

## MISCELLANEOUS.

### “KANT AND SPENCER.”

*To the Editor of The Open Court:*

This is Herbert Spencer's eightieth birthday, and a few of his admirers in this antipodean city are sending him a congratulatory message, by cable, for we feel that he, of all English philosophers, has influenced us most.

I have spent part of the morning in reperusing Dr. Carus's pamphlet *Kant and Spencer*, and I would like to say that it seems to me that Dr. Carus has misapprehended Spencer's criticism of Kant.

Much controversy is raised by the use of the word "intuition". I do not think Spencer meant by that word anything different from that which Dr. Carus means. He uses "forms of intuition" to mean just what Dr. Carus calls "pure intuition." The word "intuition" may not be the best translation of "Anschauung", but it is the English word used by various translators and commentators. See Meiklejohn's Translation p. 24, Max Müller's p. 23, Vol. II. Watson *Kant and his English Critics*, G. Croom Robertson's *Elements of General Philosophy*, and others.

I think that perhaps Alfred Fouillée in his *Histoire de la Philosophie* puts the question plainer. He says, pp. 397 and 398, "D'après cela, qu'est ce que l'espace et le temps? Des *conditions* de notre sensibilité, sans lesquelles nous ne pourrions rien percevoir, des moyens par lesquelles nous émettons nos sensations en séries régulières, . . . Ce sont, dit Kant, des moules ou cadres dans lesquels les choses viennent prendre la forme qui nous permet de nous les représenter; ce sont, en un mot, les *formes de la sensibilité*." Indeed, Meiklejohn's and Max Müller's translations, which almost agree in this respect, word for word, put it thus, so far as Space is concerned: "It (Space) is nothing else than the form of all phenomena of the external sense, that is, the objective condition of the sensibility, under which alone external intuition is possible."

According to Kant, as Croom Robertson has well said, "The human mind brings to the result of pure sense-experience certain subjective factors, viz., (1) pure intuitions (*reine Anschauung*), in order to perception; (2) pure categories of concepts, in order to understanding; (3) pure ideas, in order to reason." These are transcendental and *a priori*. Now the criticism of Mill, Bain, and Spencer, not to mention others, on this position of Kant is, that these are not transcendental nor *a priori*.

According to Spencer, to take "Space and Time", they have been derived by "accumulated and consolidated experiences", not in the individual alone but

through heredity. To quote the words of Spencer in his Essay "On Space-Consciousness", published in *Mind*:

"It must also be pointed out that since on the evolution-hypothesis, that consciousness of Space which we have lies latent in the inherited nervous system and since, along with those first excitations of the nervous system which yield rudimentary perceptions of external objects, there are produced those first excitations of it, which yield the rudimentary consciousness of the Space in which the objects exist — it must necessarily happen that Space will appear to be given along with these rudimentary perceptions in their form. There will necessarily very soon result something like that inseparability which the Kantists allege. Hence we cannot expect completely to decompose into its elements the Space-consciousness *as it exists in ourselves.*"

It will be seen from this extract wherein the difference between Kant and Spencer in this question lies. According to Kant the forms of Space and Time have not been derived from experience. According to Spencer they have been so derived. Both recognise that the "forms", so to speak, exist. To use Dr. Carus's happy expression they are "at-sights", but their "whence and how" is the question. How have these moulds, if I may use another expression, come to us? There they are, like the mould of the linotype-machine into which the molten lead of experience disappears, but how were these moulds formed? As a thorough-going Evolutionist Spencer says they are the product of ages of experiences. (See his *Psychology*, 2. ed.)

The only quarrel that one might have with Spencer is that at first sight it might appear that Space and Time, as forms of sensibility, are confounded with the abstract idea of Space and Time; a careful perusal of his *Psychology* will show, however, that he did not so confound them (p. 360, Vol. II, *Psychology*). It is plain, I submit, from his Essay I have quoted, that he rightly appreciated Kant's position.

I do not think Dr. Carus has quite apprehended Spencer's position when he says that Spencer believes that Kant said "that Space and Time have no application in the world of objects (i. e., the non-ego)." Spencer puts his position thus: "To affirm that Time and Space belong to the ego, is simultaneously to affirm that they do not belong to the non-ego." Again: "The Kantian doctrine not only compels us to dissociate from the non-ego these forms as we know them, but practically forbids us to recognise *or suppose any forms for the non-ego*". I do not know if a Kantian would object to this statement, save in the words I have italicised. The only "forms of intuition" Kant mentions as existing in order to perception are Space and Time. The qualities of things, etc., are not "forms".

I may add, one point in which a Kantian may complain of Spencer is that he has not recognised that, considering the time in which he lived and his environment, Kant was an advanced Evolutionist. There are passages in his *Anthropology*, which though put cautiously and suggestively, show that he believed that even man was a product of Evolution. Spencer seems to me, however, to be right in saying that a thorough-going Evolutionist must seek for the origin of the "forms of intuition"—Space and Time—in experience; Kant did not do so. Whether Spencer's view is accepted or not, it is on Evolutionist lines and seems to me the only rational explanation given at present of how these forms arose. John Stuart Mill and Bain suffer from the defects of the old English school—of having developed their psychology before the far-reaching results of Evolution—of heredity—were appreciated. This is seen if one refers to James Mill's *Analysis of the Human Mind*, and is also apparent if the first edition of Bain's works be perused.