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## AN AMERICAN MORALIST.\*

BY PROF. L. M. BILLIA.

DR. PAUL CARUS, one of the editors of *The Monist* and *The Open Court*—periodicals which rank among the most important of the socio-philosophical reviews of the United States of America—proposes, in three lectures upon the "Ethical Problem," the adoption of a course which might be considered as a compromise between the utilitarian and the objective-moral, or, as he terms it, the "intuitionalist" school. He meets the utilitarian principle at the outset by the following declaration:

"We may say that the pursuit of happiness is a natural right of man, but we cannot derive the moral "ought" from the pursuit of happiness. And the mere pursuit of happiness is not sufficient to make a complete and worthy human life. On the contrary, the mere pursuit of happiness wherever it prevails unchecked in the soul of man is a most dangerous tendency, which unfits man for business as well as for family life, and above all for ideal aspirations. What is the reason that trustworthy persons, competent workers, dutiful men and women are so rare? It is simply because most people are too eager in their pursuit of happiness.

"The pursuit of happiness is not wrong. Enjoyment is not a sin, and recreation is not improper. Yet it is wrong to make happiness the sole aim of existence. We cannot live without enjoyment; enjoyment keeps our minds healthy and buoyant; yet enjoyment is not the purpose of life. Recreation is the rest we take after our work is done. We do not work in order to have recreation; but we seek recreation in order to do more work.

"If the pursuit of happiness is not sufficient to make man's life complete and worthy, what then is needed to make it so? We all know what is needed: it is ethics. Then let us have ethics—not mere theories about pleasurable sensations, but true ethics—ethics that are nobler than the mere pursuit of pleasure."

If these lofty conceptions do not suffice to gain our sympathies for him, the author acquires a new claim on us by virtue of the following declaration:

"I shall be glad to learn from my critics; and wherever any one will convince me of an error, he will find me ready to change my opinion and to accept the truth whatever it be."

Both from a scientific and a practical point of view, I find his disagreement with those who would promote the elevation of moral life without regard to philosophical or religious opinions, or without fundamental principles, a very serious matter.

Dr. Carus's book had its origin in a controversy between the author and the "Society of Ethical Culture," represented by *The Ethical Record*, of Philadelphia. Although we cannot agree with him in his position that supernatural revelation is an impossibility, we, nevertheless, approve of his conception of the necessity of a philosophico-scientific basis of ethics—a necessity which, in our opinion, is a logical objective exigency of speculative thought, and, socially, a subjective exigency of our time and of modern education. This view is, in our opinion, fully in accord with Antonio Rosmini's "Philosophy of Ethics" and "Philosophy of Right (*Diritto*)."

The author, possessed of a happier memory than ours, very well recollects the time when man was an animal, living in herds with others of his kind; and he knows also, that at that early day higher ethics had received but little development. But, as little by little a higher ethics grew, society emerged from barbarism into the light of civilisation. And here criticism grows somewhat laborious; for, notwithstanding his earnest profession of scientific research, the author's method of procedure is that of the statement of aphorisms and definitions, each of which we should be justified in calling in doubt. In fact, it is these very aphorisms and definitions from which he proceeds, that should, first of all, have been submitted to critical examination—even from a historical standpoint—if the author really wished to give ethics a scientific basis. In agreement with Comte's conceptions of the three natural stages of development, he declares that the question, whether ethics is a science and can be founded upon a scientific basis, is the same as that of the reconciliation of religion and science, or of the development of religion from infancy to its state of maturity, from dualism to monism, from the mysticism of a vague supernaturalistic speculation to the light of positive certainty, from an authoritative and credulous faith to the faith of scientific knowledge.

However correct and honest the intentions of the author may be, we consider as truly deplorable his arbitrary conception of religion, which, in his presupposition undiscussed, and, for him, admitting of no discussion, is nothing but a human fact, while to us

\* Translated from the Italian. The article appeared first in *Il Nuovo Risorgimento Rivista di Filosofia, Scienze, Lettere, Educazione e Studi Sociali* (Milan), a Roman Catholic magazine, and was republished in pamphlet form.

the elevation of man to the Absolute is itself a work of God. If the author's supposition were true, his course would have to be approved of, although the difficulty would remain, whether a scientific religion could be understood by the multitude, who might know it generally, but not scientifically.

Nor are we less surprised at the author's confounding the ideas "vague," "supernatural," and "fantastic"; the fantastic, the ideal, and the supernatural being three orders much at variance with facts. Altogether, Dr. Carus's point of departure differs in nothing from that of Comte.

And thus, when he comes to establish the "basis" of ethics—always in aphoristic form—he states the hypothesis, that knowledge is a representation of facts—a definition of which our readers know, beyond doubt, is disputable.

It is true, the author attempts to found ethics upon reason, upon the immutable and necessary order of things, and he deserves praise for thus having elevated himself above the level of the utilitarian; but, in default of tradition and through excessive fear of the supernatural and mystical, he falls into the error of a material monism and fails, at the same time, to give his doctrine a foundation.

However, the author is worthy and capable of something better, as may be seen in his beautiful observation in censure of the ferocious and pharisaical theory, which pretends to derive all moral sentiment from egotism. Here he is entirely in accord with the Italian school, and I doubt if the remarks he makes could be improved upon.

Only it is deplorable that, owing to his disregarding a great part of ancient and modern philosophic speculation, he should not be able, while face to face with the utilitarians, to perceive others than the ranks of those whom he terms intuitionists, wrongfully accusing them of ignoring and of refusing to demonstrate, by natural and scientific methods, the reasons or motives underlying morality, of making duty a mystery, etc., etc. All this we naturally read with something akin to ill-will here, in the home of the philosophy of right (*diritto*); in fact, in Europe generally, where for so many centuries the supreme motives of the good have been scientifically investigated.

He likewise touches upon the problem of freewill and believes to have found its solution, but does not seem to be well aware of the main difficulty, which consists in this, that, on the one hand, the fact of freewill is attested by the consciousness; on the other hand, that will without motive is an absurdity. Certainly. But, with the usual defect of Anglo-Americans—the tendency to vaporings, as in the McKinley bill, so in philosophical speculation,—the work of centuries,—he falls into a twofold error: historical and

philosophical. His classification of those who have entered into an investigation of this problem into theologians, who hold freewill a will without motive and an inscrutable mystery, and freethinkers, so called, who place it among illusions, is much too superficial. Assuredly, these two views are both false; but, if our author had kept accurate account of philosophical tradition, and above all, if he had paid closer attention to Italian philosophy, and to that of Rosmini in particular, he would have observed that the difficulty has been by many not only recognised, but also surmounted.

In fact, the doctrine of practical judgment, in our opinion, while, on the one hand, it justifies the existence of freedom of choice, is not satisfied with merely affirming it, but demonstrates the operation by a keen analysis; and, on the other hand, confutes in the best possible manner determinism, physiological, as well as psychological and rationalistic. And what is this "best possible manner"? That of conceding, or rather, of comprehending whatever truth there may be in those views, in order the better to avoid the fallacies they may contain. An act not determined by a reason is an absurdity. Decidedly. But a free will consists precisely in the ability to determine, in the ability to make real a given reason, a given impulse, a given sentiment. How is freewill reconcilable with the evident subjection of our acts to the status of the nervous system, the status of health or disease, adventitious or constitutional, individual or hereditary? Free choice is an act of reflection, or rather, one of the higher acts of reflection. Now, reflection requires a certain status of order and calmness in our functions, which, for instance, does not exist, at least not without great expenditure of force, in fever, hysterics, excessive pain, extraordinary somnolence, or any ardent superexcitation. But it is none the less true that these same conditions, favorable or unfavorable as they may be to reflection, and to the exercise of free choice, have for the most part their origin in liberty of choice itself, as in disease which has been neglected or aggravated, or criminally transmitted to descendants, or in cases of exaltation not restrained at the outset, or to assume a less ignoble case, in any excessive lassitude or strain, whether of muscle or brain, consequent upon hard labor.

At times Dr. Carus recognises the difficulty, but then again, following the imperfect theory of some German moralists, he confounds liberty of will with freedom from passion, and ends by admitting liberty solely in connection with the Good. Now, it is very true that liberty makes for the Good. It is very true that he who does good is freer than he who works evil; that the practice of virtue not only educates and refines sentiment, but also strengthens freedom of will,

just as, on the other hand, yielding to certain vices weakens, and, in the end, almost entirely nullifies it. But it is none the less true that liberty presents itself in connection with the Evil as well as in connection with the Good. So true is this that, before entering on the examination of certain crimes, men often sustain fierce struggles with themselves in the endeavor to silence the voice of nature, of conscience, of blood; as may especially be noticed in criminal cases of a political nature, and in all those which are executed with open predetermination and which are designed to some end of vast importance. Nor is it the case that those who have preceded Dr. Carus have not well distinguished between necessity and compulsion—a very old and well-known distinction. On the contrary, he himself does not well distinguish *libertas a coactione* from *libertas a necessitate*, in which freedom of choice precisely consists. *Libertas a necessitate*, we repeat, does not in itself denote absence of reason, but determines to itself the preponderant reason.

We must say, however, by way of *causerie*, as the French would put it, that we have been better entertained than we at first expected to be, by this work of the author of "Meliorism."\* We find two good reasons for not being displeased with it.

The first is the author's innate goodness and loftiness of spirit, which constantly reveals itself in his combating egotism, in his lifting up his readers out of the slough of "Spencerianism," and in the fact that he reposes the supreme ethical law in *truth*. Although rejecting his doctrine of representation,† we cannot but congratulate Dr. Carus on his happy declaration: that ethics should recognise as its principal basis the search for truth and adaptation thereto; that an honest inquiry into truth is the condition of all ethics, and that faithfulness and obedience to truth includes all the laws that a system of ethics could contain.

#### ROSMINI'S PHILOSOPHY.

PROF. L. M. BILLIA is a Roman Catholic and a disciple of Antonio Rosmini-Serbatì. There is a deep-seated and radical difference between our view and that of our critic, and yet there is also in some points

\* This is the title of another of the author's works, and, in fact, the one which he applies to his system.

† For the convenience of our readers, especially the young and strangers, we may repeat the reasons upon which we reject the theory of representation: That which is known is the truth; that which is known is the idea. Idea and truth are entirely wholly one, and are wholly one also with the object thought of. If, instead of saying that the idea is the object thought of, we say that the idea is, through sense-remembrance, a representation of the object, it would come to pass that we could never think of any object, but always of its representation; therefore, I could not think: one, two, three—the thought itself would be impossible. Moreover, the representation could not be thought, if not by means of a certain resemblance or similitude with the object thought of; this similitude is what is actually thought: it is a common element; it is the unity of the representation and that which is represented. Idea in this sense is the representation of many things similar to each other, but this is not its definition. (See Rosmini, *Psychology*, vol. II, p. 1339.)

of great consequence a striking agreement. As there is no hope of a conversion on either side, we may forbear arguing the case and be satisfied with a simple statement, which will contrast the two world-conceptions. But before entering into a discussion of the present subject, it seems advisable to sketch the philosophy of Professor Billia's great master, who may fairly be regarded as the most representative Roman Catholic thinker of modern times.

Rosmini was born in March, 1797, in Roveredo, Tyrol, the eldest son of a wealthy and noble family. He attended the Lyceum at Trient and the University of Padua, and selected in 1821 the ecclesiastical calling with the avowed purpose of giving to theology a sound philosophical basis. In his love of the church and eagerness for reform, he became the founder of a new religious order, the Society of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity, popularly called in Italy "The Rosminians." He joined Piedmont in 1830 and Pope Pius IX. in 1848, under whose reform-ministry he became the papal minister of education. At the outbreak of the Roman revolution, he retired from public life and died July 1st, 1855 at Stresa.

In spite of all his devotion not only to the church but also to the Pope personally, whom he followed into his exile at Gaëta, one of his writings "On the Five Wounds of the Church" has been placed upon the Index.

Rosmini's numerous, and partly very ponderous, writings are little accessible to the English speaking world. His works were collected (according to Meyer's *Konversations-Lexikon*) in seventeen volumes (Milan, 1842-44), and he wrote, according to Davidson, not fewer than ninety-nine various publications, books, and among them very voluminous books, articles and pamphlets, on philosophical, theological, ethical, legal, and miscellaneous subjects. Among them are claimed to be the most important ones, "Nuovo saggio sull' origine delle idee," 3 vol.; and "Philosophia del diritto." The best known Italian works on his life are by Thomaseo (Turin, 1855) and Bernardi (Pinerolo, 1860).

There is a translation extant of Rosmini's "Nuovo saggio sull' origine delle idee," entitled "New Essay on the Origin of Ideas" (London, 1883-84), published by the English branch of the Rosminians which is attached to the ancient church of St. Etheldreda, Ely Place, Holborn. The most convenient work for English readers will be Davidson's book "Rosmini's Philosophical System" (London, 1882).

In order to overcome doubt and unbelief Rosmini attempted to establish a rational basis of the Christian faith, thus to work out a conciliation of reason and religion. He opposed the sensualism and empiricism as represented in Italy by Gioja and Ramagnosi, and propounded a philosophical system which in accord with

Descartes's idealism was expected to be in agreement with the doctrines of the church.

The Encyclopædia Britannica characterises Rosmini's philosophy as follows :

"Rosmini, contemplating the position of recent philosophy from Locke to Hegel, and having his eye directed to the ancient and fundamental problem of the origin, truth, and certainty of our ideas, wrote :—' If philosophy is to be restored to love and respect, I think it will be necessary, in part, to return to the teachings of the ancients, and in part to give those teachings the benefit of modern methods' ('Theodicy,' n. 148). Pursuing, therefore, the now generally approved method of the observation of facts, he most carefully examined and analysed the fact of human knowledge, and obtained the following results :

"1) That the notion or idea of being or existence in general enters into, and is presupposed by, all our acquired cognitions, so that, without it, they would be impossible.

"2) That this idea is essentially objective, inasmuch as what is seen in it is as distinct from and opposed to the mind that sees it as the light is from the eye that looks at it.

"3) That it is essentially true, because 'being' and 'truth' are convertible terms, and because in the vision of it the mind cannot err, since error could only be committed by a judgment, and here there is no judgment, but a pure intuition affirming nothing and denying nothing.

"4) That by the application of this essentially objective and true idea the human being intellectually perceives, first, the animal body individually conjoined with him, and then, on occasion of the sensations produced in him *not by himself*, the causes of those sensations, that is, from the action felt he perceives and affirms an agent, a being, and therefore a true thing, that acts on him, and he thus gets at the external world,—these are the true primitive judgments, containing (a) the subsistence of the particular being (subject), and (b) its essence or species as determined by the quality of the action felt from it (predicate).

"5) That reflexion, by separating the essence or species from the subsistence, obtains the full specific idea (universalisation), and then from this, by leaving aside some of its elements, the abstract specific idea (abstraction).

"6) That the mind, having reached this stage of development, can proceed to further and further abstracts, including the first principles of reasoning, the principles of the several sciences, complex ideas, groups of ideas, and so on without end.

"7) Finally, that the same most universal idea of being, this generator and formal element of all acquired cognitions, cannot itself be acquired, but must be innate in us, implanted by God in our nature. Being, as naturally shining to our mind, must therefore be what men call the light of reason. Hence the name Rosmini gives it of ideal being ; and this he laid down as the one true fundamental principle of all philosophy, and the supreme criterion of truth and certainty."

We are in sympathy with the aspiration represented by Rosmini, of rationalising the Christian faith. We do not believe that Rosmini was successful in his efforts ; indeed, we think that he could not be, because he took a wrong start and was blinded by the firm and fore-determined conviction that the Christianity of the church was undeniable and indubitable truth. Nevertheless, we regard the effort of any man of conciliating his religion with science and rational thought as praiseworthy, and we go so far as to say that the gist of Christianity, i. e. the main tenets of Christian ethics, admit

indeed of a perfectly rational foundation. We deny, however, the possibility of rationalising the dogmas of the church. We see in them only the crystallised mythology of past ages, which, when regarded as a mythology, is profound, venerable, full of oddly and mysteriously expressed truths, but when regarded as truth itself, are utterly absurd.

We agree with Professor Billia in substance while we disagree in form. We agree in rejecting hedonism, or the pleasure theory in ethics, and we agree in accepting the ethics of a stern search for truth. Neither of us can think of speaking of ethics as independent of a definite world-conception. Both of us regard morality simply as the practical application of our deepest religious convictions concerning that which we have found to be the truth. Yet we disagree as to the form in which we cast our convictions. Rosmini and his school favor mystical expressions and extol the tradition of the church in comparison to the results of modern science. We, on the contrary, do not rest satisfied until the mysteries disappear like fog before the sun ; and while we place little reliance upon ecclesiastical traditions, we rely mainly upon that which God's revelation in nature teaches us through science.

Thus my Roman Catholic critic who enjoys the advantage of living in the cradle of an ancient civilisation and the very home of the "Filosophia del diritto" jokes at my ingenuousness of accepting the theory of evolution. He does not attempt to overthrow the theory of evolution, and does not seem to expect me to take the trouble of proving it to him. I hope, he will not be offended when I openly confess that the smile was fully reciprocated on my part. It is not ignorance of the philosophical and ecclesiastical traditions, nor a horror of the supernatural that prevent me from accepting an ecclesiastical philosophy as is that of Rosmini's. Yet Professor Billia, it appears to me, does not appreciate the full weight of overwhelming proofs which give evidence to the truth of the theory of evolution.

Professor Billia, so it seems to us, still regards religious truths (i. e., the moral tenets which confessedly contain the gist of religion) as incompatible with the results of modern science. This may be excusable in the face of the fact that almost all modern ethicists who accept the theory of evolution, Spencer, Höffding, Gizycki, etc., are hedonists. We trust that the theory of evolution, far from overthrowing the moral truths of religion will give them a scientific and reliable basis. If evolution is true, we must live in obedience to the law of evolution. In that case, we cannot fashion our lives according to our pleasure, for the facts of nature sternly demand, by penalty of degeneration and perdition, a constant progress and higher development of our souls. Here we are in accord with

the old Hebrew and Christian tradition. Ethics is not subjective; our rules of conduct are not self-made; there is an objective authority which must be obeyed, whose will is plainly recognised in the laws of nature and in the course of evolution.

We have no "fear of the supernatural"; we simply regard its conception as an error. To Professor Billia religious truths are acquired by a supernatural revelation, and scientific truths by a natural revelation. The former only are regarded as holy and infallible, not the latter, which are rather dubitable and unreliable. To us all truth is holy. In so far as truth is a statement of fact, a description of some feature or part of the objective reality in which and of which we are, truth is always divine. Thus religion, or our attempt of living the truth, no less than science, or our search for the truth, are in one respect "human facts" and in another respect "a work of God."

The main difference between our Catholic critic and ourselves consists in this: that he regards the traditional authority of the Church as ultimate, while we replace it by the authority of objective truth, provable according to the usual methods of science.

We do not intend to enter into a discussion of minor points; so we abstain here from repeating our doctrine of freewill, simply stating that we do not feel guilty, as Professor Billia maintains, of having confounded "liberty of will with freedom from passion"; on the other hand, we do not see how the Italian school can boast of having solved the problem, while claiming to have confuted "in the best possible manner determinism, physiological, psychological, and rationalistic." We further abstain from discussing whether or not and how far there is an agreement of our position with Auguste Comte's positivism. We concur with Comte in the recognition of the scientific method; we depart from his agnosticism and many details of his philosophical views; and, finally, we only hint here that when the author of "The Ethical Problem" spoke of the "intuitionists," he did not have reference to the "Objective school" of Rosmini. Intuitionism is a peculiarly English phenomenon, which can only in one point, indeed, in the main point, be compared to Rosmini's view, viz.: in its strange tenet of the intuitive apprehension of truth. This latter point, however, is of sufficient consequence to deserve a few additional remarks.

Professor Billia regards it as a matter of course that "the doctrine of representation" is wrong. By doctrine of representation he understands our proposition that knowledge is a representation of facts and that truth is a correct representation of facts. According to his view "idea and truth are wholly one, and are wholly one with the object thought of." This sentence, if I understand this rather mystifying explanation cor-

rectly, means, that ideas are directly perceived in the same way as sensations—the *Anschauungen* of our senses. Our sensations (i. e., in Kant's terminology our *Anschauungen*, often translated by "intuitions") are not subject to doubt; they are immediately perceived as real; and a similar immediateness has been attributed by many philosophers to certain very general or universal truths.

Rosmini regards "being" and truth as identical. We make a distinction between reality and truth. Sensations are "real"; we cannot say that sensations as such are either true or untrue. For instance, I feel a slight pang of hunger in the stomach: Is there any truth or untruth in this feeling? Or a certain color sensation takes place in the eye: Is there any truth or untruth in this sensation? Sensations are simply real; they are the data of our experience, out of which we construct our ideas. But these ideas if they properly represent the objects sensed, are true; if not, they are untrue. Truth and untruth always presuppose mental activity. If I, having a color sensation which is a subjective hallucination, judge that there is an object before me, I am mistaken; the sensation in that case is not wrong, but my judgment of it is wrong. The sensation is right enough; it is caused somehow according to the laws of nature; but I have allowed myself to be misguided by its appearance.

Thus truth is never a thing of immediate perception, but always the product of mental activity. The very laws of mind would have to be reversed, should truth be directly perceived as are sensations.

Professor Billia assumes that if an idea, "through sense-remembrance," were "a representation of the object,"

"It would come to pass that we could never think of any object, but always of its representation; therefore,

he adds,

"I could not think one, two, three—the thought itself would be impossible."

Why? Is this not self-mystification? Let us not stultify ourselves. By having and thinking a representation, we think of the object represented. A certain feeling, being caused somehow, say by a certain sense-impression, comes to represent an object, and thus it stands for it; it symbolises it. This is the nature of thought. Whenever the symbol is felt, the object represented in it is thought of.

There is a long distance between Alessandria in Northern Italy and Chicago in the prairies of Illinois, but it almost seems to us that the distance between the spiritual roads of Professor Billia and ourselves is greater still. Centuries seem to lie between us. But in spite of all our divergencies we observe with pleasure a certain concurrence in some most important

points. We have in this sketch attempted to represent the case with faithful impartiality, not attenuating and not extending either the differences or agreements.

P. C.

#### KNOWLEDGE.

WE define knowledge (1) as a representation of facts in sentient symbols; and (2) as a description of facts (Kirchhoff). In the former sense we limit the term to sentient beings, in the latter we apply it generally. The usage of the verb "to know" is limited exclusively to the former sense, for we do not say, that a book "knows" something. The latter sense is more general. We say that a man has knowledge, and also that a book contains knowledge.

The root of the words *to know*, *gnoscere*, *γινώσκειν*, *erkennen*, etc., is the same as in *ken*, *can*, *können*, denoting an ability to do something.\* It signifies the mental disposition which makes a man fit to accomplish his purpose. It is his state of being acquainted with the facts with which he has to deal.

What is the nature of this state, and how does it originate?

The origin of knowledge, i. e., the act of becoming acquainted with things, of acquiring knowledge, of perceiving, is called cognition.

A sentient being is exposed to impressions of the surrounding world. The various objects make various impressions upon the different senses, and these impressions are remembered. Certain characteristic features of their forms remain and can be revived by an appropriate stimulus, so as to be felt again. As soon as a certain event (say a ray of sunshine previously registered by the eye as light and by the skin as a peculiar kind of warmth) impresses itself upon the sense-organs, it revives the memory-structures of the same kind. The feeling of the present sense impression is felt to be the same in kind as those prior sense-impressions, the vestiges of which are preserved in the revived memory-structures. The reference of a sense-impression to the memory-structure of its class is a primitive perception, and perception is the simplest act of cognition.

Facts are pictured in sensations, and these pictures represent the facts. A certain feeling has come to stand for a certain object, event, or phenomenon. The presence of this feeling signifies the presence of its

respective and analogous object, event, or phenomenon, and this state of the representativeness of various feelings, in its higher perfection, is called knowledge. On a higher level of mentality facts are described in names or word-symbols,\* and these names represent whole classes of facts.

Knowledge is rendered definite by naming. A sentient being can be said to really know a thing only when he has named it. We know only that which we can clearly describe in words. Names label things and enable us to handle them in our minds without difficulty. They are symbols of the essential features of things.

Briefly: Knowledge is an appropriate representation of facts in mental symbols, and the purpose of knowledge is the ability of appropriately dealing with facts.

The amount of mentality of a mental being is measured by its knowledge, or rather by its ability of operating with knowledge. Knowledge is that which constitutes the power of mental beings, and without knowledge man's dignity would be naught. Knowledge is and must be the basis of all action; for actions without knowledge are mere reflex motions.

Knowledge being of paramount importance, the acquisition of knowledge forms an indispensable and the most prominent department in human life. The acquisition of knowledge is the department of science.

The aim of science is to make knowledge not only reliable, but also handy. The former is obtained by critique, the latter by classification, and both are called "system."

System means the arrangement of all parts into one whole. A set of facts or events (in order to be systematic) must be formulated so as to include, in a methodical order, all possibilities. This will exhaust the subject and at the same time allow us to survey the whole field, as it were, at a glance. System renders facts *übersichtlich*.† Having knowledge systematically arranged, we can readily assign new facts of a well-known class to their proper places in the system; we understand them at once and can predetermine the course of their events even before a renewed observation. We can also exercise critique. We can judge of the reliability of accounts concerning facts, for we recognise at once contradictory elements as inharmonious with the rest.

\* The verb "to know" is used in Genesis iv, 1, in the sense of "causing to bring forth, or to produce." So the German *erkennen* (a reflex causative verb of *kennen*, meaning "causing one's self to know") and the Greek *γινώσκειν* have the same double meaning. Is it a strange coincidence only or a fact of deeper significance that these verbs are used to express two so heterogeneous acts as "knowing and begetting"? If it is a confusion between two roots of a similar or the same sound, it is certainly very, very old and dates back to the period before the separation of the various Aryan branches. Should the coincidence arise from the same conception which in more recent times gave two meanings to the words "potent" and "impotent"?

\* Mathematical and algebraic symbols must in this connection also be regarded as words.

† There is an appropriate word missing in English to denote the German *übersichtlich* and *Ubersichtlichkeit*, "surveyable and surveyability." Surveyability is more than "clearness" or "lucidity"; it is a systematic arrangement in which one readily finds one's bearings. It is that order which makes a domain of science easily surveyed. Surveyability is attained by methodical arrangement; it is the product of "system"; it is the advantage derived from methodical arrangement.

Thus system, on the one hand, implies the completeness of parts presented with greatest economy, and on the other hand, affords the means of criticism for the elimination of faulty statements, contradictions, and errors.

P. C.

#### CURRENT TOPICS.

In a tone of apology the Chicago papers deplore the unavoidable absence of Chicago "sports" from the prize fights at New Orleans. Even the suburban village of Oshkosh displays more public spirit than we do in this matter, as appears from the following humiliating confession which I find in this morning's paper: "A delegation of twelve from Oshkosh will pass through the city bound for the fights to-day, but the Chicago contingent at the arena promises to be very small." The best that Chicago can do under the circumstances is to send "regrets" and the customary fashionable excuse of a "prior engagement," to meet the President of the United States. There is also an explanation to the effect that the prize-fighting element, and the patrons of the prize ring in Chicago are all Democrats, whose presence is earnestly desired at Washington to give tone to the inauguration of Mr. Cleveland. A proper complaint is made of the bungling mismanagement by which two such interesting Democratic festivals as the inauguration of the President at Washington, and a prize-fight at New Orleans should have been appointed so near in time together, and in cities so far apart, whereby the Chicago "contingent" was prevented from attending both entertainments. The prize-fight should have been at Washington, or the inauguration at New Orleans.

In the *Forum* for March is an article on "The Science of Municipal Corruption," by a skilled professor who prudently withholds his name. He speaks with the confidence of an expert. It is a very unpleasant article, because after you have read a page or two of it, you cannot help doubting your own honesty. When the professor says, and proves it, that of the "typical Legislature, City Council, or Board of Education," two thirds are open to bribes, and only one third is honest, we cannot help thinking that the odds are two to one against ourselves, and that if we were members of the "typical Legislature or City Council" we should probably be numbered among the two thirds. Riches breed corruption, and character too often depends on opportunity. Considering the low standard of public life, we have reason to be proud that thirty-three and a third per cent. of our public men are honest men.

Having, very likely, been for a long time in the business of buying and selling men, the professor has no trouble in sorting them into grades and qualities as if they were potatoes in the market; and the information he gives about prices will be found valuable to those who may have occasion to buy a few men for any particular purpose. He says that the cheapest are "the leaders of workmen and farmers' political movements." I hope this is not true, but it agrees with the opinion of a railroad-lawyer of my own acquaintance who told me that a "granger" legislature was the cheapest he ever bought. Second in cheapness come "the editors of country newspapers, and newspapers in small cities,"—the editors in big cities, of course, command higher prices,—but next in cheapness to the country editors come "country lawyers, and a certain class of city lawyers"; and then come "clergymen who drift into practical politics"; these, remarks the professor, "can almost always be bought by indirect methods." It will be noticed that the scale of prices rises as men rise out of poverty, the poorest being the cheapest, and the gloomy moral at the bottom is this: never elect or appoint a poor man to office. "Moral reputation," says the professor, "is a flimsy security for conduct; financial competence is a good security." While there may be a

grain of melancholy truth in that, it only adds to the glory of the poor men who have characters above temptation, and the number of these is legion. They are immensely in the majority; and I would rather trust with an office a poor man of "moral reputation," than a rich man who is honest because he has money enough to make him so.

An unfortunate accident happened last Tuesday at the Democratic convention; an American was put on the ticket by mistake. His name is Gastfield, and he was nominated for the office of city clerk. The explanation of the blunder is that the convention was cheated by the German shape of his name. When the philologists of the party discovered the mistake it was too late to correct it, for the nomination had been made. They showed, however, that if the convention had possessed any linguistic sense it would have detected the imposition, for had the name been really German it would have been spelled Gastfeld, and not Gastfield, a very clumsy forgery or imitation of German. The leading Democratic paper of the city, referring editorially to the misadventure, says: "Gastfield was chosen on the mistaken inference that he was a German. A fair estimate of the convention's regard for and acquaintance with Germans and the German language may be gathered from the fact that the terminal syllable of Gastfield's name was accepted without question as an assurance of his being a German of the Germans. As a matter of fact Gastfield neither speaks nor understands the German language." Many strong partisans, interested in the success of the ticket, express a hope that Mr. Gastfield will yet be able to prove to the satisfaction of the party that he is not an American.

Some time ago I made a plea in *The Open Court* in behalf of "distinguished," a flattery weary and worn. I thought it was time to take the word "off post" as we used to say in the army, and relieve it of duty; but my plea was disregarded, and the tired adjective is working harder than before. If we must please one another by an exchange of genteel compliments why not press into the service "eminent," "celebrated," and "illustrious"; handsome, full-sized words, which with scarcely anything to do, are idling their time away. Nearly all the work of mutual admiration is thrown upon "distinguished." Not long ago I visited the Illinois Legislature, and my first impression was that the General Assembly was not quite so refined a body of statesmen as a legislature ought to be, for every member was smoking like a Chicago tug boat, and the Speaker of the House was just faintly visible through a dense tobacco cloud that wrapped him in a halo like a London fog; but I soon found that my estimate was wrong. I discovered that the Legislature was composed of extremely courteous men, for whenever one member spoke of another he always referred to him as the "distinguished gentleman" from Pike, Jo Daviess, Cook, or whatever the county was. Not even a council of Spanish grandes could have been more punctilious in exalting one another, but the performance became insipid at last from pure monotony. It was like the tintinnabulations of a cow-bell. It had no musical "scale," no positive, comparative, and superlative degrees. Every man was "distinguished"; neither less nor more than that, and it would have been a relief to have heard the word "illustrious," or even "pusillanimous," for a change.

It has been intimated that my former comments on "distinguished" came from envy; and that I was merely jealous of greater men. I do not believe that, and yet I am not bold enough to deny it, for I doubt that any man can tell how much of the censure he scatters about him springs from ignoble jealousy. The taunt, however, will not fit me now, for since I wrote that other criticism, the "distinguished" compliment has been given to me. Last week an eloquent writer of Chicago presented me with one

of his books, and on the fly leaf he spoke of me as his "distinguished friend." I am very proud of that, and I think better of the word than I did when almost everybody was "distinguished" except me. Still, I favor a change, for the flattery is becoming too promiscuous altogether. Within a week I have read of the "distinguished" fighter Corbett, and the "distinguished" Apostle Paul. Also, I have seen the falls of Niagara complimented as the "distinguished" cataract, while the Vice-President of the United States at a banquet spoke of Mr. Stevenson as "the distinguished gentleman who will in a few days succeed me." I think there must be a change, for the word has reached the climax of adulation in a description of that identical Mr. Stevenson, who appears in Monday's paper as a "distinguished communicant," because he went to church on Sunday and patronised the sacrament. The courtly chronicler says: "While the pastor did not allude personally to the distinguished communicant, there was something in his discourse that seemed to fit the honors he has achieved." Even the Lord's supper became "distinguished" by the presence of Mr. Stevenson. Above all that fawning praise, I hear the tones of Thomas Hood's democracy ringing like a chime of bells:

"One place there is—beneath the burial sod,  
Where all mankind are equalised by death;  
Another place there is—the fane of God,  
Where all are equal who draw living breath."

\* \* \*

A dispatch, dated Sydney, February 26, says: "King George Tubu, of the Tonga Islands, is dead." This is an important announcement, for the death of that monarch presents a fine opportunity for statesmanship. I know not where the Tonga Islands are, but I am quite sure they will make an excellent "coaling station" for our fleet in case of war, and that if we do not "seize" this opportunity to annex them, England will. As King George Tubu is dead, we can get the islands without having to pay him a pension of \$20 000 a year. Besides, they will be some consolation for the loss of Hawaii, a bit of prey, which, having eagerly pursued for a few days, we are now as anxious to let alone as was the eager hunter when he overtook the grizzly bear. Slowly, but majestically, the American conscience rose above the scheme of conquest and buried it. Extent of territory and material achievement may make a nation big, but it requires moral heroism to make it great.

\* \* \*

The House of Representatives at Washington was very disorderly the other day, and so riotous were the proceedings that the Speaker "ordered out the mace," whatever that is, and rebuked the tumultuous members by saying: "Gentlemen, I hope you will remember that this is the House of Representatives and not a bear garden." This was rather severe upon the bear garden, and reminds me of old Squire Chandler, formerly Justice of the Peace at Marbletown. I always thought that he put on too much dignity and style in his contemptible little court-room, especially as the District Court was very indulgent and permitted us to throw books and inkstands at one another, without inflicting any greater punishment on us than a reprimand. One day a couple of us were trying an exciting case before the old Squire, and just as the discussion had reached ninety degrees in the shade, when the inkstand-throwing had only just begun, he fined us ten dollars apiece, saying: "I'll teach you gentlemen that you are not in the District Court now." So Bruin, the Speaker of the bear garden, might very properly say, when his colony was extremely rude: "Gentlemen, remember you are not in Congress now."

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For a hundred years or so, the Christian churches of England and America have been sending regiments of missionaries across the sea to convert the Mohammedans of Asia. They have not

been successful; and now in a spirit of reciprocity the children of Islam reply to us and say, "Since you have not been able to convert us, we will try to convert you"; and their missionaries have already started from Bombay, some to England and others to America. The Mohammedan invasion has begun, and the standard of the crescent is already unfurled in the city of New York. In six weeks we shall see it in Chicago. The propaganda is said to be under the direction of rich Mohammedans in India, and their pioneer missionary is Muhamed Alexander Russell Webb, an American, formerly Consul of the United States at the Philippine Islands, where he became a Mussulman. He is now founding a publishing house in the city of New York for the printing of Mohammedan tracts, and very soon he will have a mosque established there. Some of the New York and Chicago papers have given him a sneering welcome, and yet their sarcasm had a nervous flutter in it, as if they were a little bit afraid of him and would rather he had not come. Now, it accidentally happens that I know something about Muhamed Alexander Russell Webb. An intimate friend of his is an intimate friend of mine, and for the past two years I have been permitted to read the letters and lectures of Mr. Webb. These prove him to be spiritually and intellectually a very able man; and I can assure his Christian critics that if they meet him in a comparison of creeds they will find him able to justify his own. I advise them to strike at the weak spot in his armor: the Mohammedan practice of polygamy. It may be true that this is more social than religious, but it is permitted by the Moslem church and therefore it attaches to the faith. Mr. Webb will find it a stumbling-block in his way.

M. M. TRUMBULL.

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