

are not to be easily understood; and you may assume that any man of merely ordinary education, who professes to be a disciple of Spencer, from his own study of those treatises, must have blindly accepted what he cannot understand. But after all that he has written, contained in some fifteen volumes, besides essays and articles in Periodicals, and notwithstanding an extraordinary profuseness of illustration, suggestive of very extensive research and diversified learning, while the reader is perplexed by scientific words used in a novel sense assigned to them by the writer, a critic in the *Edinburgh Review* is able to say of him, that "he has not ascertained a single new fact, nor put old ones together in such a way as to justify any new inference as to their causes, either immediate or ultimate."\*

His theory is, that in the beginning there were innumerable atoms floating in infinite space, but giving us no clue to their origin, which were at some definite moment put into motion, and were thus gradually combined by the effect of some force of the nature whereof nothing can be known. Inert matter acted upon by "persistent force" is the beginning and end of his system, but as he explains "by the persistence of force, we really mean the persistence of some cause which transcends our knowledge and conception. In asserting it, we assert an unconditioned reality without beginning or end." † One manifestation of this force is gravity, and to this acting upon matter, he appears at one time to attribute the formation of the universe, for he asserts that "matter cannot be conceived except as manifesting forces of attraction and repulsion," although in fact gravity was not known as a universal accompaniment of matter before Newton's discovery of its laws. At another time the active force is assumed to be the solar ray which, impinging upon matter, may be supposed to have at length produced the lowest forms of life, whence by the process of evolution the highest are derived. But, as was demonstrated in an able paper read before the Victoria Institute, he has unwarrantably introduced mind without accounting for it. He has not shown how force can become mind, but, as it is there represented, "he steals some mind, and maintains underneath the surface of his reasoning an illicit channel of communication, by which

\**Edinburgh Review*, January, 1881.

†Herbert Spencer's *First Principles*, page 192, d.