

"Outsider" goes on to say: "The study of philosophy seems to exist only by virtue of a presumption that all the regularities of the universe are to be explained on some one principle, and we might expect that, were this principle once grasped, these regularities of space, so intelligible as they are, so universal, so fundamental, would, among the first and easiest of things, get explained with mathematical precision and clearness." Yes, we might expect this, we might expect a great many things; but when we expect that explained which is without relations, well, we are going to be disappointed, that is all. It may be unfortunate that evolution cannot explain the conservation of energy, or persistence of force as Mr. Spencer calls it. And when this, together with Space, Time, and the other inexplicables are explained by "Outsider," or some one else, the El Dorado of philosophy will no doubt have been reached, and Mr. Spencer will probably yield the palm very willingly. But until then are not those who expect these explanations in much the same position as the child crying for a slice of the moon? In asking whether Mr. Spencer's unknowable is not "the good, authentic, practical, working God of religion, or a poor decayed divinity exercising no function in this evolutionary world, but retained on half pay for the sake of auld lang syne," the desire to ridicule seems to be backed up by a plentiful non-acquaintance with Mr. Spencer's writings. If this point is not made clear in "First Principles" it is certainly brought out in the controversy that occurred several years ago between Mr. Spencer and Mr. Frederic Harrison concerning the nature and reality of religion. I should like to see "Outsider's" exposition of the theory that counter-evolution would necessarily ensue from the principle of the conservation of energy could the motions of all the bodies in the world be reversed in direction at the same instant, their velocities remaining the same. Would it not be a necessary element in this plan that thereafter motion should follow the line of greatest resistance?

EDGAR R. DAWSON.

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EXPERIENCE AND INTUITION.

A DISSENTER FROM SPENCER'S THEORY OF THE SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE AS EXPLAINED BY "KAPPA."

To the Editor of the New-York Times:

"Kappa," in his defense of Spencer in yesterday's TIMES, says "that the long-standing dispute between Kant and Locke and their respective followers as to the matter of knowledge, whether partly intuitive or wholly derived from experience, has been set at rest by the conception of the inherited effects of the experience of ancestors, producing a body of organized experience in the individual which Kant mistook for intuitive knowledge." I must say that "Kappa" settles that question very easily to his own satisfaction, but not to mine. The above-quoted conception, like all relative conceptions, is true so far as it goes, but the infinite conception alone can settle anything absolutely. How does "Kappa" interpret it himself, "that there is no experience innate in man"? That will be true according to how he looks at the question, whether in the relative or in the absolute sense. How, for instance, would he answer the following questions?

If all experience is derived from our own efforts and from the efforts of those who have experienced life before us, where does the faculty to get experience, or to experiment life with, come from? Did the first state of existence which ever experienced life get its experience from itself, or, if not, from whence? If it got it (its experience) from itself, is it not what philosophers, or Kant himself, would call innate or intuitive? And if the first state of existence capable of experiencing life would not receive it from an antecedent state, was not experience innate or intuitive in that first state of existence? And if it were innate in the first, why should it not be so in the second, and in the third, and so on, indefinitely? If the first man, say, (in supposing that there would have been a first man,) could not receive experience from a preceding man and still could experience life, would "Kappa" call the experience of that first man innate or hereditary?

A little further on "Kappa" says: "What is the intrinsic difference between the question, 'Why is space continuous?' A.--We do not know, and the question 'Why does that man look so sad?' A.--Because he has read 'Outsider's' articles;" and he goes on, like most philosophers, trying his best to give philosopher's reasons to suit his own way of looking at

things, in a manner so intricate and complex and in such a labyrinth of words that it is almost impossible to a common mortal to make out what he is driving at. To me, a simple, common-sense man, all questions are intrinsically alike inasmuch that they all call for an answer. If you know enough to give the correct answer, you give it; and if you do not know you are an ignoramus, and you cannot give it. And it is so with "Kappa," with Spencer, with "Outsider," and with every man, be he a philosopher or not. As for myself, I take it that there is an answer to every question provided it be rational; but as to any intrinsic difference between two or more questions, I cannot see any, except that one question is not the other or the others, and that they all require a different answer; that the answer to each is merely a matter of degree of knowledge or of relative knowledge, and that all knowledge is acquired in the same manner—through experience or through analogy, or through both experience and analogy. Whether the experience is innate, intuitive, inherited, or acquired is in itself again a matter of experience or knowledge, and as to analogy, it is merely an affair of reason, but here again and forever we find that reason, like experience, may be also, I suppose, either innate, intuitive, inherited, or acquired, and if I say that reason and experience are one and the same thing under two different names; and that neither can be, or that it cannot be, without being at the same time or together innate, intuitive, inherited, and acquired, I shall find myself, also, presently philosophizing and drowning myself in the flow of my own words and of my own opinions. What I wanted to say, purely and simply, was that the first question of "Kappa" can be answered just as well, and is answered in exactly the same manner, as his second by the use of reason, which, as I have said above, is another name for knowledge or experience. I would therefore answer his first question, to which "Kappa" says "we do not know," by saying that space is continuous for infinite (as I suppose he means) because it is "intended" to hold an infinite universe, and that if there was no infinite space there could be no infinite universe. That answer covers the question as far as it can do it relatively or without going into the question of absolute or eternal existence—which alone can settle every question absolutely or without recourse.

Although Mr. Spencer tries to set a limit between the knowable and the unknowable or to limit our own knowledge, I beg respectfully to say that, in my humble opinion, that alone which is not or which has no existence is inconceivable, unknowable, and unrealizable, and that whatever is, whatever has an existence, whatever is really or absolutely, be it the Infinite or God himself, from the moment that it is real it is realizable, conceivable, and knowable. That is why I said above that there is an answer to every possible question, provided it be rational, because whatever is rational is real and whatever is real is not only possible, but is, and whatever is irrational is unreal, inconceivable, and impossible, because not only it is not, but it cannot be. The answer to every question soever is therefore a mere matter of knowledge, of experience or reason, and to make use of "Kappa's" own thunder, if we keep inheriting experience, knowledge, or reason constantly, and if we keep constantly acquiring more and more of it, through our own efforts, it seems to me that we are bound to acquire enough of it, in time, for all purposes, or at least for our own purpose here below, which is to know whatever is real or rational or eternal existence itself.

CARL OPPERG.

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