

truth lies deeply buried under this mass of error at the surface, and can only be brought to light by the most prolonged and patient research in the face of this time-honored prejudice. The progress of man and society has been strictly proportioned to the degree to which hidden realities have thus been substituted for false appearances.

As a somewhat anomalous but very important example of the erroneous ideas which the human race must needs acquire and reluctantly surrenders, may next be considered the optimistic habit of thought. Optimism can scarcely be called a doctrine. It does not result, like most erroneous beliefs, from a false interpretation of the facts which nature presents to the untrained faculties. It is rather the original, unreflective state of the pre-social mind. It is the survival of the most useful of all instincts—that of self-preservation. It was well adapted to that state, because to the animal it mattered not whether it was true or false. It is still a useful attitude to the swarming millions of human beings who do not reflect. But for it the realization of their unhappy lot, which it prevents, would multiply their misery and render life intolerable. But we are here considering its effect upon society, and it is easy to show that it is bad. It breeds stagnation and stifles progress. It yields contentment, and contentment means inaction. Strange as it may sound, just as the only healthy state of the intellect is doubt, so the only healthy state of the feelings is discontent. This, of course, assumes that there is something to doubt and something to improve; but there has never been an age when error did not stalk abroad or when misery was not the lot of the greater part of mankind.

The phase of optimism which most concerns the question of the relation of society to the universe is that unreasoned belief which I have called the "anthropocentric theory."* The idea that man is in any sense a favorite of nature is false and highly prejudicial to the progress of correct conceptions in social science. It may be called collective optimism, and results in social stagnation, just as personal optimism results in individual stagnation.

The extreme opposite of optimism is pessimism. It differs from it as much in its origin and nature as it does in its character as a belief. While optimism is wholly unreasoned and springs from the feelings, pessimism is exclusively a product of reason and resides in the intellect. Optimism is that hope that "springs eternal in the human breast" and defies the hard facts of existence. Pessimism recognizes the facts, and coldly chokes every hope at its birth. But pessimism is also false, first, because many hopes are realized, and secondly, because the representation in the present of the good anticipated in the future is itself a good at least of secondary order.

What, then, is man's true relation to the universe? Is there a true

* Transactions of the Anthropological Society of Washington. Vol. I., Washington, 1882, pp. 93-103; "Dynamic Sociology," Vol. II., New York, 1883, pp. 50-73.

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