

through the influence of other surrounding but equally finite spheres of existence. The question of the significance, the life and meaning of the whole, remained unanswered and unanswerable; coinciding, according to Spencer's own admission, with the unknowable ground of everything, the Absolute.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century this defect of any and every purely mechanical scheme of evolution became more and more evident, and this through the independent labour of thinkers in all three countries, and as much through the movement of scientific as through that of philosophical thought. It is not too much to say that it has been a distinct aim of the latter to enlarge the conception of evolution so as to admit of a principle of progress. To express it in scientific language, the conception of a conservative system is not applicable either to the universe as a whole or to such finite portions of it as contain the phenomena of life and mind. Nevertheless, the naturalism and agnosticism in Spencer's thought have acted as a great stimulus to philosophical reasoning both in France and in this country, not to speak of America, in the intellectual development of which we are, in this Work, only indirectly interested.

The most original attempts to modify the evolutionary theories of Spencer and Darwin so as to make them more applicable to mental and especially moral and social phenomena, are to be found in the recent philosophical literature of France. In this country that school of thought which undertook to explain and, as T. H. Green put it, do over again the work which Hegel

72.  
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78.  
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