

# Philosophy in the United States

G. Stanley Hall (1879)

## ***Classics in the History of Psychology***

*An internet resource developed by*

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ISSN 1492-3173

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**G. Stanley Hall** (1879)

First published in *Mind*, 4, 89-105.

*Posted September 2001*

*Editor's footnote added March 2002*

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There are nearly 300 non-Catholic colleges in the , most of them chartered by the legislatures of their respective states, and conferring the degree of A.B. upon their students at the end of a four years' course, and A.M. three years after graduation. In nearly all these institutions certain studies, æsthetical, logical, historical, most commonly ethical, most rarely psychological, are roughly classed as philosophy and taught during the last year almost invariably by the president. The methods of instruction and examination are so varied that it is impossible in the space at our disposal to report in detail upon the nature and value of the work done in these institutions. More than 200 of them are strictly denominational, and the instruction given in philosophy [p. 90] is rudimentary and mediaeval. More than 60 which in the annual catalogue claim to be non-sectarian are, if not pervaded with the spirit of some distinct religious party, yet strictly evangelical. Indeed there are less than half a dozen colleges or universities in the where metaphysical thought is entirely freed from reference to theological formulæ. Many teachers of philosophy have no training in their department save such as has been obtained in theological seminaries, and their pupils are made far more familiar with the points of difference in the theology of Parks, Fairchilds, Hodges[\*] and the like, than with Plato, Leibnitz or Kant. Many of these colleges were established by funds contributed during periods of religious awakening, and are now sustained with difficulty as denominational outposts by appeals from the pulpit and sectarian press. The nature of the philosophical instruction is determined by the convictions of constituencies and trustees, while professors are to a great extent without independence or initiative in matters of speculative thought. The philosophical character of some institutions is determined by the conditions attached to bequests. A few are under the personal and perhaps daily supervision of the founders themselves, who engage and discharge the members of their faculties as so many day-labourers, and who are likely to be religious enthusiasts or propagandists.

The traditional college-*régime* in the was designed to cultivate openness and flexibility of mind

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by introducing the student hastily to a great variety of studies, so that his own tastes and aptitudes might be consciously developed as guides to ulterior and more technical work. The method of philosophical indoctrination, in striking contrast to this, seeks to prevent the independent personal look at things, and to inoculate the mind with insidious orthodoxies which too often close it for ever to speculative interests. The great open questions of psychology and metaphysics are made to dwindle in number and importance as compared with matters of faith and conduct. Some of the professorlings of philosophy are disciples of disciples of Hopkins, Hickok, Wayland, Upham, Haven. Most have extended their philosophical horizon as far as Reid, Stewart, . Many have read Mill's *Examination of Hamilton*, chapters of Herbert Spencer, lectures of Huxley and Tyndall, and epitomes of Kant, Berkeley, Hegel, and Hume. Others, fewer in number, have studied compendious histories of philosophy like Schwegler and Ueberweg, have read Mill's *Logic* and Taine, have dipped into Kant's *Critique*, and have themselves printed essays on Spencer, Leibnitz, Plato, &c., in religious periodicals, have perhaps published compilations on mental or moral science, and are able to aid the sale of small [p. 91] editions of their works by introducing them into their own classes as text-books. Others, fewer yet, to be spoken of later, have had thorough training, and are doing valuable and original work. It is, in any case, plain that there is very small chance that a well-equipped student of philosophy in any of its departments will secure a position as a teacher of the subject. He may find a career as a writer, editor, or instructor in other branches, or he may bring his mind into some sort of platonising conformity with the milder forms of orthodoxy and teach a philosophy with reservations. That most of the instructors find the limitation of their field of work galling is by no means asserted or implied. Many of them feel no need of a larger and freer intellectual atmosphere. They have never been taught to reason save from dogmatic or scriptural data. Where little science is taught there is a certain dignity attached to their department above all the others, which is as unfavourable to their own advancement as it is to the spirit of persistent inquiry on the part of the students. Summary and original methods of dealing with speculative questions are far more commonly found than philosophical erudition or careful criticism. Yet there is an almost universal complacency in the degree of liberality attained which is in strange and indeed irrational contrast to the feeling with which a philosophy which is entirely emancipated from the theological yoke is regarded. is well pleased, to be thought freer from the rigidity of dogma than , and Oberlin claims more warmth of feeling and less tyranny of creed than either. While slight differences among the philosophical *idola* of orthodoxy are thus disproportionately magnified, all these institutions unite in impressing upon their students the lesson that there is an abyss of scepticism and materialism into which, as the greatest of all intellectual disasters, those who cease to believe in the Scriptures as interpreted according to the canons of orthodox criticism, are sure to be plunged.

The spirit and aims of philosophical instruction in very many of the smaller colleges have found an admirable exponent in the Monday lectureship of the Rev. Joseph Cook, whose discourses, now published in several volumes, have had an immense influence upon the semi-theological philosophy of all such centres of learning as we have just characterised. In these forty-minute lectures before immense popular audiences, art, literary criticism, politics, religious history, science and systems of thought are discussed with much display of erudition and with great similitude of candour. Long lists of names and title-pages are read, succinct and often epigrammatic summaries of philosophical and religious systems and tendencies are given; recent discoveries in science are explained or illustrated by [p. 92] diagrams and by illuminated microscopic preparations, until the hearers are convinced that, by a short and easy method now first displayed, the very kernel of truth has been shelled from books and nature by a master-hand. Then, with much liberality of interpretation, scriptural doctrines are compared with these results, all in a conciliatory spirit; but wherever the teachings of science or philosophy are judged to vary from those of Scripture, the supreme authority of the latter is urged with all that intensity of a fervid and magnetic personality which makes dogmatism impressive and often even sublime. The mere brute force of unreasoned individual conviction, which Hegel so wittily characterises as the animal kingdom of mind, has a peculiar convincing eloquence of its own in religious matters, which, acceptable as it often is to faith, has long been one of the stumbling-blocks in the way of philosophy in .

Another reason for the backward condition of philosophy in most of these institutions is found in their poverty. A few of them were established by real-estate companies to help the sale of land.

By the negligence of the more worthy members of trustee-boards, together with mistaken provisions to fill vacancies, others have fallen under the control of ward-politicians, and professorships are retained or declared vacant by a scarcely better than popular suffrage. Still others are under the immediate control of state-legislatures, which have it in their power to reduce or even to withhold the annual appropriation. Nearly all of them are poorly endowed, and some are entirely without funds save those accruing from tuition-fees; and thus, so numerous are they, so sharp is the competition for patronage, and so quick and sagacious is parental jealousy of any instruction which shall unsettle early and home-bred religious convictions, that it is not surprising that there is little philosophical or even intellectual independence to be found in these institutions. Again the faculty or corps of professors generally consists of from three to ten men, or occasionally ladies, who must instruct in mathematics, natural and physical science, ancient and two or three modern languages, political and literary history, oratory, theme-writing, &c., and who are thus obliged to spend from three to six hours per day in the class-room. Thus fatigue, coupled with the dissipation of teaching miscellaneous subjects, generally renders original thought and research impossible even where otherwise it might have led to valuable results.

While thus business conspires with to bring mental science into general disfavour, the average American college is in no position to lead or even to resist popular opinion and sentiment, supposing it inclined to do so. The shrewd practical money-making man, even in one of the learned professions, [p. 93] can make little use of philosophy; indeed it is liable to weaken his executive powers and make him introspective and theoretical. The popular philistinism which we have heard impressed as a weighty philosophical motto in the exhortation, "Look outward not inward, forward not backward, and keep at work," and which seems no more rational than the superstitious aversion to science in the Middle Ages, has been strangely efficacious against philosophical endeavour here. Hence all branches of mental science have come to be widely regarded as the special appanage of a theological curriculum, where despite the limitations above described a little speculation is a trifle less dangerous than for a practical business man.

The above, however, we hasten to say, is the darker side of the picture and is truer in general of Western than of Eastern colleges. The most vigorous and original philosophical instruction is almost everywhere given in ethics, though like nearly all other subjects it is taught from text-books. Those most commonly used are Alexander's *Moral Philosophy*, 's *Law of Love and Love as a Law*, Wayland's and Fairchild's *Moral Science*. Calderwood's and Peabody's treatises have lately been introduced into three of the larger institutions. Portions of 's *De Officiis* we also find in three catalogues as part of the required course in ethics. The work with text-books is commonly supplemented by lectures where ethical principles are applied to law, trade, art, conduct, &c., in a more or less hortatory manner. The grounds of moral obligation are commonly deduced from Revelation, supplemented by the intuitions of conscience, which are variously interpreted. The practical questions of daily life are often discussed in the class-room with the professor with great freedom, detail and interest. Current social or political topics are sometimes introduced, and formal debates by students appointed beforehand by the professor, and followed by his comments, may occasionally take the place of regular recitations and lectures. In one large institution each member of the class in ethics is required to write a thesis during the senior year, to be read before the class on one of such topics as the following, which we copy from a printed list: -- "Is it right to do evil that good may come?" "Is falsehood ever justifiable, and if so, when?" "The moral character of Hamlet." "My favourite virtues and why?" "How far is Plato's Republic truly moral?" "Discussion of the conflict of duties, e.g., in Jephthah, Orestes." "The Utilitarianism of J. S. Mill." "How far may patriotism justify the motto, *My country right or wrong*." "The moral difficulties in the way of civil service reform." That the subjects thus attempted are far too vast and general for thorough discussion by the students who essay them [p. 94] cannot be denied, but it is possible that definite and permanent centres of interest in the infinite questions of ethics may often be thus established in the most immature minds. On the whole the average student completes his course in moral science with the conviction that there is a hard and fast line between certain definite acts and habits which are always and everywhere, wrong, and others which are right; that above all motives, circumstances, insights, the absolute imperative of conscience must determine the content as well as the form of actions. The psychological nature and origin of conscience are questions which have excited very little interest.

The theory of the syllogism is taught in nearly all the colleges from elementary text-books, of which Fowler's *Deductive Logic* and Jevons's smaller treatise, which have lately come into quite general use, are the best. As a rule but little time is devoted to work in this department, and the methods of induction are often entirely ignored.

Mental philosophy is usually taught during perhaps half the senior year from such text-books as Bowen's abridgement of Hamilton's *Metaphysics*; *The Human Intellect*, by President Porter of Yale College, which has been epitomised in a smaller volume; Haven's, Upham's and Wayland's *Mental Philosophy*; Everett's *Science of Thought*; Hickok's *Rational and Empirical Psychology*. Schwegler's *Outline of the History of Philosophy*, of which Seeley's translation is far superior to that of , is coming into use in the larger institutions. Locke's *Essay*, portions of , of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, and even Mill, , Spencer's *Psychology*, Bain, and Taine, are also occasionally introduced.

Æsthetics, so called, is taught in many colleges from various text-books, such as Day, Bascom, Kames's *Elements of Criticism*, and compendiums of art-history. An immense range of topics, from landscape-gardening and household-furniture to painting, poetry, and even music, are summarily treated, and more or less arbitrary psychological principles are laid down as fundamental canons of taste. The work done in this department we regard as not merely worthless, but as positively harmful. No attempt is made to explain the ulterior causes or the nature of feelings of pleasure and pain ; and without museums, galleries, or even photographs, little can, be learned of the history or principles of art.

's *Analogy*, Natural Theology, the Evidence of Christianity, Pedagogics, and the Catechism, are taught in a few institutions as a part of the philosophical discipline. The question of the order in which the above studies should be pursued, was lately brought forward in a general convention of [p. 95] college officers, but has attracted little attention. In at least four of the larger theological seminaries, courses of lectures on the history of philosophical speculation are given by the professor of systematic divinity. In very many of the higher schools and colleges for female education, especially if they are under evangelical control, instruction is given in mental science. In the annual catalogues of the very smallest and poorest of these colleges, we have seen one teacher dubbed professor of mental, moral and physical science, and in another of natural and intellectual philosophy. Literature, history, mathematics, and more often political economy, may be found as part of the work of the instructor in philosophy.

The serious and introspective frame of mind which religious freedom and especially pietism tends to develop; the enterprise and individuality which are characteristic of American life, and which have shown themselves in all sorts of independent speculation; the principle of self-government, which in the absence of historical precedents and tradition inclines men to seek for the first principles of political and ethical science, have combined to invest semi-philosophical themes with great interest even for men of defective education. From the pulpit and even in the adult Sunday-school class or the debating society, in the club-essay and the religious press, metaphysical discussions are often heard or read, and not infrequently awaken the liveliest discussions. Yet, on the other hand, dogmatism and the practical spirit have combined thus far quite too effectually to restrain those who might otherwise have devoted themselves to the vocation of thinking deeply, fearlessly and freely on the ultimate questions of life and conduct. If "philosophers in are as rare as snakes in ," it is because the country is yet too young. The minds of business and working men, whether sceptical or orthodox, have short, plain, and rigid methods of dealing with matters of pure reason or of faith, and are not always tolerant of those who adopt other and more, 'unsettling' ones. If, however, we may find in Hegel's *Phenomenology* a program of the future, the hard common sense which subdues nature and organises the objective world into conformity with man's physical needs will, at length, when it has done its work, pause in retrospect, and finally be reflected as conscious self-knowledge which is the beginning of philosophical wisdom. As a nation we are not old enough to develop, and yet too curious and receptive to despair of, a philosophy.

As we pass either from the smaller to the larger or from the Western to the Eastern institutions, we find in general a much better condition of things. The older Edwards, the influence of whose

writings is still very great upon the religious philosophy [p. 96] of New England and the Middle States, did much to rationalise Calvinism and to inspire confidence in the verdicts of reason. In his great work on the freedom of the Will, he taught that the essence of right and wrong lies in the nature of acts and motives and not in their cause, that spontaneity and not self-determination is the characteristic of a free act. Subjectively, virtue is the love of being in general. . Adam's sin was not imputed to his descendants, but its effects were naturally transmitted as the withdrawal of higher spiritual influences. The new birth is not the advent of a new but the new activity of an old principle. The disciples of Edwards -- Dr. Dwight, C. G. Finney, E. A. Parks, Horace Bushnell, Moses Stuart, and many others -- have modified and widely extended his opinions.

Deserving of special mention are Mark Hopkins and L. L. Hickok. The latter, lately professor of philosophy in , has written text-books entitled *Rational Psychology, Moral Science, Empirical Psychology, Rational Cosmology, Creator and Creation, &c.*, some of which are made the basis of instruction in . On the ground of a modified Kantianism he attempts to reconcile an original interpretation of post-Kantian idealism with orthodox theology. His subtle mysticism has found many admirers. Mark Hopkins, long president of Williams College, though laying claim to no great scholarship even in his own department, brings with singular independence and individuality the skill of nearly half a century of paedagogic experience, and a most impressive force and sweetness of character, to enforce in a direct Socratic way the lesson that philanthropy is the substance of both religion and morals. His influence, not only on many generations of students, but wherever his lectures and text-books have been read, has been considerable.

At , philosophy is taught mainly by President Porter on the basis of his compendious text-book above named, but with auxiliary lectures, books of reference, &c. Although a clergyman of the congregationalist denomination, he has devoted a life of study largely to philosophy, and is a vigorous expositor of the Scotch-Kantian speculation as opposed to Darwinism and materialism.[1]

The influence of W. E. Canning, Theodore Parker, R. W. Emerson, and the considerable body of Unitarian writers, has been most wholesome in stimulating and liberalising speculative thought, especially at Harvard University where the most [p. 97] extended course of philosophic study is now offered. The amount of work *required* of all students is much less than at Yale, and instead of the topical method, by which sensation, representation, reason, &c., are followed separately through ancient and modern systems, the historical method is adopted. Jevons's *Logic* and Locke's *Essay*, each two hours per week, are prescribed for all students during the junior year. But in addition to this, five optional courses are offered in the last annual catalogue as follows : (1) Cartesianism, Descartes, Malebranche, Berkeley, Hume ; (2) Spinoza, Leibnitz and Kant, Bouillier's *Histoire de la philosophie Cartesienne*, Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, Schwegler's *History of Modern Philosophy*, Lectures on French and German Philosophy; (3) German Philosophy of the present day -- Schopenhauer's *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Hartmann's *Philosophic, des Unbewussten*; (4) Psychology -- Taine *On Intelligence*, Recitations and Lectures; (5) Ethics -- Grote's *Treatise on the Moral Ideals*, Cicero's *De Officiis*, Lectures. Each of these courses occupies three hours per week through the year, and all, especially the first two, are largely attended. The fourth course has been organised only two years, and is conducted by the assistant-professor of physiology. It was admitted not without some opposition into the department of philosophy, and is up to the present time the only course in the country where students can be made familiar with the methods and results of recent German researches in physiological psychology: the philosophical stand-point of Dr. James is essentially that of the modified new-Kantianism of Renouvier. Professor Bowen, who has been for many years at the head of the philosophical department, has recently published his lectures on the History of Modern Philosophy in the form of a text-book, a review of which has already appeared in MIND. He is a very lucid expositor, especially of Kant and Schopenhauer, and a vigorous antagonist of materialism and infidelity: his philosophical stand-point is essentially theistic and his method eclectic. Assistant-professor Palmer, who has for some years taught the first course, and more recently Kant's *Critique*, is purely objective, impersonal and historical in his expositions, which are remarkably acute and thorough. Professor C. C. Everett, of the theological department, lectures on the history of German philosophy from a modified Hegelian

stand-point. How independent and original his interpretations have been may best be seen in his *Science of Thought*. John Fiske, formerly lecturer on philosophy in the university, and widely known by his *Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy* as the American expositor of Herbert Spencer, was the first to elaborate the doctrine that the development of sympathy and philanthropy [p. 98] was due to the prolongation of the period of human infancy, Following Mr. Spencer's sociological researches, he has more recently turned his attention to historical subjects. Chauncy Wright, whose philosophical papers have lately been edited by Professor Norton, was a man of great philosophical acumen, whose untimely death was most unfortunate for philosophy in . It is impossible, even after a careful study of his writings, either to epitomise his views or to account for his influence upon those who came in contact with him. The latter was no doubt largely due to the uniform sweetness of his disposition, to his unusual powers of ready conversational exposition and illustration, and to the extent and variety of his mental acquisitions. His most considerable essay, on the "Origin of Self-Consciousness," unfolds the view that when a subjective sequence of mental terms or states can be held along with, though distinct from, an objective sequence, involving thus at least four terms in all, self-consciousness may be first said to exist. How this comes to pass and how thence the higher faculties are developed, is unfolded with most characteristic analytic subtlety. With an almost Coleridgean power of abstract ratiocination, favoured by his mathematical profession, he combined the tastes of a student of nature. His correspondence with Mr. Darwin, more lately printed among his letters, shows how carefully he had pondered the details of the theory of natural selection, the expression of emotion, &c. It can scarcely be doubted, however, by those who attempt to shell out the kernel of his speculations, that vagueness and even ambiguity most seriously impair the value of his work. Finally, no account of philosophy in would be complete which failed to mention the name of J. E. Cabot, a member of the visiting board of the University in philosophy, and widely known for the extent of his learning and the breadth of his sympathies and opinions.

President Le Conte of the , most favourably known for his acute contributions to the phenomena and theory of binocular vision, has for some years instructed his classes from the text-books of Bain, Spencer, Carpenter, &c. It is also hoped that the new will soon establish a chair of physiological psychology and another of the history of philosophy. A special professorship of the former department is more or less definitely contemplated by several of the larger institutions.

Outside of schools and colleges, philosophical interests have taken on the whole a wide range. Trendelenburg, Schleiermacher, Krause, Schelling, Fichte, Herbart and Lotze have all found more or less careful students and even disciples among [p. 99] men of partial leisure in the various professions, who have spent the last year or two of student-life in . Above all these, however, stand first the influence of Hegel, which since 1867 has been represented by the quarterly *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, edited, by Wm. T. Harris of St. Louis, and secondly that of Herbert Spencer and other English evolutionists, which has been greatly extended by the *Popular Science Monthly*, edited by Dr. E. L. Youmans of New York. Mr. Harris is a pronounced Hegelian, adopting in the main the interpretation[sic] of Rosenkranz. As superintendent of the public schools of his city, he has had but little time for original contributions to his *Journal*, but all English students who wish to understand Hegel's *Logic*, particularly the third part, should not fail to read Mr. Harris's compendious articles as part of the necessary propaedeutic. He has gathered about him a circle of young men who have been led by his influence to interest themselves in German speculations, and whose contributions are found in nearly every number of the *Journal*. Unfortunately it has never quite paid its expenses, and the editor himself has year after year made up the deficit from his own purse. Yet the quality of the original articles has steadily improved, and the influence of the *Journal* seems on the whole to be increasing in the country. From the first a large portion of each number has been given to translations from Greek, French, and especially German philosophers. Important chapters of Fichte, Kant, Trendelenburg, Rosenkranz, and especially of Hegel's *Aesthetics*, *Phenomenology*, *Logic*, &c., have appeared here for the first time in English. Many convenient epitomes of more extended works by the above and other writers have also been published. The editor has from the first carefully studied the bearings of philosophical speculation upon methods of education, and the high character of the schools under his care and the wide interest felt among teachers in his annual reports, bear witness to the discretion with which

abstract principles have been utilised as practical suggestions. German paedagogical methods have also been introduced to the notice of teachers in the pages of the *Journal*. Among its earlier more prominent contributors Mr. Kroeger has lately turned his attention to translating Fichte, Mr. Schneider to Shakespearian criticism, and Mr. Davidson to Aristotle, whose *Metaphysica* he is now translating with new interpretations in Athens.

The appearance of such a journal in America, and above all in a great centre of western trade, supported by enthusiastic self-trained thinkers who had the hardihood to attempt to translate into Anglo-Saxon the ponderous nomenclature of the absolute idealism of the *Wissenschaftslehre* and the Hegelian [p. 100] *Logic*, has been often spoken of as surprising and even anomalous. The explanation, however, may not be far to seek. There is perhaps no spot in where during the last quarter of a century illustrations of the powers of the human mind over nature have been so numerous and so impressive as in . In a city so young and so large, the geographical and commercial centre between west, east, and south, the inference that in a more than poetic sense thought is creative and man is the maker of the world, is not merely congenial, but to a certain degree spontaneous and irresistible. Again there is such a pleasing sense of liberty in the perpetual recurrence of dialectic alternatives, and yet of security, inspired by the regularity with which the beats and clicks of the triadic engine are heard, and above all there is such a largeness and scope in the formula of Hegel, as if the Universe itself might be 'done' once for all by reading a few thousand pages, that it is no wonder his sun should rise upon the new as it sets in the old world. Where every thing is an open question it is pleasing to feel that "all progress is advancement in the consciousness of freedom". But this is not all. No one can spend .a week among the philosophical coteries of St. Louis' without feeling -- still more perhaps than by reading the *Journal* -- that these causes, aided by the influences of reaction from a severely practical and business life, have awakened the faculty of philosophy to a most hopeful and inquiring receptivity. There seems scarcely a doubt that, should Mr. Harris decide to open his *Journal* to psychological as well as to metaphysical discussions, and in preference to the aesthetical selections which have been so often weary and unprofitable, it would soon become not only self-supporting but remunerative.

One of the most acute of the so-called "right wing" Hegelians is Professor Howison of the in . His course of lectures on the history of philosophy is extended and thorough, though attended largely by ladies. He has lately delivered a course of public lectures in the Lowell Institute on the Logic of Grammar mainly in the spirit of Aristotle and Trendelenburg.

In it is said that Hegelianism has been an excellent *Vorfrucht* to prepare the philosophical soil for the theories of evolution. It limbers and exercises without fevering the mind, making a safe and easy transition from the orthodox to the scientific stand-point. Even its adversaries often admit that as a mental discipline at a certain stage of philosophical culture it is unsurpassed. However this may be, it is certain that the theories of Herbert Spencer, G. H. Lewes and other English evolutionists, which have exerted such an immense influence in [p. 101] the during the last decade, are not indebted to Hegelianism, but are represented almost entirely by scientific men not especially interested in the history of speculation. If the worst side of the American college is the philosophical, its best is the scientific department. The value and thoroughness of the work done here is probably too little appreciated abroad. While in some of the smaller colleges it is poor enough, in many others the professors have had a thorough European training and lack only leisure and library and laboratory opportunities for valuable and original work. With comparatively few exceptions, all the most competent teachers of natural or physical science either tacitly accept or openly advocate the fundamental principles of evolution. Even the most orthodox institutions are often no exceptions to this rule. One of the largest of these long and vainly sought for a professor of zoology who would consent to pledge himself beforehand to say nothing in favour of Darwinism. In eight or nine out of more than thirty of those institutions which the writer has visited, instructors in this department are allowed to teach the principles of Huxley and Haeckel, if they wish, unmolested. It must be said, however, that very often the adoption of the formulae of the development-theory is so premature as seriously to interfere with the patient mastery of scientific details, or, through the students' impatience with other methods, to lower the standard of work and attainment in other departments. In a country of such remarkably rapid development as our own, where the ploughboy is never allowed to forget that he may become a millionaire or even President if he



wills it earnestly enough, the catchwords of evolution often excite an enthusiasm which is inversely as the power to comprehend its scope and importance. Many of the more semi-popular aspects of Herbert Spencer's philosophy have been admirably presented by Mr. John Fiske in courses of lectures in , in , and in several of the Western cities. In the periodical, especially the religious, press, criticisms almost without number have been published. Professor Bowne of the new has elaborated his strictures of Herbert Spencer into a small volume which is one of the most subtle and forcible criticisms of the *First Principles* and the *Psychology* that have ever proceeded from an essentially evangelical standpoint.

About a year ago Mr. C. S. Peirce, assistant in the United States Coast Survey, began in the *Popular Science Monthly* a series of papers entitled "Illustrations of the Logic of Science," which is still progressing. The author is a distinguished mathematician, and this discussion, in which he long ago [p. 102] interested himself, promises to be one of the most important of American contributions to philosophy. Thought, he premises, is excited by the irritation of doubt, and ceases when belief is attained. Feigned hesitancy, whether for amusement or otherwise, stimulates mental action. The production of belief is thus the sole function of thought. It involves moreover the establishment in our nature of a rule of action or a habit. Beliefs are distinguished by the different modes of action to which they give rise. There is no distinction of meaning so fine as to consist in anything but a possible difference of practice. Our idea of anything is our idea of its sensible effects. To attain the highest degree of clearness we must consider what effects that may have practical bearings we conceive the object of our concern to have. Our conception of these effects is then the whole of our conception of the object. In calling a thing hard, e.g., we say that it will not be scratched by many substances. We may indeed say that all hard bodies remain soft till they are touched. There is no falsity in such a mode of speech. The question of what would occur under circumstances which do not actually arise is not a question of facts, but only of the most perspicuous arrangement of them. (Cf. Helmholtz, *Physiol. Optik*, ss. 431-443.) If we know the effects of force, we are acquainted with every fact which is implied in saying that force exists, and there is nothing more to know. All the effects of force may be correctly formulated under the rule for compounding accelerations. Processes of investigation, if pushed far enough, will give one certain solution for every question to which they can be applied. The general problem of Probabilities, which is simply the problem of Logic, is from a given state of facts to determine the universal probability of a possible fact. The probability of mode of argument is the proportion of cases in which it carries truth with it. But it springs from an inference which is repeated indefinitely. The number of probable inferences which a man draws in his whole life is a finite one, and he cannot be certain that the mean result will accord with probabilities at all. A gambler, an insurance company, a civilisation, although the value of their expectations at any given moment, according to the doctrine of chance, is large, are yet sure to break down at some time. The fact of death makes the number of our risks and impressions finite, and therefore their mean result uncertain. Yet the idea of probability assumes that this number is indefinitely great. Hence Mr. Peirce infers that logicity inexorably requires that our interests should not be limited. They must not stop at our fate but must embrace the community. Logic is thus rooted in the social principle. He who would not sacrifice his own soul to save the world is [p. 103] illogical in all his impressions collectively. Interest in an indefinite community, recognition of the possibility of this interest being made supreme, and hope in the unlimited continuance of intellectual activity are the indispensable requirements of Logic. After laying down three fundamental rules for the calculation of chances, which are all he is willing to recognise, and deducing from his definition of the probability of a consequence rules for the addition and multiplication of probabilities, he comes to the discussion of what Mr. Venn distinguishes as the conceptualistic in opposition to the materialistic view. The former, as expounded by De Morgan, regards probability as the degree of belief which ought to attach to a proposition; while, according to the latter, it is the proportion of times in which an occurrence of one kind is in fact accompanied by an occurrence of, another kind. He concludes that the conceptualistic view though answering well enough in some cases is quite inadequate. The problem proposed by the conceptualists he understands to be this:-- Given a synthetic conclusion; required to know out of all possible states of things how many will accord to any assigned extent with this conclusion. This he regards as only an absurd attempt to reduce synthetic to analytic reason, and believes that no definite solution is possible. As all knowledge comes from synthetic inference which can by no means be reduced to deduction, it is inferred that all human certainty consists merely in our knowing that the processes by which our

knowledge has been derived are such as must generally lead to true conclusions. In discussing the order of nature, Mr. Peirce concludes that although this universe ought to be presumed too vast to have any character, yet the spirit of science is hostile to any religion except one like that of M. Vacherot, who worships a supreme and perfect ideal whose non-existence he finds as essential to the conception of it as Descartes found its existence to be. Any plurality of objects have some character in common which is peculiar to them and not shared by anything else. A chance-world is simply the actual world as it would look to a polyp at the vanishing point of intelligence. If we do not limit ourselves to such characters as have *for us* importance, interest or obviousness, then any pair of objects resemble one another in just as many particulars as any other pair. The division of synthetic inferences into induction and hypothesis, the discussion of Mill's doctrine of the uniformity of nature, and of the assumption of De Morgan's Formal Logic, are very suggestive and interesting; but we have no space for further quotations and must refer the reader to the original papers.

Perhaps the most general characteristic of American intellectual [p. 104] life is its heterogeneity. Not only has each religious sect or denomination its own revered and authoritative founders or reformers, its own newspapers and literature, and often its own set of duties and associations, beyond the limit of which the thoughts and interests of its more uneducated members rarely pass, but also many semi-philosophical sects have a more or less numerous representation. Swedenborgianism has many churches and expositors, the best of the latter being Mr. Parsons and Mr. Henry James, father of the well known novelist. The sort of life produced under the influence of this system is broadly sympathetic, charitable, intelligent, and in every way admirable. Its disciples in have succeeded in making it in the best sense of the word a practical system. Again, the later speculations of Comte in the *Politique Positive* have found a number of admirers in and elsewhere. The voluminous works of S. P. Andrews best illustrate the incoherency and assumption of this rather insignificant coterie. What might be called its right wing contents itself with the discussion of revolutionary social and economic theories, particularly of the relation of labour and capital, while its left shades off by insensible gradations into all the vagaries of spiritualism. The general sect of spiritualists is very large and has produced a vast and dismal body of literature. Most physiologists and psychologists are now convinced that here is one of the most interesting fields for scientific observation, such as will never be made by spiritualists themselves, but no serious study of the phenomena has as yet been attempted.

On the whole, in view of the intellectual conditions of the , it is not to be wondered at that minds of a philosophical cast are often found to be eclectic and perhaps hypercritical. Probably in no other country is a man of high culture tempted by so many and varied considerations to criticise or instruct rather than to add to the sum of the the world's intellectual possessions by doing original work.

The influence of German modes of thought in is very great and is probably increasing: Du Bois Reymond observed in a public address some years ago that no two countries could learn so much from each other. Scores of American students may be found in nearly all the larger German universities. Most of even the smaller colleges have one or two professors who have spent from one to three or four years in study in that country, whose very language is a philosophical discipline. The market for German books in the is in several departments of learning larger than in itself, though this is partly, of course, to be accounted for by the number of German residents. The Hegelianism of St. Louis was not only [p. 105] first imported but has always been to some extent supported by native Germans.

It has been urged that a nation, like ours, which inherits a ready-made language and a rich literature which it has not itself developed, is apt to be superficial in thought and shallow in sentiment. But it is surely forgotten that this is a heritage to which every generation is born. Besides, language knows no political or geographical distinction, and even the best literature is no longer national. And may we not, at least, modestly claim that enough philosophical thinking has been done to show that we are not behind in power of mental assimilation?

Protestantism in has its well-developed grammar of dissent, and has been in the past an

invaluable philosophical discipline. The American, perhaps, even more than the English, Sunday might almost be called a philosophical institution. A day of rest, of family life and introspection, it not only gives seriousness and poise to character and brings the saving fore-, after-, and over-thought into the midst of a hurrying objective and material life, to which its wider sympathies and interests and new activities are a wholesome alternative, but it teaches self-control, self-knowledge, self-respect, as the highest results of every intellectual motive and aspiration. In its most developed forms, especially among the Unitarians, Protestantism[sic] has more or less completely rationalised not only the dogmas of theology but their scriptural data, and now inculcates mainly the practical lessons of personal morality and the duty of discriminative intellectual, political and æsthetical activity.

Finally we shall venture to call patriotism a philosophical sentiment in . It is very deeply rooted and persistent even in those who take the most gloomy view of the present aspect of our political life, who insist that the Constitution needs careful and radical revision, and who are not disposed to overrate the magnitude of events in our national history thus far. It is philanthropic, full of faith in human nature and in the future. And if, according to a leading canon of the new psychology, the active part of our nature is the essential element in cognition and all possible truth is practical, then may we not rationally hope that even those materialisms of faith and of business which we now deplore, are yet laying the foundations for a maturity of philosophical insight deep enough at some time to intellectualise and thus harmonise all the diverse strands in our national life?

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#### Footnotes

[\*] *Classics* Editor's note: Edwards Amasa Park of Andover Theological Seminary; Charles Hodge (1797-1878) of Princeton Theological Seminary or his son Archibald Alexander Hodge (1823-1886) first of Western Theological Seminary (PA) and, from 1878, ; and James Harris Fairchild (1817-1902) of . It is unclear why Hall added a terminal "s" to each name. It seems barely possible the he would have made the same error with all three. Perhaps he meant to insert the word "the" before the three names to indicate people of their sort more generally, i.e., "...the Parks, Fairchilds, Hodges, and the like..."

[1] Dr. Porter has also published a brief historical sketch of philosophy in the , with an exhaustive bibliography, in Ueberweg's *History of Philosophy* (translated by Professor G. S. Morris of ) Vol. II., pp. 422, ff.

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