of species," and the "struggle for existence" the cause of the extinction of inferior races, while the "survival of the fittest" is the result of "natural selection," what will be the outcome of biological, sociological, and cosmological evolution? Mr. Darwin finds evidences of the physiological origin of animal and vegetal organisms, which, by processes of metamorphic evolution, he thinks gave origin to man; but he does not know to what end, or for what purpose; nor does he consult human history to obtain evidence of spiritual phenomena, and the destiny of mankind on earth.

Is it "scientific" to assume that embryogenesis is a type of metamorphic evolution in the whole animal

kingdom, without predicating that the result of embryonic evolution in the highest known species of individual organism, once complete, is a type of the result of metamorphic evolution in collective realms when complete? We maintain that it is not scientific in a comprehensive sense: and this is where Darwinism is in the dark on questions of collective biology.

Why not inquire what resemblance there will be finally between the result of metamorphic evolution in an individual embryo which becomes a complex unity of organism (fish, reptile, bird, or mammal) and the result of metamorphic evolution in the collective animal kingdom which is to become a complex unity of some kind? What kind of organic unity? Physical philosophy does not profess to know. It is an inconclusive system of philosophy.

Natural philosophers can see the end from the beginning of a nest of eggs under the body of a bird sitting upon them to give heat and life to the unorganized substance of the eggs; but they do not observe the brooding inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to give spiritual life and fraternal organization to unorganized races of mankind. They do not see that life is the source of life: that vital spontaneity is indestructible as well as physical and chemical spontaneity. They do not see that the final home of the immortal soul is the eternal home from whence it came into this lower world; and the home to which it will assuredly return. They do not see much of anything, in fact, but the infinity of space and the mysterious power of atoms in molecular mechanics. They are inspired by the works of God, without being consciously under the influence of spiritual revelation.

Serpents' eggs are hatched by the heat of the sun, without parental incubation, and serpents are a part of

the divine economy of nature. The serpent which tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden was the spirit of unbelief; the Satan which induced her to eat of the forbidden fruit; and the same spirit has still a work to do in connection with the tree of knowledge.

The Bible is written to explain the progressive evolution of mankind from the instinctual state of animality up to the human state of rationality, and the language of inspiration is analogy in poetry and in revelation. Trees, animals, and minerals are symbols of human characters in various states of life. The serpent represents a state of unbelief, and therefore it was written in the beginning, "Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life" (Gen. iii. 14). And this is repeated in the prophecy of the end of metamorphic social evolution (Isaiah lxxv. 25): "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust *shall be* the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, saith the Lord." Is this not clear? Are not atoms the foundation of physical philosophy? the dust on which the serpent of unbelief feeds the mind? Dust without end, in all shapes and forms. Physical cosmology, without a rational idea of a spiritual world, or a definite theory of organic unity, as the result of biological and sociological evolution in the natural world. "There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in physical philosophy."