

wrongs, preachers of individual and social righteousness, and the source and channel of an ever loftier conception of Yahveh and of the mission of Israel. In fulfilling each of these capacities they were acting as public teachers. In every national crisis they were at hand to denounce, to encourage, to comfort and always to instruct. They were the public conscience of Israel, the soul of its religion, the creators of public opinion, its most conspicuous, its most revered, its most convincing teachers.

HUME'S SUPPRESSED ESSAYS.

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION.

MY attention was called by a judicious collector of rare books to the fact that David Hume's essays on "The Immortality of the Soul" and on "Suicide" are unobtainable in the book market. They were suppressed at the time they were published and exist now only in one edition preserved in the British Museum, nor were they ever reprinted. For that reason alone they should be worthy of republication. Books or essays are never suppressed unless they are feared, and their effect is feared only if they are good or at least memorable.

Such is the argument of an old reader of *The Open Court*, and it appeals to me; decidedly he is right. A suppressed essay should be made accessible if the author is a thinker as keen and penetrating as David Hume. For this reason I at once took steps to procure a copy of this rare book containing Hume's two essays and decided, if possible, to make Hume's thoughts accessible, even if they should be disappointing and not come up to expectations.

In my attempt to procure the two essays, I addressed myself to Mr. William A. Speck, of the Yale University Library, and thanks to the courtesy of the Board of Trustees, I procured the little book containing Hume's autobiography, his two suppressed essays, also a refutation by the editor, and two letters quoted from Rousseau's *Héloïse*, duly answered. These were printed originally in three separate volumes dated 1777 and 1783, and were bound together at an early date. The title of this portion reads: "Essays on Suicide, and The Immortality of the Soul, ascribed to the late David Hume, Esq. Never before published. With remarks, intended as an Antidote to the Poison contained in these performances, By the Editor. To which is added, Two letters on suicide from

Rosseau's *Eloisa*. London: Printed for M. Smith: and sold by the Booksellers in Piccadilly, Fleet-street and Paternoster-row. 1783. (Price 3s. 6d. sewed.)" The editor looks upon Hume's essays as dangerous, and sets forth his best arguments why these absurd propositions are untenable.

I cannot say that nowadays David Hume's views are in any way extraordinary. They are views very common at present and can be published to-day without endangering the faith of mankind. He who believes in the immortality of the soul will not be disturbed in his belief by David Hume. He will probably base his belief on other reasons than those which the skeptical philosopher tries to refute, and he bases his logic on other considerations. Moreover a man who is placed in such a desperate position as to wish to commit suicide, because in his hopeless situation he naturally prefers extinction to life, will be doubted by no one except the most brutal zealot who argues on purely theoretical grounds. Every one will have sympathy with the misfortunes of a woefully suffering brother. We no longer condemn a suicide, we pity him.

So the solution of a bigoted zealot of the old stamp is no longer upheld and the question may be worthy of reconsideration. At least it has been reconsidered in recent times and I cannot say that the problem has been solved in a satisfactory manner. Prof. Felix Adler, religiously liberal enough, proposed the idea that a man who intends to commit suicide should call together a council of some of his friends, explain to them his troubles and expect from them a decision whether he should be at liberty to do so. Queer to call upon the conscience of other people! If they gave their permission would they not feel like murderers? and if they did not, have they the right to condemn a man to a life of misery? Further, it is quite probable that a desperate situation, unless it be a hopeless or extremely painful disease, cannot be explained even to his most intimate friends by a sufferer who longs for an escape.

Considering the fact that David Hume was a thinker of great depth, it seems to me quite desirable indeed to republish his two suppressed essays. That they have been suppressed and are still omitted from all editions of Hume's works, that they are unobtainable in the book market, seems almost incredible. I have received the little book containing them only through exceptional circumstances, the rarity of the book being due to the narrowness of David Hume's age. Nowadays thinkers who hold Hume's views do not hesitate to present their arguments in just as vigorous terms and as fearlessly as he. There is no reason to suppress them. Nor

is there any need to repeat here the editor's "Antidote" published in the edition before me of London, 1773, because our present generation wants other arguments than the old orthodox convictions according to which the deism of Hume is rank infidelity. Hume is a deist, not an atheist. His belief in God, the God of deism, is just as staunch as that of many a pious Unitarian preacher of to-day, while the editor's views are rarely heard of to-day even in orthodox pulpits.

After all, how harmless is the argument of a man like David Hume! Every one clings to his conviction founded upon his own individuality. Think of a man of the type of Sir Oliver Lodge. Could he ever be convinced by David Hume's arguments? He would rather rely on the evidence of the reports given by mediums and accept their testimony as fairly creditable, however fantastic it may be.

The book before us also contains two chapters on suicide by Rousseau (in our book persistently misspelled Rosseau) "Letter CXIV" and "Letter CXV," which need not be republished because they are accessible in every edition of Rousseau's *Héloïse*.

The history of Hume's two essays is briefly recorded in the preface from which we quote the following paragraphs:

"These two Essays on *Suicide* and *the Immortality of the Soul*, though not published in any edition of his works, are generally attributed to the late ingenious Mr. Hume.

"The well-known contempt of this eminent philosopher for the common convictions of mankind, raised an apprehension of the contents from the very title of these pieces. But the celebrity of the author's name, renders them, notwithstanding, in some degree objects of great curiosity.

"Owing to this circumstance, a few copies have been clandestinely circulated, at a large price, for some time, but without any comment. The very mystery attending this mode of selling them, made them more an object of request than they would otherwise have been.

"The present publication comes abroad under no such restraint, and possesses very superior advantages. The *Notes* annexed are intended to expose the sophistry contained in the original Essays, and may shew how little we have to fear from the adversaries of these great truths, from the pitiful figure which even Mr. Hume makes in thus violently exhausting his last strength in an abortive attempt to traduce or discredit them.

"The admirers of *Mr. Hume* will be pleased with seeing the

remains of a favourite author rescued in this manner from that oblivion to which the prejudices of his countrymen had, in all appearance, consigned them; and even the religious part of mankind have some reason of triumph from the striking instance here given of truth's superiority to error, even when error has all the advantage of an elegant genius, and a great literary reputation to recommend it."

Finally, I wish to express my thanks publicly to the Board of Trustees of the Yale University Library for having enabled me to have these rare essays of David Hume copied for publication. Without their courtesy it would have been impossible to present them to our readers.

ESSAY I. ON SUICIDE.

One considerable advantage that arises from Philosophy, consists in the sovereign antidote which it affords to superstition and false religion. All other remedies against that pestilent distemper are vain, or at least uncertain. Plain good sense and the practice of the world, which alone serve most purposes of life, are here found ineffectual: History as well as daily experience furnish instances of men endowed with the strongest capacity for business and affairs, who have all their lives crouched under slavery to the grossest superstition. Even gaiety and sweetness of temper, which infuse a balm into every other wound, afford no remedy to so virulent a poison; as we may particularly observe of the fair sex, who tho' commonly possess of these rich presents of nature, feel many of their joys blasted by this importune intruder. But when sound Philosophy has once gained possession of the mind, superstition is effectually excluded, and one may fairly affirm that her triumph over this enemy is more complete than over most of the vices and imperfections incident to human nature. Love or anger, ambition or avarice, have their root in the temper and affections, which the soundest reason is scarce ever able fully to correct, but superstition being founded on false opinion, must immediately vanish when true philosophy has inspired juster sentiments of superior powers. The contest is here more equal between the distemper and the medicine, and nothing can hinder the latter from proving effectual but its being false and sophisticated.

It will here be superfluous to magnify the merits of Philosophy by displaying the pernicious tendency of that vice of which it cures the human mind. (1) The superstitious man says Tully is miserable in every scene, in every incident of life; even sleep itself,

which banishes all other cares of unhappy mortals, affords to him matter of new terror; while he examines his dreams, and finds in those visions of the night prognostications of future calamities. I may add that tho' death alone can put a full period to his misery, he dares not fly to this refuge, but still prolongs a miserable existence from a vain fear lest he offend his Maker, by using the power, with which that beneficent being has endowed him. The presents of God and nature are ravished from us by this cruel enemy, and notwithstanding that one step would remove us from the regions of pain and sorrow, her menaces still chain us down to a hated being which she herself chiefly contributes to render miserable.

'Tis observed by such as have been reduced by the calamities of life to the necessity of employing this fatal remedy, that if the unseasonable care of their friends deprive them of that species of Death which they proposed to themselves, they seldom venture upon any other, or can summon up so much resolution a second time as to execute their purpose. So great is our horror of death, that when it presents itself under any form, besides that to which a man has endeavoured to reconcile his imagination, it acquires new terrors and overcomes his feeble courage: But when the menaces of superstition are joined to this natural timidity, no wonder it quite deprives men of all power over their lives, since even many pleasures and enjoyments to which we are carried by a strong propensity, are torn from us by this inhuman tyrant. Let us here endeavour to restore men to their native liberty, by examining all the common arguments against Suicide, and shewing that that action may be free from every imputation of guilt or blame, according to the sentiments of all the ancient philosophers.

If Suicide be criminal, it must be a transgression of our duty either to God, our neighbour, or ourselves.—To prove that suicide is no transgression of our duty to God, the following consideration may perhaps suffice. In order to govern the material world, the almighty Creator has established general and immutable laws, by which all bodies, from the greatest planet to the smallest particle of matter, are maintained in their proper sphere and function. To govern the animal world, he has endowed all living creatures with bodily and mental powers; with senses, passions, appetites, memory, and judgment, by which they are impelled or regulated in that course of life to which they are destined. These two distinct principles of the material and animal world, continually encroach upon each other, and mutually retard or forward each others operation. The powers of men and of all other animals are restrained

and directed by the nature and qualities of the surrounding bodies, and the modifications and actions of these bodies are incessantly altered by the operation of all animals. Man is stopt by rivers in his passage over the surface of the earth; and rivers, when properly directed lend their force to the motion of machines, which serve to the use of man. But tho' the provinces of the material and animal powers are not kept entirely separate, there results from thence no discord or disorder in the creation; on the contrary, from the mixture, union, and contrast of all the various powers of inanimate bodies and living creatures, arises that sympathy, harmony, and proportion, which affords the surest argument of supreme wisdom. The providence of the Deity appears not immediately in any operation, but governs every thing by those general and immutable laws, which have been established from the beginning of time. All events, in one sense, may be pronounced the action of the Almighty, they all proceed from those powers with which he has endowed his creatures. A house which falls by its own weight, is not brought to ruin by his providence, more than one destroyed by the hands of men; nor are the human faculties less his workmanship, than the laws of motion and gravitation. When the passions play, when the judgment dictates, when the limbs obey; this is all the operation of God, and upon these animate principles, as well as upon the inanimate, has he established the government of the universe. Every event is alike important in the eyes of that infinite being, who takes in at one glance the most distant regions of space, and remotest periods of time. There is no event, however important to us, which he has exempted from the general laws that govern the universe, or which he has peculiarly reserved for his own immediate action and operation. The revolution of states and empires depends upon the smallest caprice or passion of single men; and the lives of men are shortened or extended by the smallest accident of air or diet, sunshine or tempest. Nature still continues her progress and operation; and if general laws be ever broke by particular volitions of the Deity, 'tis after a manner which entirely escapes human observation. As on the one hand, the elements and other inanimate parts of the creation carry on their action without regard to the particular interest and situation of men; so men are entrusted to their own judgment and discretion in the various shocks of matter, and may employ every faculty with which they are endowed, in order to provide for the ease, happiness, or preservation. What is the the meaning then of that principle, that a man who tired of life, and hunted by pain and

misery, bravely overcomes all the natural terrors of death, and makes his escape from this cruel scene: that such a man I say, has incurred the indignation of his Creator by encroaching on the office of divine providence, and disturbing the order of the universe? shall we assert that the Almighty has reserved to himself in any peculiar manner the disposal of the lives of men, and has not submitted that event, in common with others, to the general laws by which the universe is governed? This is plainly false: the lives of men depend upon the same laws as the lives of all other animals; and these are subjected to the general laws of matter and motion. The fall of a tower, or the infusion of a poison, will destroy a man equally with the meanest creature; an inundation sweeps away every thing without distinction that comes within the reach of its fury. Since therefore the lives of men are for ever dependant on the general laws of matter and motion, is a man's disposing of his life criminal, because in every case it is criminal to encroach upon these laws, or disturb their operation? But this seems absurd; all animals are entrusted to their own prudence and skill for their conduct in the world, and have full authority as far as their power extends, to alter all the operations of nature. Without the exercise of this authority they could not subsist a moment; every action, every motion of a man, innovates on the order of some parts of matter, and diverts from their ordinary course the general laws of motion. Putting together, therefore, these conclusions, we find that human life depends upon the general laws of matter and motion, and that it is no encroachment on the office of providence to disturb or alter these general laws: Has not every one, of consequence, the free disposal of his own life? And may he not lawfully employ that power with which nature has endowed him? in order to destroy the evidence of this conclusion, we must shew a reason why this particular case is excepted; is it because human life is of such great importance, that 'tis a presumption for human prudence to dispose of it. But the life of a man is of no greater importance to the universe than that of an oyster. And were it of ever so great importance, the order of human nature has actually submitted it to human prudence, and reduced us to a necessity, in every incident, of determining concerning it.—Were the disposal of human life so much reserved as the peculiar province of the Almighty, that it were an encroachment on his right, for men to dispose of their own lives; it would be equally criminal to act for the preservation of life as for its destruction. If I turn aside a stone which is falling upon my head, I disturb the course of

nature, and I invade the peculiar province of the Almighty, by lengthening out my life beyond the period which by the general laws of matter and motion he had assigned it.

A hair, a fly, an insect is able to destroy this mighty being whose life is of such importance. Is it an absurdity to suppose that human prudence may lawfully dispose of what depends on such insignificant causes? It would be no crime in me to divert the *Nile* or *Danube* from its course, were I able to effect such purposes. Where then is the crime of turning a few ounces of blood from their natural channel?—Do you imagine that I repine at Providence or curse my creation, because I go out of life, and put a period to a being, which, were it to continue, would render me miserable? Far be such sentiments from me; I am only convinced of a matter of fact, which you yourself acknowledge possible, that human life may be unhappy, and that my existence, if further prolonged, would become ineligible; but I thank Providence, both for the good which I have already enjoyed, and for the power with which I am endowed of escaping the ill that threatens me.* To you it belongs to repine at providence, who foolishly imagine that you have no such power, and who must still prolong a hated life, tho' loaded with pain and sickness, with shame and poverty—Do not you teach, that when any ill befalls me, tho' by the malice of my enemies, I ought to be resigned to providence, and that the actions of men are the operations of the Almighty as much as the actions of inanimate beings? When I fall upon my own sword, therefore, I receive my death equally from the hands of the Deity as if it had proceeded from a lion, a precipice, or a fever. The submission which you require to providence, in every calamity that befalls me, excludes not human skill and industry, if possible by their means I can avoid or escape the calamity: And why may I not employ one remedy as well as another?—If my life be not my own, it were criminal for me to put it in danger, as well as to dispose of it; nor could one man deserve the appellation of *hero*, whom glory or friendship transports into the greatest dangers, and another merit the reproach of *wretch* or *miscreant* who puts a period to his life, from the same or like motives.—There is no being, which possesses any power or faculty, that it receives not from its Creator, nor is there any one, which by ever so irregular an action can encroach upon the plan of his providence, or disorder the universe. Its operations are his works equally with that chain of events which it invades, and which ever principle prevails, we may for that very

* *Agamus Dei gratias, quad nemo in vita teneri protest.* SEN. Epist. 12.

reason conclude it to be most favoured by him. Be it animate, or inanimate, rational, or irrational, 'tis all a case: its power is still derived from the supreme Creator, and is alike comprehended in the order of his providence. When the horror of pain prevails over the love of life; when a voluntary action anticipates the effects of blind causes, 'tis only in consequence of those powers and principles which he has implanted in his creatures. Divine providence is still inviolate, and placed far beyond the reach of human injuries. 'Tis impious says the old Roman superstition* to divert rivers from their course, or invade the prerogatives of nature: 'Tis impious says the French superstition to inoculate for the small-pox, or usurp the business of providence by voluntarily producing distempers and maladies. 'Tis impious says the modern *European* superstition, to put a period to our own life, and thereby rebel against our Creator; and why not impious, say I, to build houses, cultivate the ground, or sail upon the ocean? In all these actions we employ our powers of mind and body, to produce some innovation in the course of nature; and in none of them do we any more. They are all of them therefore equally innocent, or equally criminal. *But you are placed by providence, like a sentinel, in a particular station, and when you desert it without being recalled, you are equally guilty of rebellion against your almighty sovereign, and have incurred his displeasure.* —I ask, why do you conclude that providence has placed me in this station? for my part I find that I owe my birth to a long chain of causes, of which many depended upon voluntary actions of men. *But providence guided all these causes, and nothing happens in the universe without its consent and co-operation.* If so, then neither does my death, however voluntary, happen without its consent; and whenever pain or sorrow so far overcome my patience, as to make me tired of life, I may conclude that I am recalled from my station in the clearest and most express terms. 'Tis providence surely that has placed me at this present in this chamber: But may I not leave it when I think proper, without being liable to the imputation of having deserted my post or station? When I shall be dead, the principles of which I am composed will still perform their part in the universe, and will be equally useful in the grand fabrick, as when they composed this individual creature. The difference to the whole will be no greater than betwixt my being in a chamber and in the open air. The one change is of more importance to me than the other; but not more so to the universe.

—'Tis a kind of blasphemy to imagine that any created being

* TACIT. Ann. lib. i .

can disturb the order of the world, or invade the business of Providence! it supposes, that that being possesses powers and faculties, which it received not from its creator, and which are not subordinate to his government and authority. A man may disturb society no doubt, and thereby incur the displeasure of the Almighty: But the government of the world is placed far beyond his reach and violence. And how does it appear that the Almighty is displeas'd with those actions that disturb society? By the principles which he has implanted in human nature, and which inspire us with a sentiment of remorse if we ourselves have been guilty of such actions, and with that of blame and disapprobation, if we ever observe them in others:—Let us now examine, according to the method proposed, whether Suicide be of this kind of actions, and be a breach of our duty to our *neighbour* and to *society*.

A man who retires from life does no harm to society: He only ceases to do good; which, if it is an injury, is of the lowest kind.—All our obligations to do good to society seem to imply something reciprocal. I receive the benefits of society, and therefore ought to promote its interests; but when I withdraw myself altogether from society, can I be bound any longer? But allowing that our obligations to do good were perpetual, they have certainly some bounds; I am not oblig'd to do a small good to society at the expense of a great harm to myself; why then should I prolong a miserable existence, because of some frivolous advantage which the public may perhaps receive from me? If upon account of age and infirmities, I may lawfully resign any office, and employ my time altogether in fencing against these calamities, and alleviating, as much as possible, the miseries of life: why may I not cut short these miseries at once by an action which is no more prejudicial to society?—But suppose that it is no longer in my power to promote the interest of society, suppose that I am a burden to it, suppose that my life hinders some person from being much more useful to society. In such cases, my resignation of life must not only be innocent, but laudable. And most people who lie under any temptation to abandon existence, are in some such situation: those who have health, or power, or authority, have commonly better reason to be in humour with the world.

A man is engaged in a conspiracy for the public interest; is seized upon suspicion; is threatened with the rack; and knows from his own weakness that the secret will be extorted from him: Could such a one consult the public interest better than by putting a quick period to a miserable life? This was the case of the famous and

brave *Strozi* of *Florence*.—Again, suppose a malefactor is justly condemned to a shameful death, can any reason be imagined, why he may not anticipate his punishment, and save himself all the anguish of thinking on its dreadful approaches? He invades the business of providence no more than the magistrate did, who ordered his execution; and his voluntary death is equally advantageous to society, by ridding it of a pernicious member.

That Suicide may often be consistent with interest and with our duty to ourselves, no one can question, who allows that age, sickness, or misfortune, may render life a burthen, and make it worse even than annihilation. I believe that no man ever threw away life, while it was worth keeping. For such is our natural horror of death, that small motives will never be able to reconcile us to it; and though perhaps the situation of a man's health or fortune did not seem to require this remedy, we may at least be assured that any one who, without apparent reason, has had recourse to it, was curst with such an incurable depravity or gloominess of temper as must poison all enjoyment, and render him equally miserable as if he had been loaded with the most grievous misfortunes.—If suicide be supposed a crime, 'tis only cowardice can impel us to it. If it be no crime, both prudence and courage should engage us to rid ourselves at once of existence, when it becomes a burthen. 'Tis the only way that we can then be useful to society, by setting an example, which if imitated, would preserve to every one his chance for happiness in life, and would effectually free him from all danger of misery.*

* It would be easy to prove that suicide is as lawful under the Christian dispensation as it was to the Heathens. There is not a single text of scripture which prohibits it. That great and infallible rule of faith and practice which must controul all philosophy and human reasoning, has left us in this particular to our natural liberty. Resignation to Providence is indeed recommended in scripture; but that implies only submission to ills that are unavoidable, not to such as may be remedied by prudence or courage. *Thou shalt not kill*, is evidently meant to exclude only the killing of others, over whose life we have no authority. That this precept, like most of the scripture precepts, must be modified by reason and common sense, is plain from the practice of magistrates, who punish criminals capitally, notwithstanding the letter of the law. But were this commandment ever so express against suicide, it would now have no authority, for all the law of *Moses* is abolished, except so far as it is established by the law of nature. And we have already endeavoured to prove that suicide is not prohibited by that law. In all cases Christians and Heathens are precisely upon the same footing; *Cato* and *Brutus*, *Arrea* and *Portia* acted heroically; those who now imitate their example ought to receive the same praises from posterity. The power of committing suicide is regarded by *Pliny* as an advantage which men possess even above the Deity himself. "Deus non sibi potest mortem consciscere si velit quod homini dedit optimum in tantis vitæ pænis."—Lib. II. cap. 7.

ESSAY II. ON THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

By the mere light of reason it seems difficult to prove the *Immortality of the Soul*; the arguments for it are commonly derived either from *metaphysical* topics, or *moral* or *physical*. But in reality 'tis the Gospel and the Gospel alone, that has brought *life and immortality to light*.

I. METAPHYSICAL topics suppose that the soul is immaterial, and that 'tis impossible for thought to belong to a material substance.—(1) But just metaphysics teach us that the notion of substance is wholly confused and imperfect, and that we have no other idea of any substance, than as an aggregate of particular qualities, inhering in an unknown something. Matter, therefore, and spirit, are at bottom equally unknown, and we cannot determine what qualities inhere in the one or in the other. (2) They likewise teach us that nothing can be decided *a priori* concerning any cause or effect, and that experience being the only source of our judgments of this nature, we cannot know from any other principle, whether matter, by its structure or arrangement, may not be the cause of thought. Abstract reasonings cannot decide any question of fact or existence.—But admitting a spiritual substance to be dispersed throughout the universe, like the etherial fire of the *Stoics*, and to be the only inherent subject of thought, we have reason to conclude from *analogy* that nature uses it after the manner she does the other substance, *matter*. She employs it as a kind of paste or clay; modifies it into a variety of forms and existences; dissolves after a time each modification, and from its substance erects a new form. As the same material substance may successively compose the bodies of all animals, the same spiritual substance may compose their minds: Their consciousness, or that system of thought which they formed during life, may be continually dissolved by death. And nothing interests them in the new modification. The most positive assertors of the mortality of the soul, never denied the immortality of its substance. And that an immaterial substance, as well as a material, may lose its memory or consciousness, appears in part from experience, if the soul be immaterial.—Reasoning from the common course of nature, and without supposing any new interposition of the supreme cause, which ought always to be excluded from philosophy, what is incorruptible must also be ingenerable. The Soul therefore if immortal, existed before our birth; and if the former existence no ways concerned us, neither will the latter.—Animals undoubtedly feel, think, love, hate, will, and even reason,

tho' in a more imperfect manner than men; are their souls also immaterial and immortal?

II. Let us now consider the moral arguments, chiefly those derived from the justice of God, which is supposed to be farther interested in the farther punishment of the vicious and reward of the virtuous.—But these arguments are grounded on the supposition that God has attributes beyond what he has exerted in this universe, with which alone we are acquainted. Whence do we infer the existence of these attributes?—'Tis very safe for us to affirm, that whatever we know the Deity to have actually done, is best; but 'tis very dangerous to affirm, that he must always do what to us seems best. In how many instances would this reasoning fail us with regard to the present world?—But if any purpose of nature be clear, we may affirm, that the whole scope and intention of man's creation, so far as we can judge by natural reason, is limited to the present life. With how weak a concern from the original inherent structure of the mind and passions, does he ever look farther? What comparison either for steadiness or efficacy, betwixt so floating an idea, and the most doubtful persuasion of any matter of fact that occurs in common life. There arise indeed in some minds some unaccountable terrors with regard to futurity; but these would quickly vanish were they not artificially fostered by precept and education. And those who foster them, what is their motive? Only to gain a livelihood, and to acquire power and riches in this world. Their very zeal and industry therefore is an argument against them.

What cruelty, what iniquity, what injustice in nature, to confine all our concern, as well as all our knowledge, to the present life, if there be another scene still waiting us, of infinitely greater consequence? Ought this barbarous deceit to be ascribed to a beneficent and wise being?—Observe with what exact proportion the talk to be performed and the performing powers are adjusted throughout all nature. If the reason of man gives him great superiority above other animals, his necessities are proportionably multiplied upon him; his whole time, his whole capacity, activity, courage, and passion, find sufficient employment in fencing against the miseries of his present condition, and frequently, nay almost always are too slender for the business assigned them.—A pair of shoes perhaps was never yet wrought to the highest degree of perfection which that commodity is capable of attaining. Yet it is necessary, at least very useful, that there should be some politicians and moralists, even some geometers, poets, and philosophers among mankind. The powers of men are no more superior to their wants,

considered merely in this life, than those of foxes and hares are, compared to *their* wants and to their period of existence. The inference from parity of reason is therefore obvious.—

On the theory of the Soul's mortality, the inferiority of women's capacity is easily accounted for. Their domestic life requires no higher faculties, either of mind or body. This circumstance vanishes and becomes absolutely insignificant, on the religious theory: the one sex has an equal task to perform as the other; their powers of reason and resolution ought also to have been equal, and both of them infinitely greater than at present. As every effect implies a cause, and that another, till we reach the first cause of all, which is the Deity; every thing that happens is ordained by him, and nothing can be the object of his punishment or vengeance.—By what rule are punishments and rewards distributed? What is the divine standard of merit and demerit? Shall we suppose that human sentiments have place in the Deity? How bold that hypothesis. We have no conception of any other sentiments.—According to human sentiments, sense, courage, good manners, industry, prudence, genius, &c. are essential parts of personal merits. Shall we therefore erect an elysium for poets and heroes like that of the ancient mythology? Why confine all rewards to one species of virtue? Punishment, without any proper end or purpose, is inconsistent with *our* ideas of goodness and justice, and no end can be served by it after the whole scene is closed. Punishment, according to *our* conception, should bear some proportion to the offence. Why then eternal punishment for the temporary offences of so frail a creature as man? Can any one approve of *Alexander's* rage, who intended to exterminate a whole nation because they had seized his favorite horse Bucephalus?*

Heaven and Hell suppose two distinct species of men, the good and the bad; but the greatest part of mankind float betwixt vice and virtue.—Were one to go round the world with an intention of giving a good supper to the righteous, and a sound drubbing to the wicked, he would frequently be embarrassed in his choice, and would find that the merits and the demerits of most men and women scarcely amount to the value of either.—To suppose measures of approbation and blame different from the human confounds every thing. Whence do we learn that there is such a thing as moral distinctions, but from our own sentiments?—What man who has not met with personal provocation (or what good-natured man who has) could inflict on crimes, from the sense of blame alone, even the

* Quint. Curtius lib. VI. cap. 5.

common, legal, frivolous punishments? And does any thing steel the breast of judges and juries against the sentiments of humanity but reflection on necessity and public interest? By the Roman law those who had been guilty of parricide and confessed their crime, were put into a sack along with an ape, a dog, and a serpent, and thrown into the river. Death alone was the punishment of those who denied their guilt, however fully proved. A criminal was tried before *Augustus*, and condemned after a full conviction, but the humane emperor, when he put the last interrogatory, gave it such a turn as to lead the wretch into a denial of his guilt. "You surely (said the prince) did not kill your father."* This lenity suits our natural ideas of *right* even towards the greatest of all criminals, and even though it prevents so inconsiderable a sufferance. Nay even the most bigotted priest would naturally without reflection approve of it, provided the crime was not heresy or infidelity; for as these crimes hurt himself in his *temporal* interest and advantages, perhaps he may not be altogether so indulgent to them. The chief source of moral ideas is the reflection on the interest of human society. Ought these interests, so short, so frivolous, to be guarded by punishments eternal and infinite? The damnation of one man is an infinitely greater evil in the universe, than the subversion of a thousand millions of kingdoms. Nature has rendered human infancy peculiarly frail and mortal, as it were on purpose to refute the notion of a probationary state; the half of mankind die before they are rational creatures.

III. The *Physical* arguments from the analogy of nature are strong for the mortality of the soul, and are really the only philosophical arguments which ought to be admitted with regard to this question, or indeed any question of fact.—Where any two objects are so closely connected that all alterations which we have ever seen in the one, are attended with proportionable alterations in the other; we ought to conclude by all rules of analogy, that, when there are still greater alterations produced in the former, and it is totally dissolved, there follows a total dissolution of the latter.—Sleep, a very small effect on the body, is attended with a temporary extinction, at least a great confusion in the soul.—The weakness of the body and that of the mind in infancy are exactly proportioned, their vigour in manhood, their sympathetic disorder in sickness; their common gradual decay in old age. The step further seems unavoidable; their common dissolution in death. The last symptoms which the mind discovers are disorder, weakness, in-

* Suet. Augus. cap. 3.

sensibility, and stupidity, the fore-runners of its annihilation. The farther progress of the same causes encreasing, the same effects totally extinguish it. Judging by the usual analogy of nature, no form can continue when transferred to a condition of life very different from the original one, in which it was placed. Trees perish in the water, fishes in the air, animals in the earth. Even so small a difference as that of climate is often fatal. What reason then to imagine, that an immense alteration, such as is made on the soul by the dissolution of its body and all its organs of thought and sensation, can be effected without the dissolution of the whole? Every thing is in common betwixt soul and body. The organs of the one are all of them the organs of the other. The existence therefore of the one must be dependant on that of the other.—The souls of animals are allowed to be mortal; and these bear so near a resemblance to the souls of men, that the analogy from one to the other forms a very strong argument. Their bodies are not more resembling; yet no one rejects the argument drawn from comparative anatomy. The *Metempsychosis* is therefore the only system of this kind that philosophy can hearken to.

Nothing in this world is perpetual, every thing however seemingly firm is in continual flux and change, the world itself gives symptoms of frailty and dissolution. How contrary to analogy, therefore, to imagine that one single form, seemingly the frailest of any, and subject to the greatest disorders, is immortal and indissoluble? What daring theory is that! how lightly, not to say how rashly entertained! How to dispose of the infinite number of posthumous existences ought also to embarrass the religious theory. Every planet in every solar system we are at liberty to imagine peopled with intelligent mortal beings, at least we can fix on no other supposition. For these then a new universe must every generation be created beyond the bounds of the present universe, or one must have been created at first so prodigiously wide as to admit of this continual influx of beings. Ought such bold suppositions to be received by any philosophy, and that merely on the pretext of a bare possibility? When it is asked whether *Agamemnon*, *Thersides*, *Hannibal*, *Varro*, and every stupid clown that ever existed in *Italy*, *Scythia*, *Bactria* or *Guinea*, are now alive; can any man think, that a scrutiny of nature will furnish arguments strong enough to answer so strange a question in the affirmative? The want of argument without revelation sufficiently establishes the negative.—“*Quanto facilius (says Pliny*) certius que sibi quemque*

* Lib. 7. cap. 55.

credere, ac specimen securitatis antigene tali sumere experimento." Our insensibility before the composition of the body, seems to natural reason a proof of a like state after dissolution.—Were our horrors of annihilation an original passion, not the effect of our general love of happiness, it would rather prove the mortality of the soul. For as nature does nothing in vain, she would never give us a horror against an impossible event. She may give us a horror against an unavoidable event, provided our endeavours, as in the present case, may often remove it to some distance. Death is in the end unavoidable; yet the human species could not be preserved had not nature inspired us with an aversion towards it. All doctrines are to be suspected which are favoured by our passions, and the hopes and fears which gave rise to this doctrine are very obvious.

'Tis an infinite advantage in every controversy to defend the negative. If the question be out of the common experienced course of nature, this circumstance is almost if not altogether decisive. By what arguments or analogies can we prove any state of existence, which no one ever saw, and which no way resembles any that ever was seen? Who will repose such trust in any pretended philosophy as to admit upon its testimony the reality of so marvellous a scene? Some new species of logic is requisite for that purpose, and some new faculties of the mind, that may enable us to comprehend that logic.

Nothing could set in a fuller light the infinite obligations which mankind have to divine revelation, since we find that no other medium could ascertain this great and important truth.

CONSOLING THOUGHTS ON EARTHLY EXISTENCE AND CONFIDENCE IN AN ETERNAL LIFE.¹

BY HELMUTH VON MOLTKE.

[In connection with a discussion of thoughts on man's destiny after life, it will be interesting to our readers to see what a famous German general thought about death. Moltke, a man characterized as the *Schlachtendenker*, pondered on the religious problems of life and death more than we may have expected, and we see that the problem moved him deeply. Off and on throughout his life he worked at notes for a little sketch which is commonly known as his *Trostgedanken*, and there are extant no less than three distinct but very similar manuscripts of it written in his own hand. All three have been published in his collected works (Berlin: Mittler & Son, Vol. I) thus enabling

¹ Translated by Lydia G. Robinson.