

LECTURE X.

PANTHEISM.

I.

WHEN we observe how widespread pantheism is, and has always been, we are naturally led to ask, Why has it proved so attractive? The consideration of this question may be combined with that of another equally important: Does it deserve to be as attractive as it has actually proved to be? These are the two questions which I shall keep before me in the present lecture. While endeavouring so far to answer both, I shall consider them, as I have just indicated, not apart, but in connection. Thus viewed they are practically equivalent to the single question, What are the real and apparent merits and defects of pantheism?

Let us, in the first place, seek an answer by judging of pantheism as a response to the purely and properly religious wants of human nature.

Now, obviously, pantheism is in this reference incomparably superior to atheism. In every form it gives some answer to our religious cravings. In every form atheism gives none. Pantheism always presents at least a little sustenance for the spirit, and sometimes a comparatively rich supply. Atheism yields nothing whatever which can satisfy the higher appetites of a human being. It pronounces everything a vanity except what is finite and fleeting. It is most natural, therefore, that the general mind and heart of humanity should never have hesitated when the alternative presented to it was pantheism or atheism to prefer the former.

Then pantheism has a decided advantage over polytheism in virtue of its emphatic affirmation of the unity and infinity of God. It responds, in consequence, to imperative demands of reason which polytheism contradicts. Hence while the human mind has always found itself compelled, as soon as it began to philosophise, either to assail polytheistic beliefs or to interpret them in a way which changes their entire character, it has, on the contrary, been always led by speculation to adopt pantheistic tenets. It is just when polytheism begins to pass into pantheism that philosophy makes its appearance; and, in fact, it is the philosophy which accounts for the transition. Further, pantheism has the power of rendering polytheism subservient to its advancement. It can provide it with

a basis of intellectual principles; it can devise plausible reasons even for its most extravagant details; it can make itself indispensable to it; and by doing so it can secure the assistance of all the forces of faith and superstition possessed by polytheism. This may be a source of enormous influence, as the example of India convincingly shows.

Further, pantheism has a certain marked superiority over every doctrine or system which leads men to think of creation as independent of the Creator, or of God as withdrawn from His creatures. Where theism has degenerated into deism, or Christianity into a mere intellectual creed, it is not unnatural that pantheism should prevail. In such a case its spread may serve a providential purpose as a counterpoise to the opposite extreme of error. It is the expression of a sense of a Divine presence in the universe. It insists on the all-pervading activity of God. It is belief in Him as One

“ Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, which impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.”

In the possession of this truth it has nothing which a true theism, such as we find in the Bible,

has not also, but it has a truth which the human soul needs, which theists have often not prized enough, and which many professed theists have virtually forgotten altogether.

Pantheism likewise ministers in some degree to devout emotion and affection by centring all in, and even by sacrificing all to, the one absolute Existence. It teaches men to rise both above the good and the evil of the visible and temporal world, and to yearn after eternal rest in the world of immutable being. It teaches them to sacrifice egotism and to glory in being parts and particles of God. That many minds can find a certain satisfaction and strength in this teaching the wide prevalence of pantheism in religion abundantly proves. It pervades all Hindu religion, and elicits and sustains in many a Hindu mind a piety which concentrates the thoughts and energies with such wonderful intensity and exclusiveness on eternity, that time and the things of time appear only the delusions of a dream. It has in every age of Christian history presented itself either as the rival and opponent of Christian doctrine, or with the claim to be its highest and truest expression; and many great and elevated minds have been found to listen to it, and to look to the absorption in the Infinite which it promises as their highest good.

Pantheism, however, falls far short of giving such satisfaction to the religious wants of man as a true

theism supplies. It does well to insist on the omnipresence of God, and on the complete and ceaseless dependence of the universe on His power. But all true theism does the same. There is no pantheism in the Bible, yet no book is more thoroughly pervaded and inspired by the thought that finite things are not self-existent, nor self-sustained, nor self-evolved, but that God is over all and in all, the ground of existence, the source of life, the giver of every good. This thought is implied on each page. It is strikingly expressed in the words of the Psalmist when he says,—“If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me:” of the prophet,—“Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord: do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord:” of the Apostle Paul,—“For in God we live, and move, and have our being:” and of the Apostle John,—“He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” To call language of this kind pantheistic has no warrant in reason, and no other tendency than to mislead. The truth that “of God, and through Him, and to Him, are all things,” is common to pantheism and theism, and distinguishes both from deism. There is more,

however, than this to be said. Pantheism is, in fact, far from teaching the full truth even as to God's presence. It cannot consistently conceive of it as a personal and spiritual, but only as a natural and necessary, presence. It tells us that God is in all that we see and touch and hear,—in the light of day, the springing grass, and whispering breeze ; but it tells us too that the God who is there is present only as substance, force, and law, not as reason, love, and will. If so—if God is only thus present to us in the elements and agencies of nature,—His presence is, in reality, only their presence. It adds nothing to their presence. Were it withdrawn, if the things themselves existed, there would be no difference. Imagination and poetry may endeavour to make something of the distinction between the presence of a merely impersonal God in nature and the mere presence of nature, but I do not see how either reason or a reasonable faith, either philosophy or religion, can attach any importance to it. If the God who is in the sunbeam can only be present as its light and heat, the sunbeam without God must be equivalent to the sunbeam with God. Only when God is felt to be the creative and legislative Reason—the supreme Will, free, righteous, and loving,—can His presence in the objects and processes of nature acquire a real religious significance. If He is even only so present in ourselves that there is no dis-

inction between Him and us, between His power and our power, His presence with us is not distinguishable from His absence from us. Another sort of presence is needed before the soul can be satisfied,—the presence of one spirit with another spirit. Religion implies, undoubtedly, that we realise God's presence with us; but it equally implies, what pantheism denies, that He is personally distinct from us; that He can have affection and compassion towards us, and that we can love Him with an unselfish love; that He can guide and help us, and that we may trust Him as we cannot trust ourselves; and that we may fear Him as one whom we can offend, and pray to Him as one who can hear and answer us.

Religion supposes faith, love, hope; but pantheism when it denies the personality of God refuses to these affections an appropriate object. It withholds from the view of the spirit what can alone satisfy its best and deepest feelings. The less of determinate personal character God is regarded as having, the less is it possible to love or trust Him. When supposed to be wholly indeterminate and impersonal, no room at all is left for a religion characterised by the personal affections. To a necessarily self-evolving impersonal God—whether conceived of as substance, identity, force, law, process, or idea—the only worship which can reasonably be offered is a cold, passionless resigna-

tion, which submits because it must, which bows not to love but to power, and which looks forward to the eternal loss of individual existence as the inevitable destination of man. The soul craves for union with God, and can have no healthy spiritual life except through union with Him; but the value, and even possibility of such union must depend not only on the disposition of man, but on the character of God. Pantheism, however, would divest God of character: it denies to Him self-consciousness, fatherly love, providential care, redeeming mercy: under pretence of exalting Him above all categories of thought and existence it reduces Him to the level of dead things, of necessary processes, of abstract ideas, or even to the still lower level of the unknowable and non-existent; and it thereby leaves no room for that union with God in rational, pure, and holy love, which is the only basis, the grand distinction, the power, and the glory of true religion. It offers to enable us to realise better than any other theory the omnipresence of God, but it represents Him as in reality inaccessible either to intelligence or affection. It keeps the word of promise to the ear, but breaks it to the heart.

History confirms what has just been said. It shows that pantheism can only find room for a religion of affectionate devotion by being untrue to its distinctive principles. The more consistent

it is, the less religious it is. In Brahminism and Buddhism we perceive how a deep sense of the evils of the present life, and a vivid fear of the evils which may be endured in the future phases of existence, may cause men to yearn intensely and to labour earnestly for the extinction of personality, or even for utter annihilation, but the absolute Being of the one system and the absolute Fate of the other are alike unloved. The mystical piety of India, when strictly pantheistic, knows nothing of the gratitude for Divine mercy and the trust in Divine righteousness which characterise evangelical piety. Instead of love and communion in love, it can only commend to us the contemplation of an object which is incomprehensible, devoid of all affections, and indifferent to all actions. When feelings like love, gratitude, and trust are expressed in the hymns and prayers of Hindu worship, it is in consequence of a virtual denial of the principles of pantheism; it is because the mind has consented to regard as real what it had previously pronounced illusory, and to personify what it had declared to be impersonal. Hinduism holds it to be a fundamental truth that the absolute Being can have no personal attributes, and yet it has not only to allow but to encourage its adherents to invest that Being with these attributes, in order that by thus tem-

porarily deluding themselves they may evoke in their hearts at least a feeble and transient glow of devotion. It has even been forced, by its inability to elicit and sustain a religious life by what is strictly pantheistic in its doctrine, to crave the help of polytheism, and to treat the foulest orgies and cruellest rites of idolatry as acts of reasonable worship paid indirectly to the sole and supreme Being. It finds polytheism to be the indispensable supplement of its pantheism. It is the personal gods of Hindu polytheism, and not the impersonal principle of Hindu pantheism, that the Hindu people worship. No people can worship what they believe to be entirely impersonal. Even in the so-called religions of nature the deified natural powers are always personified. It is only as persons that they are offered prayers and sacrifices. In lands where polytheism has been destroyed the pantheist still finds himself unable to worship mere indeterminate Being, and hence he becomes a worshipper either of humanity in general or of the individuals whom he regards as heroes. He can only conceive of his God as having reality in the progress of the human race or in the souls of great men. Says one of our modern pantheists, "The universal does not attract us until housed in an individual. Who heeds the waste abyss of possibilities? The ocean is everywhere the same, but it has no character

unless seen with the shore or the ship." In so far as pantheists, Hegel and Cousin, Carlyle and Emerson, are also hero-worshippers, man-worshippers.

I have said that the ability of pantheism to ally itself with polytheism accounts for its prevalence in certain lands ; but I must add that, although a power, this ability is not a merit. It is a power for evil—a power which sustains superstition, corrupts the system which possesses it, deludes and degrades the human mind and heart, and arrests social progress. Educated Hindus are often found to represent it as an excellence of Brahminism, that it not only tolerates but embraces and incorporates the lower phases of religion. They contend that it thereby elevates and purifies polytheism, and helps the minds of men to pass from the lowest stage of religious development gradually up to the highest. The opinion may seem plausible, but neither reason nor experience confirms it. Pantheism can give support to polytheism, and receive support from it, but only at the cost of sacrificing all its claims to be a rational system, and of losing such moral virtue as it possesses. If it look upon the popular deities as mere fictions of the popular mind, its association with polytheism can only mean a conscious alliance with falsehood, the deliberate propagation of lies, a persistent career of hypocrisy. If, on the other

hand, it regard them as really manifestations of the absolute Being, it must believe this on the authority of revelation or tradition, for it is impossible to pretend that their existence and the reality of their exploits can be proved by reason. But in this case pantheism manifestly ceases to have any title to rationality. Instead of showing itself to be a system explanatory of facts, it convicts itself of being a device to give plausibility to fables. Whatever can account for what is false as easily as for what is true, cannot really account for what is true. Then, as to the testimony of experience, India alone is surely sufficient proof that the union of pantheism with polytheism does not correct but stimulate the extravagances of the latter. Pantheism, instead of elevating and purifying Hindu polytheism, has contributed to increase the number, the absurdity, and the foulness of its superstitions.

While in India pantheism has allied itself to polytheism, in Germany it has often professed to accept even the most distinctive doctrines of Christianity. Many followers of Hegel have claimed to find in the mysteries of faith the profoundest speculative truths, while utterly rejecting and despising them as presented in Scripture and by the Church. They have talked of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit; of the incarnation and atonement; of the Word and sacraments; of the resurrection and eternal life,—as if they were sincere and fer-

vent believers, and yet have been virtually atheists. The form of pantheism which they have adopted has enabled them to present their anti-religious negations in the language which had been appropriated to the expression of positive Christian tenets. It has allowed them, while discarding sacred things, to retain sacred names and venerated formulas. Now, undoubtedly, pantheism in Germany has owed much of its success to this power of assuming the aspect of the system to which it is most opposed. Through availing itself thereof it has not only commended its doctrines to some who would have been shocked by them if they had been presented without disguise, but it has been able to work an amount of harm which it could never otherwise have done, by substituting for the principles of the Gospel dogmas nominally the same but really as different as darkness from light or poison from food. But, again, it must be said that power is by no means identical with merit. Satan is only the more dangerous because he can take the form of an angel of light; and he is none the worthier of our esteem when he presents himself in this character. So pantheism will receive no credit either from truly intelligent or scrupulously honest men because of its power of seeming to be what it is not, and of explaining away or perverting what it professes to interpret and confirm.

I have admitted that pantheism, judged of from a religious point of view, ranks high above atheism. I am entitled, yea, bound, to add that it is very apt to sink down to the same low level. It has often been observed that it has throughout its whole history vacillated between atheism—the denial that there is really a God,—and acosmism—the denial that there is really a world. The reason is obvious. It can only defend its claim to have reached the knowledge of absolute unity by virtually suppressing either the infinite or the finite—by representing either nature as an illusion or God as an abstraction. This truth has been so convincingly established by M. Saisset that it would be a waste of labour to dwell upon it. Dr Liddon has presented it concisely in these words: “In conceiving of God, the choice before a pantheist lies between alternatives from which no genius has as yet devised a real escape. God, the pantheist must assert, is literally everything; God is the whole material and spiritual universe; He is humanity in all its manifestations; He is by inclusion every moral and immoral agent; and every form and exaggeration of moral evil, no less than every variety of moral excellence and beauty, is part of the all-pervading, all-comprehending movement of His universal life. If this revolting blasphemy be declined, then the God of pantheism must be the barest abstraction of

abstract being ; He must, as with the Alexandrian thinkers, be so exaggerated an abstraction as to transcend existence itself ; He must be conceived of as utterly unreal, lifeless, non-existent ; while the only real beings are those finite and determinate forms of existence whereof 'nature' is composed. This dilemma haunts all the historical transformations of pantheism, in Europe as in the East, to-day as two thousand years ago. Pantheism must either assert that its God is the one only existing being whose existence absorbs and is identified with the universe and humanity ; or else it must admit that He is the rarest and most unreal of conceivable abstractions ; in plain terms, that He is no being at all."¹ If pantheism must thus sacrifice, however, either the infinite to the finite or the finite to the infinite—either God to nature or nature to God—it is not difficult to see which will be in greatest danger of being surrendered. Profoundly speculative and deeply devotional minds may refuse on any account to abandon their faith in the infinite, and be content to sacrifice the existence of the worlds of sense and consciousness ; but ordinary minds will assuredly never be able to persuade themselves that all finite things, themselves included, are mere illusions and nonentities, and will, consequently, confound God with the universe—thereby resolv-

¹ Bampton Lectures for 1866—8vo ed., pp. 448, 449.

ing God as distinguished from nature into a mere notion or name.

Religion and morality are so allied, that when we treat of the relation of pantheism to one of them, we cannot leave wholly out of consideration its relation also to the other. In fact, it is precisely in its non-recognition of the moral relations on which the communion of sinful man with a holy God ought to rest that pantheism most signally fails as a religion. Through its blindness to the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man it can only elicit and sustain a piety which is exclusive of morality. It allows, yea, leads, its votaries to believe that they can be religious without caring to be righteous. It implies that all self-accusation is self-deception, since the worst passions and vilest actions of humanity are states and operations of the One Absolute Being. Man cannot be justly held responsible for what truly belongs to God—for affections or deeds which are necessarily manifestations of the Divine nature. This characteristic of pantheism has doubtless been to many an attraction. It is only too natural that those who love sin should not desire to have to do with a God who hates it. Piety without morality cannot fail to please many better than a piety which is inclusive of morality. But such a piety can never truly satisfy a living and awakened soul. Conscience is an ineradicable principle of the

human spirit ; it is even the highest principle of the human spirit, because it testifies to the existence and presence of a law which is the expression of a supremely high and holy nature. There is no principle to which religion is more bound to conform and yield satisfaction, yet pantheism contradicts its most sacred and certain convictions, and directly tends to eradicate and destroy it.

Yes, pantheism is not only an inadequate religion, but it strikes at the very roots of morality, and strives to set aside its fundamental postulates. Man feels himself a free agent and responsible for his conduct. He recognises an order or law which impresses him as sacred, and he has a conviction that he can either bring his life into harmony with it or war against it. He acknowledges obligations and rights ; he experiences the joys of an approving conscience, and the bitterness of remorse. The pantheist is a man, and these convictions and feelings are known to him as well as to other men ; and he may, as many pantheists do, try earnestly to retain them, to do justice to them, to incorporate them into his system. But the task is a hopeless one. If evil be no less necessary or divine than good, evil must be but good in another way we are not skilled in, and neither God nor man can reasonably condemn it. If human personality and freedom are illusions, then must obligation, guilt and retribution be the absurdest

fictions. In a word, from pantheistic premisses we can only legitimately infer that "whatever is, is right," or that "might is right."

Pantheists who have had any regard to logic have never been able to reach other conclusions. The advocates of the Vedanta doctrine teach that sin is neither real in itself nor capable of reaching to what is real in man ; that it is but a creation of ignorance ; that "though the soul plunge itself in sin, like a sword in water, it shall in no wise cling to it;" that the distinctions of right and wrong are mere appearances which will vanish as soon as the dream-state of life is dispelled. The beautiful Bhagavad Gita distinctly teaches that what are called right actions and wrong actions are alike to God; that He may be served with evil as well as with good. It may be said that Stoicism, although a form of pantheism, was sublimely moral—a system which inspired and moulded heroic natures and nourished the noblest virtues. But it must be borne in mind that the entire morality of Stoicism rested on affirmations which no Stoic ever made even a serious attempt to reconcile either with the unity of existence or the fatalism of events. Stoic morality was rooted in the belief that reason and righteousness ruled the universe, and, above all, in the conviction that the will is outside of the sphere of fate—that it is free; that man is the absolute lord of his own actions ;

that the soul is essentially above fate, and equal to Jove himself. Stoicism escaped the moral consequences of its pantheism only by disregarding speculative consistency, and asserting the most manifest contradictions with truly Roman audacity. Pass to Spinoza. He had the merit of at least making desperate efforts to attain consistency. What sort of moral creed, then, did he deduce from pantheistic principles? One which almost looks as if it had been the joint production of a Thomas a Kempis and a Thomas Hobbes, containing, as it does, along with a rule of life which is rather too good for saints so long as they are in the flesh, another which is only followed by the brutes. Spinoza was a naturally noble-minded man, and so he taught that virtue is the intellectual love of God; but he was also a pantheist and a reasoner, and therefore he taught, too, that the measure of man's right is his power and appetite; that the best right is that of the strongest. In like manner, whenever Hegelian pantheism has been fully thought out and clearly expressed, evil has been maintained to be essential to the self-manifestation of God and necessarily involved in the existence of good, might has been proclaimed to be right, success has been held to be its own sufficient justification, war has been defended on immoral grounds, and personal liberties have been despised. The whole history of panthe-

ism, in fact, teaches that no true system of ethics or politics can be based on a pantheistic foundation; that neither individuals nor societies can derive a healthy moral life from a pantheistic source.

Von Hartmann, in a celebrated but superficial book on the Religion of the Future, has asserted that theism is inconsistent with morality, since there can be no moral worth in the obedience of the will to any law which is not of its own making; and that pantheism is the true basis of morality, since it alone enables us to conceive of the will as its own law. Such statements show great want both of insight and reflection. If the will did give itself a law, its obedience to that law would be morally worthless. It cannot be reasonably imagined to be morally bound to obey a law which it has itself created, or, indeed, to be morally bound at all, unless under a law which is not of its own making. The will is not its own law, and cannot even be conceived of as its own law. To identify the will and its law is to confound entirely distinct things. For the will to rule the will, it would need at once to command and to obey, to be bond and free, dependent and independent. To be its own rule were for it the same as to be without rule. Besides, nothing can be more obvious than that pantheism does not allow us to conceive of the will as determining itself, as giving itself a law, or being a law

to itself. It makes it, on the contrary, impossible for us consistently to believe in any real self-determination or self-control as belonging to the will. Pantheism leaves no possibility of the existence of will properly so called. Let it be granted that there is true will in God or man, and pantheism cannot be maintained to be a rational theory of the universe.

It is more plausible—more correct even—to argue that pantheism ministers moral strength to men by teaching them to realise that God worketh in them and through them. By inculcating its doctrine of the immanence of God in all human thought and action, while at the same time especially insisting on the achievements of power and genius as the manifestations of the Divine agency, it has gained for itself a sympathy and exerted an influence which are far from inconsiderable. The conqueror, the philosopher, the poet, feels himself borne upwards, as it were, and along a path of glory and success, by the force of an indwelling God. The hours of highest achievement and joy are those in which man is frequently least conscious of his weaknesses and limitations as a man, and most prone to identify himself with God. Pantheism may give strength both for endurance and action, although it is more closely connected with the pride of power than with power itself. It does nothing, however, in a moral respect which a true

theism does not accomplish in a wiser and more efficacious way. Such a theism as that which underlies Christianity tells us that we may have strength from God for all our work if we only seek for it; that God is well pleased to work in every humble heart both to will and to do; and, at the same time, it does not tell us, like pantheism, that whatever we will and do is His willing and doing; that whether we pray or refrain from prayer, our work will be His work. It teaches us to trust in God for all good gifts and for grace to perform all good works; while it does not, like pantheism, make this great lesson of none effect by destroying the distinction between good and evil,—between dwelling in God and living in sin,—between being filled with the spirit of God and filled with ambition or pride or lust.

The distinction of good and evil, then, like the reality of a power of self-determination, is a barrier to pantheism. A plain man who holds fast to what his conscience testifies as to the opposition of right and wrong, will always have an adequate argument in hand against a self-consistent and thorough pantheism. For pantheism would obliterate the distinction between them, or make evil the mere absence of good or a lesser good. It cannot allow that moral good and evil are in direct and positive antagonism. It is bound to maintain that the one involves the other, and that both are

needed to complete a whole. It sees in their opposition only an instance of the dualism so abundantly exemplified by the polarities of nature,—by action and reaction, darkness and light, heat and cold, male and female, motion and rest, matter and spirit. But who that faithfully adheres to the testimony of conscience can be deceived by such a view? Must a man not be already blind to the difference between right and wrong who does not regard with profound distrust every assertion or insinuation to the effect that they are alike necessary, alike essential to the order and harmony of the universe? Will he not demand rigid proof for every assertion or insinuation of the kind? If he demand it, he will certainly not obtain it. It is easy to show that there is a rational and harmonious connection between light and darkness, heat and cold, and all the other so-called polarities of nature; that they come from the same mind, belong to the same system, and work together to the same end; that their conflicts are only apparent, while their co-operation is real. But no man has ever proved that truth and falsehood, virtue and vice, are similarly connected. Many have asserted it. None, however, have produced other evidence for it than illusory analogies, or deductions from false premisses. Conscience pronounces sin that which is not necessary—that which ought not to be. Reason declares it unreasonable, and finds

that it is never in and of itself a means to good, whatever good may spring from opposition to it. Right and wrong are absolutely exclusive of each other. There can be no compromise between them, or reconciliation of them. They cannot blend and merge into any common higher result. The one can only be satisfied by the annihilation of the other. All this pantheism is logically necessitated to deny, but in so doing dashes itself against a rock.

I might now proceed to consider the moral character of the optimism, the historical fatalism, the glorification of war, the hero-worship, and the contempt for weakness, poverty, and suffering virtue, which pantheism generates; but I have elsewhere done this so fully,¹ that I shall leave this part of my subject without further remark, and pass from where the dogma we are examining is weakest to where it is, perhaps, strongest.

It has often been observed that pantheism exercises a special attraction over æsthetic and artistic natures. It appeals more effectively to the emotional susceptibility than to the conscience. For while it refrains from representing God as a moral personality, it exults in describing Him as a plastic force which fills the universe with forms of beauty and grandeur,—the

¹ Historical Philosophy in France, pp. 452-479.

"Eternal spring
Of life and death, of happiness and woe,
Of all that chequers the phantasmal scene
That floats before our eyes in wavering light."

Now there are many minds in which the sense of beauty is stronger than the conviction of obligation,—which are more pained by the contemplation of æsthetic deformity than of moral evil,—which are repelled by the thought of God as a Governor and Judge, yet attracted by the thought of Him as the

"Soul of those mighty spheres
Whose changeless paths thro' heaven's deep silence lies ;
Soul of that smallest being,
The dwelling of whose life
Is one faint April sun-gleam."

It is quite natural that such minds should be taken captive by a system which does not disturb them with admonitions about sin and retribution, pardon and grace, and holiness ; but which, while adding to their interest in nature and human life, allows them to rest in the admiration of beauty as devotion to God. This is not, however, because the sense of beauty misleads in itself, or is in excess even in those who are thus deceived. The explanation of their fall is no excellence, but a defect. It is not because of the vividness and susceptibility of their æsthetic sympathies that those to whom I refer become pantheists, and adore a God who has

life and activity but no moral attributes ; it is because of the comparative feebleness and deadness of their moral principles. It is not because their sense of beauty is too strong, and they are exquisitely alive to the charms of nature ; but because their sense of duty is too weak, and they are strangely insensible to the hatefulness of sin and to the claims of righteousness. It is because their minds are one-sided and ill-balanced, and especially because reverence for holiness is not, as it ought to be, the central conviction of their souls. There can be, I need scarcely say, no true piety which rests on sympathy with the beautiful to the exclusion of reverence for moral excellence, or even in which æsthetic emotions are not subordinated to moral convictions. A being like man, who lives continually under moral law, cannot safely luxuriate in a mere religion of beauty.

But while this is to be kept in mind, it must also be maintained that theism, rightly apprehended, can sustain and satisfy all sensibilities to beauty not only as well as pantheism, but much better. It fully recognises the truth in virtue of which pantheism attracts æsthetic natures, although it recognises other truths as of still greater moment. Its acknowledgment of God as a personal moral Governor and Judge does not prevent its also acknowledging that He creates with plastic hand all lovely things, adorns even the desert flower, born

to blush unseen by any eye but His own, and elaborately moulds and delicately tints even the tiniest creatures in the depths of the ocean, because His own character spontaneously impels Him to make His works beautiful, and divinely to rejoice over what is beautiful. When poetry represents God as present and operative in nature—wheeling the silent spheres, shining in the sun, hurling the tempest forth, feeding and guiding His creatures, or speaking in the reason and conscience of man—some are ready to pronounce it pantheistic. They are not, however, to be commended or imitated. It is not pantheism to show forth the omnipresence of God. To say that it is, is to do gross injustice to theism. Only a theism falsely so called will refuse cordially to endorse whatever language merely helps us to realise that God fills and pervades His creation, and that in Him it lives and moves, and has its being. We must take some other view of pantheism than one which would compel us to include the psalmists and prophets of Israel, Christ and His apostles and their followers in all ages, among its expositors and adherents.

All the power, then, which pantheism possesses to satisfy the æsthetic capacities of man, theism also possesses. But it possesses far more. Behind nature it shows us not only a plastic force, but a perfect spirit. And this should increase our en-

joyment of nature—even of mere physical nature—which is beautiful to us in proportion as we perceive in it reflections of the graces of spirit. Physical things must be all the more sublime and fair for disclosing to the mind the majesty, the love, and tenderness of a perfect spirit. It is only in such a spirit that the mind can perceive an ideal of spiritual beauty. A perfectly holy spirit must be a perfectly beautiful spirit, and the system which presents to us an infinite spirit, perfect in all holy beauties, can alone completely satisfy the æsthetic mind. It necessarily and directly responds to the æsthetic no less than to the moral nature of men. It may call its disciples to work, indeed, rather than to enjoy, but the work which it prescribes is to realise a perfect ideal. It teaches to yearn for that beauty of universal holiness of which material beauty is but the shadow. The God of pantheism is no spiritual ideal, and can demand from worshippers no spiritually ideal life.

Further, pantheism, it seems to me, has a natural tendency to vitiate and destroy art by depriving it of a moral basis and moral motives. I admit that, in so far as it is antagonistic to atheism, or deism, or even a merely scholastic theism, it fosters art. Probably in all ages in which art has flourished the pantheistic spirit has been more or less influential. Yet it appears obvious that the decided predominance of pantheism, and still more

its exclusive sway, would be as fatal to art as even atheism or deism. It would lead straight to belief in the moral indifference of art, and would favour the rise and spread of merely naturalistic or sensuous schools of poetry and painting. It could not sustain the faith to which art owes its highest achievements, and which can alone maintain it in the vigour of perennial youth—the faith that “earth fills her lap with treasures not her own,”—that there is no pathos equal to that of moral conflict, and no sublimity equal to that of moral achievement,—that natural beauties are suggestive of spiritual perfections. Were our poets to breathe no finer ether than that which pantheism supplies, they might for a time give us songs of luscious sweetness and intoxicating delight, but the inevitable foulness of corruption would appear at length. It is of singers who have been inspired from a loftier and purer source that men will say—

“ Blessings be on them, and eternal praise,
Who gave us nobler loves and nobler cares—
The Poets, who on earth have made us heirs
Of truth and pure delight by heavenly lays.”

Would pantheism not lead painters into such an æsthetic and ethical heresy as that their highest achievements were to be won through the representation of mere nature, or even of mere nudity? And were any such heresy to become general; were our painters not to remember that they have

higher work to do than to portray the unripe graces of a Cupid, or the sensuous charms of a Venus; should they fail to realise that to become truly great in their profession they must be able to understand and interpret what is spiritually and morally significant, and that, consequently, they must possess, along with other gifts, the power of spiritual and moral vision,—then, assuredly, the painter's noble art would soon become degraded in the unworthy hands of those who professed to cultivate it.

II.

We have now seen how pantheism is related to religion, to morality, and to art. Let us further consider how it is related to thought itself, or to what is called philosophy,—*i.e.*, thought at its best—the highest thought on the highest themes.

Pantheism has always exerted a powerful attraction on speculative intellects. It has drawn not a few of the ablest of them closely and entirely to itself. The secret of its power over them is not difficult to discover. Pantheism professes to have reached what philosophy aspires to attain. It claims to know and to make known the one principle from which all dependent existence is logically and necessarily derived,—the one principle to know which is to know everything. It pretends

to have reached an absolute unity from which it can show how the entire worlds of existence and of knowledge have been evolved. Now all philosophy strives after unity. It is its aim, its task, to reduce complexity to simplicity, the many to the one. It is not to be wondered at if it should often imagine that its dream has been realised; if it should be ready to believe that its desires have been fulfilled.

The search after absolute knowledge has ended with many in their acquiescence in some form of pantheism. The search itself is inevitable, for its cause lies in the very nature of knowledge. It has been truly enough said that "to know is to limit;" and yet nothing is more characteristic of knowledge than that it is impossible to assign to it any external or objective limits. There are few propositions, perhaps, which more need to be thoughtfully appreciated than just this,—*The only ascertainable limitations of reason in the investigation of truth are those which are inherent in its own constitution.* Reason has its limits in its own laws. It is the business of psychology and logic to discover what these laws are. When they are known the powers of reason are known, because reason can never claim to be irrational. It is useless, however, to attempt to mark off the external or objective boundaries of rational research; useless to attempt to draw a line in the outward universe, beyond which all will be a *terra incognita*,

and within which all is explicable. There is absurdity—self-contradiction—in the very attempt. To draw a line separating the knowable from the unknowable we must have already done what we affirm to be impossible,—known the unknowable. We cannot draw a boundary unless we see over it. There can be no within for us where there is no without. We can set no limit to anything if we know that there is nothing beyond it. We cannot say that any fact or doctrine whatever is in itself, or in its own nature, unknowable; because to have a right to say this we should require to know it in itself or in its own nature; and if we could know it thus, it manifestly could not be unknowable. There can, in fact, be nothing unknowable in itself,—nothing unknowable for reason in itself. There can be no other unknowable for reason than the irrational or self-contradictory—which is to say, there is nothing really unknowable, since the irrational or self-contradictory is known as that in which there is nothing to know. Thus in all knowledge there is not only limitation, but comprehension of what is within, and apprehension of what is without, the limit. And the apprehension which transcends limitation while implying it, can never be absorbed into or exhausted by the comprehension which is defined by limitation while implying the unlimited. The apprehension of the unlimited, thus accompanying, in every act

of knowledge, the comprehension of the limited, forces on the mind at every moment the consciousness that beyond the little which we comprehend there is always more to be comprehended. A consciousness, generally unreflective, of the relationship of the finite to the infinite, as thus implied in the very nature of knowledge, is the profoundest and most powerful stimulus to the continuous and indefinite progress of knowledge. But is there any wonder that it should, in certain minds, lead not only to progress, but to discontent with such progress as they find themselves capable of making? To feel one's self at every step as if in contact with the infinite, and yet to be able to grasp only some small fragment of the finite; to be always haunted by the absolute, yet always to come clearly face to face merely with the relative; to pursue what one never exactly reaches; to find that in no direction has our labour an assignable end,—is apt to become painful, and especially painful to those who are most given to reflection, and most possessed by the craving for truth. What can be more natural than that some of those who thus suffer should not only seek relief by endeavouring to attain to a distinct and independent knowledge of the absolute and unconditional ground of all derivative existences and secondary truths, but succeed in persuading themselves that they had found both this relief and this knowledge? There will always be

some to whom the hope of an absolute science, such as pantheism promises, will be the most seductive that can be presented.

If this hope had been less seductive—if the promise, “Your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods,” had not been to certain minds a very powerful temptation,—the essential futility of pantheism must have been long ago recognised. Unless strongly biassed in its favour, men could not have failed to see that it is as little fitted to satisfy the intellect as to satisfy the heart and conscience. History of itself would have shown them this. It exhibits pantheism as bearing on its very face the most suspicious marks of illegitimacy. For pantheism has appeared only in a succession of disconnected, or very loosely connected, systems, which do not supplement, but contradict, one another. In all its purer and more self-consistent forms it has been no more than the private doctrine of some individual philosopher, or of a little school of persons who have consented to accept him as an authority. No school of the kind has flourished long, owing to the arbitrariness and incoherence characteristic of all pantheistic creeds. What a contrast does pantheism present in this respect to theism, the history of which is a single, uninterrupted, ever - progressive, ever - expanding movement! Pantheism is a sporadic and contracted phenomenon; theism is permanent and

comprehensive. The former has at particular seasons given satisfaction for a short time to individuals and parties; the latter has been an unfailing strength and joy to all classes of men in all ages.

It is not difficult to perceive reasons why pantheism should not have been more to humanity than what history shows it to have been. It is because it has radical defects, which bring it into necessary conflict with reason. It goes fatally astray at the very outset. The absolute unity which it seeks is a mere delusion, a mere dream. There is no path either to it or from it. The absolute unity as conceived of by pantheism is something entirely indeterminate—something which has no distinctive characteristics, and of which, prior to its self-manifestation or development, nothing can be definitely affirmed or denied—yet which, by an inherent necessity, progressively determines itself, and evolves out of itself all distinctions and all definite objects, so as to constitute the whole universe of being and thought, the infinite and the finite, the necessary and the contingent, the material and the spiritual. But this unity is a mere idol of the mind. Belief in it is intellectual idolatry. The hope of ever reaching it is consummate folly.

The absolute unity of pantheism has been conceived of in all sorts of ways, but, no matter how conceived of, diversity, multiplicity, the actual uni-

verse as we know it, has ever been derived from it only by surreptitiously dealing with it as if it were the opposite of what it is pretended to be—as if it were not absolutely one, but, on the contrary, as multiple and complex as what is deduced from it. And it could not be otherwise, because from absolute unity nothing but absolute unity can come, or rather absolutely nothing can come.

There are pantheists who have sought absolute unity in a material principle, and who have constructed systems of what is called materialistic pantheism. Such pantheism is essentially identical with materialism; and every objection which applies to materialism at all tells against it in the form of materialistic pantheism. Order, life, mind, and morality are all facts as unexplained by materialism when professing to be monism as when confessing itself to be multitudinism. For it is the profession which is erroneous, and the confession which is correct. Unity can never be reached by materialistic pantheism, nor can variety ever be explained by it. For—as I had occasion to insist when discussing materialism—there is no real oneness known, or even conceivable, in matter. The purest physical element is no real unity, but a plurality or aggregation of parts, each of which is as much a unity as the whole. Every particle of the purest physical element is distinct from every other. And no single absolutely pure physical

element can be imagined as producing an element different in kind from itself. Such production would be absolute creation, and creation without a cause. Further, matter absolutely one must be matter which is entirely indeterminate. But there is no evidence for the existence of such matter. The only reasons ever produced for belief in its existence have been worthless metaphysical subtleties. And if it did exist, it would explain exceedingly little. Far from accounting for or dispensing with mind, it would at every step imply and demand it. Plato and Aristotle convinced themselves that the material universe must have an uncreated basis, called by the former "nurse" and "receptacle," and by the latter "first-timber" and "the underlying;" but both had the perspicacity to see that such ultimate matter could at the most be merely a condition and possibility of things; that it must receive reality, forms, and attributes from an eternal and active Reason; that to suppose it to give rise to definite objects and organisms, and finally to generate intelligence, was an opinion which no thoughtful mind could entertain.

There are pantheists who have sought the absolute unity in physical force, and who have constructed systems of dynamical pantheism. They, too, have searched and laboured in vain. Mere force is as unintelligible as mere matter. Is there

a force which is the force of no being or thing? If there is not, clearly the absolute cannot be in mere force; and I am not aware that any person has shown that there is—that there can be action without an agent. And if it were proved, absolute unity would be far from reached. Every physical force is necessarily divisible force, and has, therefore, no strict essential unity. And a physical force strictly one in kind can no more produce diversity than can a single physical element. It may be supposed to have a law within it necessitating action, and that law must be in it all, and must necessitate everywhere the same action, a dreary monotony of change, out of which no variety can come.

There are pantheists who have conceived of the absolute unity under the similitude of organic life. To them the universe has presented itself as a vast organism, everywhere instinct with a self-developing vitality. But surely there can be neither unity nor absoluteness in a life which is inseparable from physical conditions, confined within organic limits, and which grows like a plant or an animal. Anthropomorphism may be a poor theory, but it must be better than phytomorphism or zoomorphism. To conceive of the absolute after the analogy of a plant or a beast may be poetical, but it is so plainly irrational as to call for no discussion.

None but superficial thinkers, however, have believed that the type of absolute unity was to be found in the physical or organic world. The material, the dynamical, and the organic forms of pantheism have only had admirers among those in whose minds speculation is in its infancy. Elevated and comprehensive intellects, when they have unhappily adopted pantheism, have almost always become metaphysical pantheists. Let us look, therefore, at the central ideas of some of the metaphysical forms of pantheism.

There is a pantheism which places absolute unity in absolute being, and which represents the worlds of sense and of consciousness as illusions. Finding that it cannot explain variety by unity, it sacrifices variety to unity, so far as it is possible for the human mind to do this. It maintains that there is no real being but one, and that all the objects of ordinary experience, and all the distinctions of the common understanding, are illusions. This has been the doctrine of men of great speculative genius, and is as consistent a theory of pantheism as has yet been devised. On at least two grounds, however, it may, I think, be safely pronounced a failure. First, it admits that besides the one real being there are appearances or illusions. But even appearances or illusions are phenomena which require to be explained. And

they cannot be explained on the hypothesis of absolute unity. They imply that besides the absolute being there are minds which can be haunted by appearances, and which can be deluded into believing that these appearances are realities. Secondly, the pantheism which maintains that there is no being except one, is under the necessity of allying itself with a scepticism which will not allow it to maintain that there is even one being. It is only by the help of a scepticism which denies the validity of the primary perceptions and fundamental laws of mind, that it can undertake to show that plurality, time, and change are illusions. But such scepticism is a very dangerous associate. It is as ruinous to any one system which professes to be a system of truth as to any other; and no one system can legitimately make use of it against another. If philosophical scepticism be conclusive, the positive assertions of pantheism must all be arbitrary. If we may not believe in plurality, neither may we believe in unity. If we may deny that time exists, notwithstanding that it is a necessary condition of thought, we may equally deny that eternity exists, since we can give no other reason for our belief in the existence of eternity than for our belief in the existence of time.

There is another pantheism which, instead of

sacrificing, like the one just mentioned, all variety to unity, endeavours to find an absolute unity which includes all variety. It rejects the view that God and the world, mind and matter, are substantially distinct, and maintains that there is but one substance—"that which exists in itself and is conceived by itself, or, in other words, that the conception of which does not require the conception of anything else antecedent to it." Infinite extension and infinite thought are represented by it as simply attributes of this substance, and all minds and bodies as modes of these attributes. It thus traces the material and mental worlds back into a single all-comprehensive substance. This is the kind of pantheism which was expounded with so much genius by Spinoza. There are many objections to it, but I have only to indicate here that what it proclaims to be absolute unity is nothing of the kind. For, first, this substance, although it can be conceived *per se*, still must be conceived. It is an object of thought, and only affirmed to exist in virtue of being an object of thought. The existence of substance is implied in the essence of substance as part of its idea; such is the reason given for asserting the existence of substance. But if so, we have obviously here not one thing but two things—substance and the idea of substance—and the first is last and the last first. These two cannot be fused into one. The idea of substance

cannot be resolved into the substance itself, seeing that, apart from the idea, there is no warrant for belief in the existence of substance ; nor can substance itself be resolved into its idea, since it is admitted that there may be in the substance itself an infinity of attributes of which we have no idea, and since, if substance be reducible to, or convertible with its idea, the pantheism of substance must be false, and must give place to absolute idealism. Secondly, substance cannot be known *per se*, but only through properties which are in relation to the minds that know them. Nothing can be known unless it has qualities which can be apprehended. But if this be the case, the attributes and modes of substance are its aspects towards minds, and hence substance, instead of explaining and comprehending minds, implies and presupposes them. Thirdly, if we waive the objection just stated, and grant that the attributes of substance are objectively and essentially in the substance itself, manifestly the substance can no longer be thought of as an absolute unity, but only as an aggregation of distinct essences. When Spinoza maintained that extension and thought were eternally and essentially, but not substantially, distinct, he was obviously granting a real duality and affirming a merely nominal unity.

There is another pantheism which, perceiving the defects of the foregoing theory, places absolute

unity in the absolute identity of subject and object, of the ideal and the real, of spirit and nature. It holds spirit and nature to be fundamentally the same—spirit being invisible nature, and nature visible spirit—and refers both back to a principle which transcends yet comprehends them, which originates and constitutes the spheres both of thought and being, and by its self-evolution forms the entire universe into an organic whole. This is the central idea in the pantheism of Schelling. It is not one, I think, which will bear examination. For, in the first place, what it affirms to be the absolute is really a process of development, or at least something subject to growth—something which advances from lower to higher, from worse to better. But surely everything of the kind, whether viewed in itself or as a process, or at its latest and most definite stage as a product, must be finite and relative. Infinity and progress, absoluteness and development, are mutually exclusive ideas. Secondly, the identity of subject and object is a self-contradictory phrase and conception. It is like the identity of black and white, odd and even, male and female; in other words, it is an alleged instance of the identity of correlatives. But just in so far as there is identity there is not correlation, and in so far as there is correlation there is not identity. Thirdly, the human mind cannot form the least

notion of a self-identical subject-object. All consciousness involves the dualism of subject and object. It is only realised as a relation. The terms of the relation may be self and a modification of self, for the object is not necessarily apart from or out of the *Ego*; but wherever there is consciousness there is relation, and wherever there is relation there is dualism. Consciousness can no more transcend the dualism of subject and object than a man can get away from himself. Fourthly, if there be such an absolute as is alleged, the knowledge of its existence must be identical with its existence. In the apprehension of the absolute subject-object there must be no distinction between knowing and being. But this implies that the knowledge of the absolute is not only unlike any knowledge of which we are conscious, but is knowledge of which we cannot possibly be conscious—knowledge which annihilates our consciousness at the moment that it identifies us with God. Schelling admitted that his absolute could only be apprehended by a very peculiar and indescribable act. Certainly any description he gave of it was peculiarly unintelligible and absurd, as has been shown in a masterly manner by Sir Wm. Hamilton in his essay on the Philosophy of the Unconditioned. I am aware that the correctness of Sir Wm. Hamilton's representation has been challenged, and the relevancy of his

criticism denied, by a writer who has made an earnest special study of the works of Schelling;¹ but I cannot find that any essential inaccuracy has been shown to exist in Sir William's account, although it may be granted to be incomplete; while his criticism would, it seems to me, remain substantially applicable, even if the rival but not really contradictory version as to what Schelling taught were adopted. Finally, if the existence of a unity of the sort imagined be granted to be known, it must still be explained how the subject and object, with their various stages and phases, have been produced by and from it. This is a task which has not been successfully accomplished. The attempts made by Schelling to *construe*, as he called it, from the absolute principle even the possible world, were quite fanciful. He himself confessed that he was wholly unable to explain by it the actual world, or even to show that there was real existence. He spent his later life in labouring to build up a theistic system to supplement this rather serious defect in his earlier philosophy.

Many pantheists failing to find a satisfactory type of unity either in physical nature or in a sphere common to matter and mind, have en-

¹ See the paper on "Schelling's Life and Letters" in the 'Fortnightly Review,' Nov. 1, 1870; and that on "Mr G. H. Lewes on Schelling and Hegel" in the 'Contemporary Review,' Sept. 1872, by Mr J. S. Henderson.

deavoured to discover it in mind itself : while they still refuse to accept the view that a perfect and personal spirit can alone account for the universe. Hence we have a class of pantheisms based on such conceptions as a universal Me, an absolute Idea, and unconditioned Will, &c. These forms of pantheism may be called psychical pantheisms, in order to distinguish them from those which I have designated physical and metaphysical.

There is a pantheism which describes the absolute principle as a universal Ego which comprehends every particular Ego—a pure Me which transcends yet manifests itself in every empirical Me—a free and active Selfhood (*Ichheit*) which posits the physical world as not-self, and objectifies itself in the moral order of the world. But this Ego or Me is, we are told, not a person ; it becomes conscious only in individuals, and has no existence apart from the world which it originates. God is merely another name for the moral order of the world. What are we to think of this view, which was made famous by Fichte? What I think of it is that he who accepts it must be very easily satisfied. The very notion of a universal Ego—of an Ego which is no Ego in particular, and yet which is every particular Ego—is an arbitrary and absurd mental fiction. What cannot know itself to be a self—what cannot say Me in contradistinction to Thee—has no right to be

thought or spoken of as an Ego or Me. All that is real in the so-called universal Ego is the multiplicity of definite individuals in which it is alleged to attain consciousness. The pure Me is affirmed to be not a person, and to have no self-consciousness, no knowledge of itself or in itself. That is, of course, so much the more reason for denying it to be a Me at all. If impersonal and unconscious it may be an entity or a fiction—some sort of thing or some sort of abstraction—but it must certainly be something far too mean and poor to be called an Ego. It comes to consciousness, it is said, in each empirical Ego. But this assertion must be distinctly denied. If the pure Ego is not conscious of itself in itself, neither is it conscious of itself in the empirical Ego. The empirical Ego is conscious only of its own self. Consciousness, in fact, knows nothing of a universal unconscious Ego. If we grant the existence of such an Ego, the worlds of consciousness and perception must still be shown to be derivable from it. In this part of his task Fichte is admitted on all hands to have utterly failed. The physical world, indeed, he hardly even attempted to explain; he sought rather to explain it away.

Shall we adopt, then, Hegel's theory of the absolute? He reduced everything to thought, and deduced everything from thought. The material and the moral world, nature and his-

tory, science, art, and religion, are, according to him, but stages of an idea, apart from which they have no existence, by the movement of which they are constituted, and through which they are formed into an organic and logical whole. Hegel professes to give us a philosophy demonstrated from beginning to end, as it starts with the absolute first—the simplest notion of reason—pure being—and thence derives all knowledge and evolves all reality in a continuous process of reasoning from abstract and implicit to concrete and explicit, everywhere determined by the principle of the identity of contraries. Vast ingenuity was shown in the elaboration and application of this notion, but I have only to do with the general notion itself, which need not detain us long, since it involves all that is most objectionable in the view of Schelling which we have already given reasons for rejecting. It represents the absolute reality, for example, as the result or completion of a process of development. This is of itself enough to warrant its condemnation. An absolute which is either in the course of being developed or which has been developed is sheer nonsense, but unfortunately it is also nonsense of a kind which leads very easily to monstrous blasphemies. Hegelianism has never been able to show that the only idea of God compatible with its principles is not that of a God gradually evolved from unconsciousness to consciousness, and

thence onwards to the height of the wisdom of Hegel. Then, Hegel's view, like Schelling's, proceeds throughout on the assumption of the identity of thought and being—a position which ought not to be assumed but proved, and which is nowhere proved. Can it be proved? Is it true? No. Whatever is known is, and whatever is may be known—infinite knowledge must be coextensive with infinite existence—but that knowing and being are identical is what by no effort of mind can be rationally conceived or believed. Further, Hegel, although he starts with a conception which allows him to treat his thoughts as things, can only seem to explain the evolution of things by making absurdity the essence of reason and the principle of demonstration. He calmly tells us that ordinary and formal logic—those principles and processes of reasoning to which we owe all the discoveries of science and all the inventions of art—cannot explain the concrete, and that the true philosopher must disregard such logical laws as the axioms of identity and contradiction, and substitute for them the identity of contradictories. In other words, he undertakes to demonstrate his system, but on condition that we accept as good reasonings what sane judgment pronounces to be bad arguments. He professes to explain the generation of God, man, and nature, from the pure being which is equivalent to pure nothing; but

it is on the assumption that contradiction is the essence of existence and of reason. Well, no doubt, pure nothing as mother, and pure absurdity as father, might be expected to beget a remarkable family, and have done so in the discoveries of Hegelianism. But true reason can, I fear, have nothing to do either with the parents or their children, It must still continue to recognise *Ex nihilo nihil fit* as an axiom, and to withhold its admiration from contradictions. It may be added that true reason must treat impersonal thought—thought without a thinker—and unconscious thought, or thought of which consciousness is only an accident—an acquisition attained in man—as unthinkable thought, a highly ridiculous kind of thought, closely akin to the pure being which is pure nothing, yet possesses the power of becoming everything.

Since Hegel's time pantheism has decidedly gone from bad to worse. Hegel placed the absolute unity in reason and sought to deduce everything from reason, although he unfortunately mistook unreason for reason ; but those who have come after him have openly likened the absolute to what is devoid of reason in us—to blind Will (Schopenhauer), to the Unconscious (Von Hartmann), to the Irrational (Bahnsen), &c. Thus they have transformed pantheism into atheism and pessimism. This is what pantheism has developed into ;

and one is at a loss to conceive what can come next. Beyond pessimism and the glorification of unreason there would seem to be nothing but nihilism and the worship of the Devil. I have elsewhere, however, said perhaps enough about the views of the absolute given by the pessimistic forms of pantheism.

I may reaffirm, then, that the pretended absolute unity of pantheism always turns out, when critically examined, to be a unity merely in name, and otherwise to be an idol of the imagination, or at least a thoroughly inadequate explanation of the universe. The fact that such unity, just because arbitrary and fictitious, can be conceived of, however, in a great variety of ways, is one of the main sources of the strength and permanence of pantheism speculatively considered. The system is a very Proteus. In any one form it is weak ; but when worsted in one form it can readily appear in another, and the struggle must be renewed. Or, to change the figure, it is an enemy which is neither strong in attack nor in direct defence, but which is skilled in the art of retreat and possessed of numerous cities of refuge. None of these cities stands a long siege ; but when one of them is taken the conqueror has often the mortification of seeing another behind it, where his old enemy is blowing trumpets and waving flags, as if he had been gaining a victory instead of suffering a defeat.

Belief in pantheistic unity is, if my argumentation has been valid, intellectual idolatry. It is an idolatry which requires us to make the most enormous and costly sacrifices. Let us consider for a moment what some of these are. First, then, all the arguments employed by theism to show the existence of a God of wisdom and righteousness must be discarded. These arguments are as relevant against pantheism as against atheism. Now, of course, no one can reasonably object to their rejection after refutation, but we are bound to insist that they be not rejected until they are refuted,—that they be proved and not assumed to be inconclusive. With our reasons for belief in a living personal God the belief itself must necessarily be abandoned, and instead of a Father, Judge, and Redeemer, we must be content with some so-called Absolute which neither knows itself nor cares for us. What a wretched exchange! And with loss of belief in a personal God we must lose all the hopes and assurances attached to that belief, and become burdened with all the consequences which flow from its denial. I shall not attempt to transcribe the dismal balance-sheet.

Further, pantheism by affirming the identity of thought and existence calls on us to sacrifice all objects of thought which cannot be conceived of otherwise than as distinct from thought, and which

must be first presented to the mind before they can be represented by it; while, by referring the phenomena of matter and of mind to one substance, it requires us either to sacrifice both to an indeterminate existence which cannot be apprehended nor even imagined, or at least to sacrifice the one to the other. But we cannot make sacrifices of this kind without being necessitated to make others which are perhaps still greater. If we hold fast to the indeterminate, and persist in evolving from it both the material and mental worlds, we must have another organ of apprehension than ordinary men, and employ a different sort of logic than that of the common understanding. Our minds must have intuitions and processes which are entirely superhuman—a knowledge which transcends consciousness, and a dialectic which is independent of the laws of thought. If, on the other hand, we suppress either matter or mind, it can only be by an application of scepticism which we are logically bound to repeat and to generalise until no object or faculty continues to be acknowledged as trustworthy. Pantheism inevitably involves either mysticism or scepticism; and both mysticism and scepticism mean the sacrifice, the suicide of reason.

Then it requires us also to regard as delusive the consciousness which each man possesses of being a self or person. Whoever knows himself as

a self, a person, knows that he is not a mere part of God or of any other being ; he knows himself as different from God and from every other being. The self-consciousness which is in each man cannot at once be his own proper self-consciousness and the self-consciousness which has been acquired by God. Self-consciousness is single, not dual. But there are millions on millions of self-conscious beings or persons in the world. And pantheism, in order to adhere to its dogma of absolute unity, must contradict the testimony borne by the consciousness of all these beings. It is logically bound to affirm that each of them is under a delusion when he supposes himself to be truly a self or person. But what does this imply? Why, that from true persons, really distinct from all other beings—free, responsible, moral—it must reduce and degrade them to mere semblances ; for with personality, their freedom of will, responsibility, duty, must be likewise sacrificed. I should have to dwell long on this if I were to attempt to exhibit the various particulars which are involved, and therefore I must be content with the mere general declaration that pantheistic unity can only be attained at the cost of the abandonment of all the fundamental moral convictions and spiritual aspirations of humanity.

It is only an intellectual idol like the pantheistic unity which can demand sacrifices so numerous

and enormous. It demands them just because it is an intellectual idol—a false unity—a unity of a kind which can never be legitimately attained. We cannot but recognise both the finite and the infinite, the relative and the absolute, the contingent and the necessary; but we cannot by the utmost effort of reason reduce them to one absolute essence from which the whole universe of thought and being may be shown to have necessarily proceeded.

The highest unity to which the finite mind can rise is, it seems to me, the unity of a single creative intelligent Will—the one infinite personal God of theism. To this unity all multiplicity may be traced back. It is no abstract and dead unity, but one which is real, which is all-comprehensive, which fully explains both the unity and variety of the universe, and which fully satisfies at once the demands of the intellect and the heart; for it is a unity which contains the infinite fulness of power, wisdom, and love. It is an absolute unity in the only sense in which that phrase conveys an intelligible and credible meaning—that is to say, it is one Being which is self-existent and self-sufficient, which is entirely independent of every other being, and possessed in itself of every excellence in an infinite measure; while it is the sole and free source of all finite excellence. Whatever the pantheist describes as an absolute unity must be one and absolute in some way much

inferior to this. The unity of matter, the unity of force, the unity of all that is unconscious and impersonal, is unessential and derivative, yea, even illusory if separated from the underlying and original unity of a self-active mind. Only that which says "I" cannot be divided or supposed to be divided; and that which says "I," while absolutely indivisible, may possess an infinite wealth of powers and properties. The absoluteness of an infinite which necessarily originates the finite is a relative and dependent absoluteness; it is the absoluteness of a being which is not self-sufficient—which is as dependent on what it produces as that which it produces is dependent on it—which is necessarily related to the finite—which, although an infinite that is necessarily and completely active, has only a finite result. This is a curious absoluteness; or rather, it is a manifest absurdity which involves the negation of the principle of causality and of every other principle of rational thought. The theist keeps free from it. God is absolute in the view of the theist, because He alone is self-dependent and self-complete—because He stands in necessary relation to nothing finite, and yet can constitute and enter into all relations with the finite, which He chooses, and which are consistent with His intrinsic perfections. According to theism, whatever is, and is not God, is a creature of God, and no creature of God has, like God,

necessary existence. According to theism, God is the one necessary Being, and He being self-sufficient, needs no other beings in order to realise perfect self-consciousness or to secure perfect blessedness. This seems to me a much more consistent and satisfactory view of absoluteness than that of the pantheist.

It must be admitted, of course, that from the unity to which theism refers us, an absolute science such as pantheism promises cannot possibly be deduced. Alike the infinity and the freedom of the single supreme will make it impossible that a finite mind should so comprehend it as to be able logically to determine its decisions and acts. In the very knowing, indeed, that there is a God, we know that He is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in His power, wisdom, and holiness; but this knowledge of His general attributes can never justify our pretending to specify what must be His particular doings, or to maintain more than that none of His doings will be found to be unworthy of His character. The finite mind may legitimately convince itself that there is an infinite mind, but it can never so comprehend such a mind as to be capable of speculatively deducing what it can or must or will do. Absolute science is the science of an infinite reason, and not the science which can be attained by a creature like man; it is knowledge in which there is no distinction be-

tween comprehension and apprehension—in which there is no imperfection or incompleteness—on which there can be no alteration, and to which there can be no addition,—and therefore it is knowledge necessarily and for ever beyond the reach of all finite intelligences. “Who by searching can find out God? Who can find out the Almighty unto perfection?”

Pantheism stumbles at the idea of creation. It affirms that creation is inconceivable, and infers that it is impossible. In treating of materialism, I have indicated that the assertion is equivocal and the inference illegitimate. But another argument has been employed. The idea of the creation of a finite universe in time has been pronounced dishonouring to God, as implying that His omnipotence is to a large extent inoperative. What, we are asked, was Omnipotence doing before creation? How and why did infinite power produce only a finite effect? Is power unused not power wasted? Is there not something irrational and repellent in the thought of an omnipotence which originates only a limited sum of results—which has no adequate operation or object? To break or avoid the force of these questions some theologians have maintained that God does all that He can—that His activity is the full expression of His ability; and others have argued that nature is an eternal and infinite creation. These are views, however, which,

far from warding off pantheism, inevitably tend to it; and they grievously offend against reason, which declares it an absurdity that even an infinite power should produce an infinite effect within a finite sphere—within limits of time and space. Is, then, omnipotence never fully exercised? Is infinite power never fully productive? We have no right to think so. Although omnipotence cannot express itself fully in the finite world to which we belong, the Divine nature may be in itself an infinite universe where this and all other attributes can find complete expression. Is either God's power or His activity to be measured exclusively by the production or support of beings distinct from Himself? If so, obviously, unless His power be perpetually and completely exercised about finite things, His activity is not equal to His power, and He is not infinitely active, but only infinitely capable of acting. Even infinite activity, however, and absolutely infinite production, cannot be reasonably denied to the Divine nature. As activity is a perfection, infinite activity may be reasonably held to be a supreme perfection which must be ascribed to God. If an absolutely infinite agent acts according to all the extent of its absolutely infinite nature, it must necessarily produce an absolutely infinite effect; the effect would not otherwise be proportionate to the cause. The production of an absolutely infinite effect must be

a far greater perfection than the creation of any number of finite effects, and the mind may feel constrained to refer such production to God. So be it. But must the infinite effect fall within the realm of contingency, of time, of space? Must it not, on the contrary, belong to the sphere of the essential, the eternal, the absolute? Must it not lie *within* instead of *without* the Godhead? Must it not be such an effect as theologians mean when they speak of *the eternal generation* of the Word or *the eternal procession* of the Holy Spirit? It cannot, I think, be such an effect as external creation. God can never find or produce without Himself an object equal to Himself and fully commensurate with His essential, necessary activity and love. The Divine nature must have in itself a plenitude of power and glory to which the production of numberless worlds can add nothing.

Any difficulties not merely verbal and manifestly superficial which pantheists have raised as to the nature of the Divine personality likewise lead, I believe, to the conclusion, not that we should reject theism, but that we should reverence and appreciate more highly the Christian doctrine of the Trinity—a mystery indeed, yet one which explains many other mysteries, and which sheds a marvellous light on God, on nature, and on man. I have appealed, however, throughout this course of lectures, only to reason ; and I am quite willing

that my arguments against pantheism and all other anti-theistic theories, as well as my arguments on behalf of theism, should be judged of by reason alone, without my reference to revelation.

I now bring these lectures to a close. It is with the trust that they may not have been wholly unprofitable to you, or unaccompanied by the blessing of God. To His name be honour and glory for ever. Amen.