

Our Contributors.

THE STUDY OF PHILOSOPHY.*

A REVIEW OF PROFESSOR WATSON'S NEW WORK,
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This new work by Professor Watson, of Queen's College, Kingston, on "Comte, Mill and Spencer," is a timely and helpful contribution to the study of philosophy. In his previous work on "Kant and His English Critics," the author presupposed in the reader such a wide knowledge of the systems of philosophy that his able book became a sealed volume to the ordinary reader, although highly prized by the special student of philosophy. In his latest contribution an attempt is made to meet the wants not only of the professional student of philosophy but also of the intelligent non-professional reader, anxious to get a more accurate knowledge of the great problems of speculative thought and to obtain some assistance in their solution. The advice given in the preface to read the complete works of the writers treated, so that the significance of the selections made by the authors, their proper place in each system, and the force of the critical remarks based on them might be properly estimated, taken along with the general plan of the book, all indicate that Professor Watson believes in constructing a philosophical system through a comparative and critical study of the History of Philosophy. The majority of teachers in the department of philosophy will commend the method employed, whether they agree with the results attained or not.

In the first chapter Professor Watson discusses the Problem of Philosophy, carefully distinguishing science in general from philosophy. This chapter is written with the greatest simplicity of language and clearness of statement. Examining conflicting theories about mathematics and natural science, he indicates that the work of applying principles to details is one thing, the question as to the ultimate significance of the principles themselves, something quite different. Philosophy is concerned with the second question as to the validity of the principles. A preliminary division is made of philosophy into three great departments: Philosophy of Nature, Philosophy of Mind, Philosophy of the Divine Existence. It will come out in the treatment of the subject that these are not co-ordinate enquiries, but constitute an ascending series proceeding from the simpler to the more concrete and complex.

Under the next chapter, by a consideration of Comte's views, we have an estimation of the theory that the scientific explanation is sufficient and all-inclusive. The claim that we can study only appearances is shown to be shallow and even contradictory. We have to consider the problem of the difference between the seeming and the real, and we must endeavor to come to some conclusion as to what constitutes reality as distinguished from mere appearance. This may be regarded as a continuation of the introduction: stating the problem and enunciating the method. After this the author begins to apply his method more directly and explicitly.

Although the names of Comte, Mill and Spencer are the only ones mentioned in the title, the theories most directly opposed to these are referred to continually. It is a popular error to suppose that philosophy is dealing with mere abstractions. The reader even at this stage begins to see that, according to Professor Watson, it is the uncritical thinker who is most entranced by the worship of abstractions, and that it is those philosophers who are least critical and most superficial who come most closely to the ordinary experience in explicitly maintaining abstract elements as real in their

isolation. A deeper study of philosophy will show the impropriety of setting up a part or abstract aspect of reality as if it were independently real.

Professor Watson takes two opposing forms of partial statements and shows the inadequacy of each extreme. He is anxious all the time in this critical rejection of one sided and imperfect views to construct a more complete and satisfactory theory. In this method, and in the form of criticism employed, he follows closely upon Kant's procedure. In fact, although Kant is only referred to directly in the last sub-division of the work, the influence of Kant's method and philosophical results on the author is evident on every page.

In the examination of Mill's theory of geometry, arithmetic and algebra and the physical sciences it will turn out that though Mill seems at first to stand as the exponent of science and its champion, Professor Watson in opposing his conclusions proves that science needs to be saved from its so called friends. If all is mere appearance, then science has lost its certainty. We need to go beyond the sensible appearances as they come and go and seek for the foundations of science in the permanent and abiding. In short we need a philosophy of science to prevent its degradation. This is discussed in connection with the problem, Can our knowledge of space or quantity be explained by a mechanical hypothesis? Must we not bring in a connecting, unifying function of thought to pass from successive feelings to the apprehension of co-existing objects? So too in time and causality the mere fact of the succeeding of sensitive changes in the organism falls far short of the consciousness of the succession, and the definite connections of the succeeding phenomena. An exposition of the true meaning of cause as sum of conditions prepares for the next enquiry, viz., Spencer's view of biological science and the theory of evolution.

The defence of the concrete as opposed to the partial seems at first sight to commit Prof. Watson to evolution pure and simple. He is advancing by showing the place of the simpler in the more complex and more nearly complete; that is, he is using the conception of organic inter-relation, in order to criticize more abstract theories. It will turn out that Prof. Watson knows what he is about and intends to condemn the evolutionist out of his own mouth, by a more thorough-going view of organic inter-connection. The chapters on evolution should be read by every one who is anxious to get at the real problem, that is, the interpretation of the appearances.

Prof. Watson examines carefully Darwin's view of the survival of the fittest in the struggle for existence, and at first says that, as against Paley's external design, Darwin seems to be successful. But, says Professor Watson, the evolutionist is altogether too premature when he concludes that, because he has succeeded in overthrowing the external design of Paley, he has done away with all design, and all need of an explanation by purpose, aim, intention, and final cause. He then proceeds to show that there would be no struggle for existence, if the species had not the aim of self-preservation and race-maintenance, which it is striving to realize. That is to say, struggle for existence is explained by purpose, and fitness is measured by application of the standard of the end, the maintenance and progress of the race. Again, there could not be success in the struggle unless the inorganic nature was intended to support the organic, and was more favorable to the higher forms of the organic than to the lower forms. We must understand the inorganic nature therefore by seeing its service for the organic. These considerations show that design or teleological explanation is not disproved by the evolutionist. Teleology is not absurd, and further consideration may show that the teleological explanation is the most comprehensive and satisfactory.

In the further consideration of the growth of the higher mental and moral characteristics from the lower, it is shown that a being who does not possess more than a merely sensitive nature is not properly described as selfish. For selfishness there must be a self, and, as it may be stated paradoxically, only the rational being can act irrationally. The need of intelligence and will for the explanation of the growth of knowledge and moral conduct is then dwelt upon, and the relation of the knower to the objects of his knowledge, and the relation of the world of existing objects to an intelligent author of the world of nature is clearly enunciated. The reasoning is subtle. It starts in each instance from what the evolutionists admit and then shows that what he denies must be added to make what he admits have even a partial validity and reasonableness. This partial truth admitted by the evolutionist, in fact claimed to be all of the truth, Prof. Watson will only grant on condition that it is shown to be partial, and that the truer view consists in just what is denied by the ordinary evolutionist.

The consideration of intelligence leads to the examination of will and purpose, the introduction of the moral problems, duty and freedom of the will, and lastly the investigation of religion and art. In this important section Professor Watson introduces Kant's theory, and arrives at his own conclusions by a sympathetic criticism, correcting and enlarging Kant's suggestive though inadequate account. I think many will regret that Professor Watson did not continue the plan pursued before Kant's theory was introduced; that is, a comparison of the narrower views of the hedonistic and utilitarian writers in ethics of the School of Mill and Spencer as opposed to the earlier intuitionist writers in order to conduct critically his own view. This perhaps seemed to the author too long a way of reaching his goal. Instead of this he at once introduces Kant who is beyond the early intuitionists although still hampered by some of their errors and on this high level Professor Watson proceeds to make a further advance to a more concrete and organic theory, in which the social and religious aspects of man's complex nature are given a more significant place in the moral life than is allowed in Kant's individualistic account. We are afraid that in this latter part, by this rapidity of movement, Professor Watson will be apt to drop the non-professional student altogether, who will be inclined, when he has read to the end of the chapter on evolution, to glance at the rest and abandon it. It is scarcely likely that the evolutionist will be inveigled into a critical study of Kant.

We regard the work, as a whole, as very able and suggestive. It is a valuable contribution to philosophical literature and likely to prove extremely helpful to all who are becoming tired of being fed on the husks of mere phrases about evolution; explaining evolution by development and development by growth, simply stating a problem as its solution. What does evolution mean? What is development? What does advancement imply? The answer to these questions will lead far beyond the thralldom of "natural laws in the spiritual world" and introduce "spiritual laws in the natural world."

In the struggle to solve these problems, we commend the reading of Professor Watson's, "Comte, Mill and Spencer: An Outline of Philosophy."

University College, Feb. 16th '95.

John Hall, D.D.: We are the portion the Lord takes out of the hand of his enemy and ours, and he cares for us as such. A love that is everlasting, a care that is likened to that which guards the pupil of the eye, a fidelity of attachment to which the mother's love finds no parallel—these have been expended on us, and are still in operation towards us. Can it be doubted, then, that He cares for us?

HELPS TO NATURE STUDY.*

BY REV. WALTER M. ROGER, M.A.

These two handsome books give pleasing evidence of the skill of our Canadian typographers, and of a growing Canadian circle of culture and taste sufficient to appreciate such enterprise. They further claim our favorable notice as easily standing the test of worth which we find ourselves more than ever disposed to apply, viz., utility in opening to us the treasures of one or both of God's great books of nature and revelation. As helps to nature study these two volumes, kindred yet different, are both welcome. Mrs. Trail is a well-known authoress. As a gifted and precocious child, she began her investigations into the wonders of Divine handiwork in her first decade and continues them now with unflagging enthusiasm in her tenth. With a keen eye, a large heart, a devout spirit and a long and varied experience of Canadian life, her observations cover, as we might expect, a wide range, extending from the dusky aboriginal, pathetically receding before the settlers march, to the tiny Redmosses beneath his tread. Here we have the assorted results of these, gathered some from virgin forest and early clearings, along the margin of her own placid Katchewanook and rushing Otonabee, or among trim gardens and meadows, or in the scenes of our modern outings, the romantic camping grounds of the "Back Lakes." Her later pages especially, in accuracy of detail and nomenclature, evince the value of the scientific help to be got from such books as the second volume before us. Its title page gives us the portrait of the genial old Scotchman, who so successfully labored to give us a reliable handbook of scientific and popular information regarding our native birds. In this, his own observations have been supplemented by the labors of other naturalists of the United States and our own land. We may yet give some extracts from these attractive volumes; meantime we commend them to the personal acquaintance of our readers and hope they will have the large circulation they deserve, and so contribute to the enjoyment and profit of future summer outings. They are well suited to foster a love for open air life, nature study, which, next to Christian truth, is the most hopeful corrective of the artificialities and high pressure of modern society and business. The fragrant air of our flowery dells and the ozone of our Laurentian hills and lakesides seem to stifle the petty rivalries, selfish engrossments and unworthy ambitions of ordinary life. It is not mere change of scene in their surroundings, but that wiser and better teachings steal in at newly opened doors, and ere we know take possession of the receptive and docile spirit. A troop of brooding worries take their bat-like flight, while flocks of brilliant hopeful inspirations, come trooping in with the birds and flowers of spring. We find that there are other and higher blessings within our reach than even being able to detect and defeat the advance guard of the codling moth or Hessian Fly, or to distinguish between Poison Ivy and Virginia Creeper, or escape toadstool poison and find mushroom feasts. These are not to be despised in their way and place, but what are they to the fellowship of our Creator which we find in the study of his works.

There's not a blossom fondled by the breeze,
There's not a fruit that beautifies the trees,
There's not a particle in sea or air
But nature owns Thy plastic influence there.

Happy who walks with Him! Whom what he finds

In nature, from the broad majestic oak
To the green blade that twinkles in the sun,
Prompts with remembrance of a present God.

It was He who gave to our robin his breast all a-flame with grateful joy at the advent of Spring and bade him mount up amid the opening buds and blossoms and

* Comte, Mill, and Spencer. An Outline of Philosophy. By John Watson, LL.D., Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Queen's College, Kingston, Canada, author of "Kant and his English Critics." James Maclehose & Sons, Glasgow. 1895. pp. 302.

** Pearl and Pebbles, or Notes of an Old Naturalist, by Catherine Parr Trail; Wm. Briggs, publisher of the Birds of Ontario, by Thomas McIlwraith. Wm. Briggs Toronto, Publisher.