

9.
Absence of
organic and
subjective
factors.

What prevented these suggestions receiving at the time that recognition which was later on given to them in a degree greatly exceeding the importance which Laplace himself presumably attached to them, was the circumstance that they contained no reference to the phenomena of organic or to those of conscious life. Laplace, like so many other philosophers, places himself, as it were, outside of the Universe which he wishes to explain; and like the spectator in a play, forgets himself entirely in the contemplation of the scenery before him.

But what Laplace had thus forgotten, the subjective factor, the position, reflections, and emotions of the beholder, constituted exactly that problem which, since the time of Kant, was attracting thinkers of the opposite school, notably in Germany. Not a comprehensive exposition of the system of the Universe allured them, but the problem how the human mind came to contemplate and comprehend such a system and what part it played itself in this process of contemplation and comprehension. And so great became this subjective interest, notably in the philosophy of Fichte, that the details of the scenery were, so to speak, entirely forgotten in the interest of studying the attitude and the emotions of the beholder. Nature, or the external world, came to be regarded merely as an opportunity for developing and exercising the intellectual and active

in his 'Cosmos' does more than just mention it, attaching to it little scientific importance; and even at the present day it figures much more largely in popular than in scientific works on Astronomy. The so-called Laplacian world-formula gained popular reputation

as an extreme expression, but also as indicating the limits of a purely mechanical view of nature, through an Address of Emil Du Bois Reymond, delivered in the year 1872 at the meeting of the German Association of Naturalists in Leipzig.