

*Soul-destroying sophistry is
fake wisdom, a hot-bed of
doubts and conjectures.*



Abstract and train of thoughts¹

Insights to the wisdom-peddlers of Greece.

Protagoras, followed by Gorgias and others, found Pythagoras' title philosopher too narrow, and so they assumed the title of Sophist, signifying one who professes the power of making others wise, a wholesale and retail dealer in wisdom — a wisdom-monger, in the same sense as an iron-monger or fish-monger. 4

Many Sophists, *e.g.*, Euthydemus and Dionysiodorus, were empty disputants, sleight-of-word jugglers, but this was far from being their common character. Plato and Aristotle repeatedly admit the brilliancy of their talents, and the extent of their acquirements. 5

Gorgias will ever be cited as an example of prostituted genius from the immoral nature of his objects, and the baseness of his motives.

These, and not his sophisms, constituted him a Sophist whose eloquence and logical skill rendered him only the more pernicious. 5

The causes of the corruption that came about, first in private and next in public life, which displayed itself in all the free states and communities of Greece, but most of all in Athens, are themselves the effects of that passion for military glory and political preponderance, which may well be called the bastard and the parricide of liberty. 6

Being hireling hunters of the young and rich, the Sophists offered to the vanity of youth and the ambition of wealth a substitute for that authority, which by the institutions of Solon had been attached to high birth and property, as the regular and ordinary results of comparative opulence and renowned ancestry. 6

The minds of men were to be sensualized; and even if the arguments themselves failed, yet the principles so attacked were to be brought into doubt by the mere frequency of hearing all things doubted, and the most sacred of all now openly denied, and then insulted by sneer and ridicule. 7

Religion, in its widest and purest sense, is the act of reverencing the Invisible, as the highest in nature and man.

By celestial observations alone can even terrestrial charts be constructed scientifically. 8

The first attempt of the Sophists was to separate ethics from the faith in the Invisible, and to stab morality through the side of religion — an attempt to which the idolatrous polytheism of Greece had furnished too many facilities. 8

Polybius attributes the ruin of the Greek states to the frequency of perjury, which they had learnt from the Sophists, to laugh at as a trifle that broke no bones, nay, as in some cases, an expedient and justifiable exertion of the power given to us by nature over our own words, without which no man could have a secret that might not be extorted from him by the will of others. 9

¹ Frontispiece by Matthieu-Bourel.

In the same spirit, the sage and observant historian attributes the growth and strength of the Roman republic to the general reverence of the invisible powers, and the consequent horror in which the breaking of an oath was held. 9

Those who first made the laws were feeble creatures which, in fact, the greater numbers of men are.

Laws, honour, and ignominy were all calculated for the advantage of the law-makers. But in order to frighten away the stronger, whom they could not coerce by fair contest, and to secure greater advantages for themselves than their feebleness could otherwise have procured, they preached up the doctrine that it was base and contrary to right to wish to have anything beyond others; and that, in this wish, consisted the essence of injustice. 10

Another code of right was that the nobler and stronger should possess more than the weaker and more pusillanimous and, therefore, the stronger has a right to control the weaker for his own advantage. 10

The language of sophistry is the power of barefaced selfishness that excludes partnership, a power which all men should have an interest in repelling.

And if for power we substitute pleasure, and the means of pleasure, it is easy to construct a system well fitted to corrupt natures, and the more mischievous in proportion as it is less alarming. 11

Music may be divided from poetry, and both may continue to exist, though with diminished influence. But religion and morals cannot be disjoined without the destruction of both; and that this does not take place to the full extent, we owe to the frequency with which both take shelter in the heart, and that men are always better or worse than the maxims which they adopt or concede. 11

As sciences are systems based on principles, so is morality a principle without a system.

Systems of morality are nothing more than the old books of casuistry generalized, even of that casuistry which the genius of Protestantism gradually worked off from itself like a heterogeneous bodily fluid, together with the practice of auricular confession. 12

Selfishness is the origin and cause of all evil.

It is the thorn in the soul which, unless a man shall have it removed, he can never soar above and be free as air. 12

The word constitution has been altered to mean capitulation, a treaty imposed by the people on their own government (as on a conquered enemy), thus giving sanction to falsehood, and universality to anomaly. 13

Popularise and philosophy, and you will soon end in perverting every noble truth. 14

Suggested reading for students.

On Black versus White Magic. 15



Insights to the wisdom-peddlers of Greece.

Sophistry has now become in Europe “the logical exercise of the intellectual faculties,” while with us it has never outgrown its pristine stage of “fallacious reasoning,” the shaky, insecure premises from which most of the conclusions and opinions are drawn, formed and forthwith jumped at.

— A MASTER OF WISDOM¹

Ἡ οδὸς κατω.

The road downwards.

— HERACLITUS, Fragment

Protagoras, followed by Gorgias and others, found Pythagoras' title philosopher too narrow, and so they assumed the title of Sophist, signifying one who professes the power of making others wise, a wholesale and retail dealer in wisdom — a wisdom-monger, in the same sense as an iron-monger or fish-monger.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Friend: a series of essays to aid the formation of fixed principles in politics, morals and religion, with literary amusements interspersed.*² London: G. Bell, 1875; 389pp. Section the Second. “On grounds of morals and religion, and the discipline of the mind requisite for a true understanding of the same.” Essay III, pp. 384-94, from the 1st American Edition, reprinted from the 2nd London Edition, Burlington [Vt.]: Chauncey Goodrich, 1831; 510pp.

As Pythagoras (584 A.C.), declining the title of the wise man, is said to have first named himself PHILOSOPHER, or lover of wisdom,³ so Protagoras, followed by Gorgias, Prodicus, &c. (444 A.C.), found even the former word too narrow for his own opinion of himself, and first assumed the title of SOPHIST; this word originally signifying one who professes the power of making others wise, a wholesale and retail *dealer* [καπηλός] in wisdom — a *wisdom-monger*, in the same sense as we say, an iron-monger. In this, and not in their abuse of the arts of reasoning, have Plato and Aristotle placed the *essential* of the sophistic character. Their sophisms were indeed its natural products and accompaniments, but must yet be distinguished from it, as the fruits from the tree.

*Ἐμπορὸς τις περὶ τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς μαθήματα.*⁴ — a vender, a market-man, in moral and intellectual knowledges (*connoissances*) — one who hires himself out or puts himself up at auction, as a carpenter and upholsterer to the heads and hearts of his customers — such are the phrases by which Plato at once describes and satirizes the proper sophist.

¹ Cf. *Mahatma Letter 29* (29) p. 216; 3rd Combined ed.

² In 1809, Coleridge made his second attempt to become a newspaper publisher with the publication of the journal entitled *The Friend*, an eclectic publication that drew upon every corner of Coleridge's remarkably diverse knowledge of law, philosophy, morals, politics, history, and literary criticism. It was written, edited, and published almost entirely by Coleridge single-handedly. It ran for twenty-five issues and was subsequently republished in book form a number of times. Years after its initial publication, a revised and expanded edition of *The Friend*, with added philosophical content, including his “Essays on the Principles of Method,” became a highly influential work and its effect was felt on writers and philosophers from John Stuart Mill to Ralph Waldo Emerson. — Cf. *Wikipedia*.

³ [Cf. “During Man's preoccupation with self even Philosophy herself has been divested from her pristine cause and purpose, and the *Wisdom of Love* < Kama-Eros-Phanes > became twisted to Love of Wisdom by the profane. That is why Philosophy is no longer revered as Inner Wisdom: it has become another domain of head-learning.” — *Compassion: the Spirit of Truth* (2021) p. 59]

⁴ [Plato, *Sophist*, 231d]

Nor does the Stagyrte¹ fall short of his great master and rival in the reprobation of these professors of wisdom, or differ from him in the grounds of it. He too gives the baseness of the motives joined with the impudence and delusive nature of the pretence as the generic character.

Many Sophists, e.g., Euthydemus and Dionysiodorus, were empty disputants, sleight-of-word jugglers, but this was far from being their common character. Plato and Aristotle repeatedly admit the brilliancy of their talents, and the extent of their acquirements.

Next to this pretence of selling wisdom and eloquence, they were distinguished by their itinerancy. Athens was, indeed, their great emporium and place of rendezvous; but by no means their domicile. Such were Protagoras, Gorgias, Prodicus, Hippias, Polus, Callicles, Thrasymachus, and a whole host of sophists *minorum gentium*:² and though many of the tribe, like the Euthydemus and Dionysiodorus so dramatically portrayed by Plato, were mere empty disputants, *sleight-of-word* jugglers, this was far from being their common character. Both Plato and Aristotle repeatedly admit the brilliancy of their talents and the extent of their acquirements. The following passage from the *Timæus* of the former will be my best commentary as well as authority:

The race of sophists, again, I acknowledge for men of no common powers, and of eminent skill and experience in many and various kinds of knowledge, and these too not seldom truly fair and ornamental of our nature; but I fear that somehow, as being itinerants from city to city, loose from all permanent ties of house and home, and everywhere aliens, they shoot wide of the proper aim of man whether as philosopher or as citizen.

Gorgias will ever be cited as an example of prostituted genius from the immoral nature of his objects, and the baseness of his motives.

These, and not his sophisms, constituted him a Sophist whose eloquence and logical skill rendered him only the more pernicious.

The few remains of Zeno the Eleatic, his paradoxes against the reality of motion, are mere identical propositions spun out into a sort of whimsical conundrums, as in the celebrated paradox entitled Achilles and the Tortoise, the whole plausibility of which rests on the trick of assuming a minimum of time while no minimum is allowed to space, joined with that of exacting from Intelligibilia (*νοημενα*) the conditions peculiar to objects of the senses (*φαινομενα*). The passages still extant from the works of Gorgias, on the other hand, want nothing but the form³ of a premise to undermine by a legitimate *deductio ad absurdum* all the philosophic systems that had been hitherto advanced with the exception of the Heraclitic, and of that too as it was generally understood and interpreted. Yet Zeno's name was and ever will be held in rev-

¹ [Aristotle]

² [minor people]

³ *viz.* If either the world itself as an animated whole, according to the Italian school; or if atoms, according to Democritus; or one anyone primal element, as water or fire, according to Thales or Empedocles; or if a nous, as explained by Anaxagoras; be assumed as any the absolutely first; *then, etc.*

erence by philosophers; for his object was as grand as his motives were honourable — that of assigning limits to the claims of the senses, and of subordinating them to the pure reason; while Gorgias will ever be cited as an instance of prostituted genius from the immoral nature of his object and the baseness of his motives. These and not his sophisms constituted him a *sophist*, a sophist whose eloquence and logical skill rendered him only the more pernicious.

The causes of the corruption that came about, first in private and next in public life, which displayed itself in all the free states and communities of Greece, but most of all in Athens, are themselves the effects of that passion for military glory and political preponderance, which may well be called the bastard and the parricide of liberty.

Soon after the repulse of the Persian invaders, and as a heavy counter-balance to the glories of Marathon and Plataia, we may date the commencement of that corruption first in private and next in public life, which displayed itself more or less in all the free states and communities of Greece, but most of all in Athens. The causes are obvious, and such as in popular republics have always followed, and are themselves the effects of, that passion for military glory and political preponderance, which may well be called the bastard and the parricide of liberty. In reference to the fervid but light and sensitive Athenians, we may enumerate, as the most operative:

- The giddiness of sudden aggrandisement;
- The more intimate connection and frequent intercourse with the Asiatic states;
- The intrigues with the court of Persia;
- The intoxication of the citizens at large, sustained and increased by the continued allusions to their recent exploits, in the flatteries of the theatre, and the funeral panegyrics;
- The rage for amusement and public shows;
- And, lastly, the destruction of the Athenian constitution by the ascendancy of its democratic element.

Being hireling hunters of the young and rich, the Sophists offered to the vanity of youth and the ambition of wealth a substitute for that authority, which by the institutions of Solon had been attached to high birth and property, as the regular and ordinary results of comparative opulence and renowned ancestry.

During the operation of these causes, at an early period of the process, and no unimportant part of it, the Sophists made their first appearance. Some of these applied the lessons of their art in their own persons, and traded for gain and gainful influence in the character of demagogues and public orators; but the greater number offered themselves as instructors, in the arts of persuasion and temporary impression, to as many as could come up to the high prices at which they rated their services. *Νεων και πλουσιων εμμισθοι θηρευται*¹ — Hireling hunters of the young and rich, they offered to the vanity of youth and the ambition of wealth a substitute for that author-

¹ These are Plato's words. [Plato, *Sophist*, 231d]

ity, which by the institutions of Solon had been attached to high birth and property, or rather to the moral discipline, the habits, attainments, and directing motives, on which the great legislator had calculated (not indeed as necessary or constant accompaniments, but yet) as the regular and ordinary results of comparative opulence and renowned ancestry.

The minds of men were to be sensualized; and even if the arguments themselves failed, yet the principles so attacked were to be brought into doubt by the mere frequency of hearing all things doubted, and the most sacred of all now openly denied, and then insulted by sneer and ridicule.

The loss of this stable and salutary influence was to be supplied by the arts of popularity. But in order to the success of this scheme, it was necessary that the people themselves should be degraded into a populace. The cupidity for dissipation and sensual pleasure in all ranks had kept pace with the increasing inequality in the means of gratifying it. The restless spirit of republican ambition, engendered by their success in a just war, and by the romantic character of that success, had already formed a close alliance with luxury in its early and most vigorous state, when it acts as an appetite to enkindle, and before it has exhausted and dulled the vital energies by the habit of enjoyment. But this corruption was now to be introduced into the *citadel* of the moral being, and to be openly defended by the very arms and instruments, which had been given for the purpose of preventing or chastising its approach. The understanding was to be corrupted by the perversion of the reason, and the feelings through the medium of the understanding. For this purpose all fixed principles, whether grounded on reason, religion, law, or antiquity, were to be undermined, and then, as now, chiefly by the sophistry of submitting all positions alike, however heterogeneous, to the criterion of the mere understanding, disguising or concealing the fact, that the rules which alone they applied, were abstracted from the objects of the senses, and applicable exclusively to things of quantity and relation. At all events, the minds of men were to be sensualized; and even if the arguments themselves failed, yet the principles so attacked were to be brought into doubt by the mere frequency of hearing *all* things doubted, and the most sacred of all now openly denied, and now insulted by sneer and ridicule. For by the constitution of our nature, as far as it is *human* nature, so awful is truth, that as long as we have faith in its attainability and hopes of its attainment, there exists no bribe strong enough to tempt us wholly and permanently from our allegiance.

Religion, in its widest and purest sense, is the act of reverencing the Invisible, as the highest in nature and man.

Religion, in its widest sense, signifies the act and habit of reverencing THE INVISIBLE, as the highest both in ourselves and in nature. To this the senses and their immediate objects are to be made subservient, the one as its organs, the other as its exponents; and as such, therefore, having on their own account no true *value*, because no inherent *worth*. They are a *language*, in short; and taken independently of their representative function, from *words* they become mere empty *sounds*, and differ from *noise* only by exciting expectations which they cannot gratify — fit ingredients of the

idolatrous *charm*, the potent Abracadabra of a sophisticated race, who had sacrificed the religion of faith to the superstition of the senses, a race of animals, in whom the presence of reason is manifested solely by the absence of instinct.

By celestial observations alone can even terrestrial charts be constructed scientifically.¹

The same principle, which in its application to the whole of our being becomes religion, considered *speculatively* is the basis of *metaphysical* science, that, namely, which requires an evidence beyond that of sensible concretes, which latter the ancients generalized in the word, *physica*, and therefore (prefixing the preposition *meta*, *i.e.*, beyond or *transcending*) named the superior science, metaphysics. The Invisible was assumed as the supporter of the apparent, *των φαινομενων* — as their *substance*, a term which, in any other interpretation, expresses only the *striving* of the imaginative power under conditions that involve the necessity of its frustration. If the Invisible be denied, or (which is equivalent) considered invisible from the defect of the senses and not in its own nature, the sciences even of observation and experiment lose their essential copula. The component parts can never be reduced into an harmonious whole, but must owe their systematic arrangement to accidents of an ever-shifting perspective. Much more than this must apply to the moral world disjoined from religion. Instead of morality, we can at best have only a scheme of prudence, and this too a prudence fallible and short-sighted: for were it of such a kind as to be *bona fide* coincident with morals in reference to the agent as well as to the outward action, its first act would be that of abjuring its own usurped primacy. *By celestial observations alone can even terrestrial charts be constructed scientifically.*

The first attempt of the Sophists was to separate ethics from the faith in the Invisible, and to stab morality through the side of religion — an attempt to which the idolatrous polytheism of Greece had furnished too many facilities.

The first attempt therefore of the Sophists was to separate ethics from the faith in the Invisible, and to stab morality through the side of religion — an attempt to which the idolatrous polytheism of Greece furnished too many facilities. To the zeal with which he counteracted this plan by endeavours to purify and ennoble that popular belief, which, from obedience to the laws he did not deem himself permitted to subvert, did Socrates owe his martyr-cup of hemlock. Still while any one *principle* of morality remained, religion in some form or other must remain inclusively. Therefore, as they commenced by assailing the former through the latter, so did they continue their warfare by reversing the operation. The principle was confounded with the particular acts, in which under the guidance of the understanding or judgment it was to manifest itself.

¹ [Students to consult:

“Divine Heliolatry is neither astrological Astrolatry, nor Idolatry”

“Occult Astrology predates modern Astronomy”

“Stars, Numbers, and True Astrology”

“Worship of planetary Spirits is idolatrous Astrolatry”

— in our Planetary Rounds and Globes Series. — ED. PHIL.]

Polybius attributes the ruin of the Greek states to the frequency of perjury, which they had learnt from the Sophists, to laugh at as a trifle that broke no bones, nay, as in some cases, an expedient and justifiable exertion of the power given to us by nature over our own words, without which no man could have a secret that might not be extorted from him by the will of others.

In the same spirit, the sage and observant historian attributes the growth and strength of the Roman republic to the general reverence of the invisible powers, and the consequent horror in which the breaking of an oath was held.

Thus the rule of expediency, which properly belonged to one and the lower part of morality, was made to be the whole. And so far there was at least a consistency in this; for in two ways only could it subsist. It must either be the mere servant of religion, or its usurper and substitute. Viewed as *principles*, they were so utterly heterogeneous, that by no grooving could the two be fitted into each other — by no intermediate could they be preserved in lasting adhesion. The one or the other was sure to decompose the cement. We cannot have a stronger historical authority for the truth of this statement than the words of Polybius,¹ in which he attributes the ruin of the Greek states to the frequency of perjury, which they had learnt from the Sophists to laugh at as a trifle that *broke no bones*, nay, as in some cases, an expedient and justifiable exertion of the power given us by nature over our own words, without which no man could have a secret that might not be extorted from him by the will of others. In the same spirit, the sage and observant historian attributes the growth and strength of the Roman republic to the general reverence of the invisible powers, and the consequent horror in which the breaking of an oath was held. This he states as the *causa causarum*,² as the ultimate and inclusive cause of Roman grandeur.

Under such convictions, therefore, as the Sophists laboured with such fatal success to produce, it needed nothing but the excitement of the passions under circumstances of public discord to turn the arguments of expedience and self-love against the whole scheme of morality founded on them, and to procure a favourable hearing of the doctrines, which Plato attributes to the Sophist Callicles. The passage is curious, and might be entitled, a Jacobin Head, a genuine antique, in high preservation. Exclaims this Napoleon of old: →

¹ [Polybius, c. 200–c. 118 BCE, Greek historian of the Hellenistic period, noted for his work *The Histories*, which covered the period of 264–146 BCE, and the *Punic Wars* in detail.]

² [Cause of all causes, *i.e.*, Eternal Be-ness, the One Unknown and Unknowable Causeless Cause. — ED. PHIL.]

Those who first made the laws were feeble creatures which, in fact, the greater numbers of men are.

Laws, honour, and ignominy were all calculated for the advantage of the law-makers. But in order to frighten away the stronger, whom they could not coerce by fair contest, and to secure greater advantages for themselves than their feebleness could otherwise have procured, they preached up the doctrine that it was base and contrary to right to wish to have anything beyond others; and that, in this wish, consisted the essence of injustice.

Another code of right was that the nobler and stronger should possess more than the weaker and more pusillanimous and, therefore, the stronger has a right to control the weaker for his own advantage.

By nature, the *worse off* is always the more infamous, that, namely, which suffers wrong; but according to the law, it is the doing of wrong. For no man of noble spirit will let himself be wronged: *this* a slave only endures, who is not worth the life he has, and under injuries and insults can neither help himself or those that belong to him. Those who first made the laws were, in my opinion, feeble creatures, which in fact the greater number of men are; or they would not remain entangled in these spider-webs. Such, however, being the case, laws, honour, and ignominy were all calculated for the advantage of the law-makers. But in order to frighten away the stronger, whom they could not coerce by fair contest, and to secure greater advantages for themselves than their feebleness could otherwise have procured, they preached up the doctrine that it was base and contrary to right to wish to have anything beyond others; and that in this wish consisted the essence of injustice. Doubtless it was very agreeable to them, if being creatures of a meaner class they were allowed to share equally with their natural superiors. But nature dictates plainly enough another code of right, namely, that the nobler and stronger should possess more than the weaker and more pusillanimous. Where the power is, there lies the substantial right. The whole realm of animals, nay the human race itself as collected in independent states and nations, demonstrates that the stronger has a right to control the weaker for his own advantage. Assuredly they have the genuine notion of right, and follow the law of nature, though truly not that which is held valid in our governments. But the minds of our youths are preached away from them by declamations on the beauty and fitness of letting themselves be mastered, till by these verbal conjurations the noblest nature is tamed and cowed, like a young lion born and bred in a cage. Should a man with full untamed force but once step forward, he would break all your spells and conjurations, trample your contra-natural laws under his feet, vault into the seat of supreme power, and in a splendid style make the right of nature be valid among you.

The language of sophistry is the power of barefaced selfishness that excludes partnership, a power which all men should have an interest in repelling.

And if for power we substitute pleasure, and the means of pleasure, it is easy to construct a system well fitted to corrupt natures, and the more mischievous in proportion as it is less alarming.

Music may be divided from poetry, and both may continue to exist, though with diminished influence. But religion and morals cannot be disjoined without the destruction of both; and that this does not take place to the full extent, we owe to the frequency with which both take shelter in the heart, and that men are always better or worse than the maxims which they adopt or concede.

It would have been well for mankind, if such had always been the language of sophistry! A selfishness, that excludes partnership, all men have an interest in repelling. Yet the principle is the same; and if for power we substitute pleasure and the means of pleasure, it is easy to construct a system well fitted to corrupt natures, and the more mischievous in proportion as it is less alarming. As long as the spirit of philosophy reigns in the learned and highest class, and that of religion in all classes, a tendency to blend and unite will be found in all objects of pursuit, and the whole discipline of mind and manners will be calculated in relation to the worth of the agents. With the prevalence of sophistry, when the pure will¹ is ranked among the *means* to an alien end, instead of being itself the one absolute end, in the participation of which all other things are worthy to be called good — with this revolution commences the epoch of division and separation. Things are rapidly improved, persons as rapidly deteriorated; and for an indefinite period the powers of the aggregate increase, as the strength of the individual declines. Still, however, sciences may be estranged from philosophy, the practical from the speculative, and *one* of the two at least may remain. Music may be divided from poetry, and *both* may continue to exist, though with diminished influence. But religion and morals cannot be disjoined without the destruction of both; and that this does not take place to the full extent, we owe to the frequency with which both take shelter in the heart, and that men are always better or worse than the maxims which they adopt or concede. →

¹ If indeed the existence of a will be admitted in any other sense than as the temporary main current in the wide gust-eddy stream of our desires and aversions. [Consult “The Voice of the Will is the Atomic Point,” in our Constitution of Man Series. — ED. PHIL.]

As sciences are systems based on principles, so is morality a principle without a system.

Systems of morality are nothing more than the old books of casuistry generalized, even of that casuistry which the genius of Protestantism gradually worked off from itself like a heterogeneous bodily fluid, together with the practice of auricular confession.

To demonstrate the hollowness of the present system, and to deduce the truth from its sources, is not possible for me without a previous agreement as to the principles of reasoning in general. The attempt could neither be made within the limits of the present work, nor would its success greatly affect the immediate moral interests of the majority of the readers for whom this work was especially written. For as sciences are systems on principles, so in the life of practice is morality a principle without a system. Systems of morality are in truth nothing more than the old books of casuistry generalized, even of that casuistry which the genius of Protestantism gradually worked off from itself like a heterogeneous humour, together with the practice of auricular confession: a fact the more striking, because in both instances it was against the intention of the first teachers of the Reformation; and the revival of both was not only urged, but provided for, though in vain, by no less men than Bishops Saunderson¹ and Jeremy Taylor.²

Selfishness is the origin and cause of all evil.

It is the thorn in the soul which, unless a man shall have it removed, he can never soar above and be free as air.

But there is yet another prohibitory reason — and this I cannot convey more effectually than in the words of Plato to Dionysius:

But what a question is this, which you propose, Oh son of Dionysius and Doris! — what is the origin and cause of all evil? But rather is the darkness and travail concerning this, that thorn in the soul which unless a man shall have had removed, never can he partake of the truth that is verily and indeed truth.³

Yet that I may fulfil the original scope of *The Friend*, I shall attempt to provide the preparatory steps for such an investigation in the following Essays on the Principles of Method common to all investigations; which I here present as the basis of my future philosophical and theological writings, and as the necessary introduction to the same. And in addition to this, I can conceive no object of inquiry more appropriate, none which, commencing with the most familiar truths, with facts of hourly experience, and gradually winning its way to positions the most comprehensive and sublime, will more aptly prepare the mind for the reception of specific knowledge, than

¹ [Robert Sanderson, 1587–1663, English theologian and sophist. His work on logic, *Logicæ Artis Compendium* (1615) was long a standard treatise on the subject. It enjoyed at least ten editions during the 17th century and was widely read as a textbook.]

² [Jeremy Taylor, 1613–1667, cleric in the Church of England who achieved fame as an author during the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell. He is sometimes known as the “Shakespeare of Divines” for his poetic style of expression, and he is frequently cited as one of the greatest prose writers in the English language.]

³ [Excerpt translated from the original Greek by the Author.]

the full exposition of a principle which is the condition of all intellectual progress, and which may be said even to *constitute* the science of education, alike in the narrowest and in the most extensive sense of the word. Yet as it is but fair to let the public know beforehand what the genius of my philosophy is, and in what spirit it will be applied by me, whether in politics or religion, I conclude with the following brief history of the last 130 years, by a lover of Old England:

The word constitution has been altered to mean capitulation, a treaty imposed by the people on their own government (as on a conquered enemy), thus giving sanction to falsehood, and universality to anomaly.

Wise and necessitated confirmation and explanation of the law of England, erroneously entitled *The English Revolution of 1688* — mechanical philosophy, hailed as a kindred revolution in philosophy, and espoused as a common cause, by the partisans of the revolution in the state.

The consequence is, or was, a system of natural rights instead of social and hereditary privileges — acquiescence in historic testimony substitute for faith — and yet the true historical feeling, the feeling of being an historical people, generation linked to generation by ancestral reputation, by tradition, by heraldry — this noble feeling, I say, openly stormed or perilously undermined.

Imagination excluded from poesy, and fancy paramount in physics; the eclipse of the ideal by the mere shadow of the sensible — subfiction for supposition. *Plebs pro Senatu Populoque*¹ — the wealth of nations for the well-being of nations, and of man!

Anglo-mania in France, followed by revolution in America — constitution of America appropriate, perhaps, to America; but elevated from a particular experiment to a universal model. The word constitution altered to mean a capitulation, a treaty, imposed by the people on their own government, as on a conquered enemy — hence giving sanction to falsehood, and universality to anomaly!!!

Despotism! Despotism! Despotism! — of finance in statistics — of vanity in social converse — of presumption and overweening contempt of the ancients in individuals!

FRENCH REVOLUTION! Pauperism, revenue laws, government by clubs, committees, societies, reviews, and newspapers! →

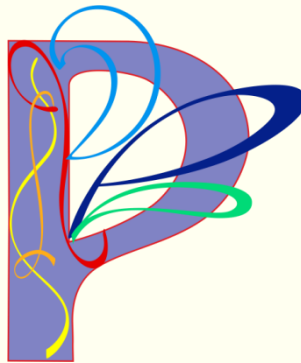
¹ [People for the Senate and the People]

Popularise and philosophy, and you will soon end in perverting every noble truth.

Thus it is that a nation first sets fire to a neighbouring nation, then catches fire and burns backward.

Statesmen should know that a learned class is an essential element of a state — at least of a Christian state. But *you* wish for general illumination! You begin with the attempt to *popularise* learning and philosophy; but you will end in the *plebification* of knowledge. A true philosophy in the learned class is essential to a true religious feeling in all classes.

In fine, religion, true or false, is and ever has been the moral centre of gravity in Christendom, to which all other things must and will accommodate themselves.



Suggested reading for students.



On Black versus White Magic.

- "A Strange Story by Bulwer-Lytton"
- "Adoration of male gods led to phallicism and black magic"
- "Akhund Abdul Ghaffur of Swat"
- "Ancient Magic in Modern Science"
- "Animated statues, trophies of the Black Art"
- "Auras of mediums and adepts"
- "Between Black and White Magic there is but a cobweb thread"
- "Black Magic is in full sway amidst mankind"
- "Black versus White Magic, the two Opposing Powers"
- "Blavatsky on the author of Phallicism"
- "Blavatsky on the malignant fever of unsound scepticism"
- "Buddhist Feminism in Ceylon"
- "Capital punishment is a relic of Jewish barbarity"
- "Christian Lectures on Buddhism"
- "Christianity has retarded the Woman's progress"
- "Confessions of Cyprianus, the Penitent Sorcerer of Antioch"
- "Does your mind elate with self-adoration"
- "Egyptian Magic, good and bad"
- "Evil is an illusion caused by the Circle of Necessity"
- "Evil is the infernal end of the polarity of spirit-matter"
- "Exact Science versus Archaic Philosophy"
- "Frightening crying children into silence"
- "How can a Black Magician be known"
- "Hugo's La Fin de Satan (1911)"
- "Hylo-Idealism is a fig leaf for Crass Materialism"

MAN IS A SOPHIST BY NATURE
SUGGESTED READING FOR STUDENTS

- “Insights to the high idealism and quaint wit of Eliphas Levi”
- “Insights to the Occult Arts”
- “Instead of Black and White Magic, read selfish and unselfish motive”
- “Magic is the Occult Knowledge of Natural Law”
- “Mediumship and Adeptship are poles apart”
- “No one has the right to control the mind of another”
- “Occultism and Kabbalah are only masks to hide the sacred truth from the profane”
- “On Astral Intoxication”
- “On malevolent bewitchments and venomous magic”
- “Ormuzd and Ahriman are ever opposing powers, yet inseparable and interdependent”
- “Papal dispensation for murder and mayhem”
- “Phallicism and Phallic Worship”
- “Presentiments of what lies in the bosom of future”
- “Psychological and conjuring tricks”
- “Reflections of an ardent apostle”
- “Religious conversion means absolute perversion”
- “Selfishness is the cause of all sin and suffering”
- “Selfishness is the hallmark of fakirs, hermits, and yogins”
- “Sin by cruel acquiescence in an unworthy fashion”
- “Spirit and Matter are dual aspects of One Cause”
- “Spiritual progress is not aided by watching the Astral Light”
- “Teraphim are the elemental spirits of ancient divination”
- “The Arabian Nights are echoes from of Lemuria and Atlantis”
- “The Astral Light reflects images of every thought and action”
- “The Ensouled Violin”
- “The Idyll of the White Lotus”
- “The Origin of Good and Evil”
- “The Original Sin is a Jewish Invention”
- “The Pernicious Sophistry of Hypocrisy”
- “The Pitfalls of Occult Arts and Metaphysical Healing”
- “The power of the magician is inversely related to his worldly interests”
- “The process of precipitating handwritten letters explained”

MAN IS A SOPHIST BY NATURE
SUGGESTED READING FOR STUDENTS

- “The Silent Brother”
- “The spiritual blindness of anthropomorphism”
- “The Theosophical Society’s position on hypnotism”
- “Theological anthropomorphism is the parent of materialism”
- “Theological malice is the root cause of Satanic Magic”
- “Trained imagination can produce occult phenomena”
- “True magic is the Gnosis of Pythagoras”
- “Warning to phenomena seekers”
- “When theological ethics speak no longer in man”
- “Why women should avoid the Church like a plague”
- “Yoga is a wolf in sheep’s clothing”



- “Poverty breeds generosity, wealth greed and selfishness”

— *in our Down to Earth Series.*

