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Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
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The Theories of Darwin and Their Relation to Philosophy, Religion, and Morality

Rudolf Schmid

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

The movement which received its impulse as well as its name from Darwin, seems to have recently passed its distinctest phase; but the more prominent points of opposition, religious, ethical, and scientific, which have been revealed through it, remain as sharply contrasted as before. The author of this book desires, in the first place, to be of service to such readers as feel the need of setting themselves right upon these questions, which touch the highest interests of mankind, but who lack time and opportunity to investigate independently a realm in which so many and so heterogeneous sciences come into mutual contact. The illogical and confused manner in which some noisy leaders confound these sciences and their problems and consequences, renders it still more difficult to arrive at a satisfactory result; and thus perhaps many readers will look with interest upon an investigation designed to simplify the different problems and the different attempts at their solution, and to treat them not only in their relations to each other, but also separately. But with this primary object, the author combines another: to render a service to some among the many who perceive the harmony between their scientific conviction and their religious need threatened or shaken by the results of science, and who are unwilling to lose this harmony, or, having lost it, desire to regain it. Those voices are indeed becoming louder, and more generally and willingly heard, which proclaim an irreconcilability between faith and [2]knowledge, between the religious and the scientific views of the world; which declare that peace between the two can only be had at the price either of permitting the religious impulses of the heart to be stifled in favor of science, of satisfying the religious need of the mind with a nourishment which in the light of science proves to be an illusion, or, as sceptics in theory and eclectics in practice, of renouncing with resignation a logical connection and foundation to their former view of the world. The most striking proof of the extent to which these voices are heard, is the fact that it has been possible for a one-sided pessimism to become the fashionable system of philosophy in a Christian nation. The most effective means for opposing such discordant voices, and for making amends for the disagreements which they have occasioned, undoubtedly consists in the

actual proof of the contrary of their theories, in the clear presentation of a standpoint from which not only the most unrestricted freedom of investigation and the most unreserved acknowledgment of its results shall be in perfect harmony with the undiminished care of our entire religious possession, but in which this peace is preserved and forever established by the very fact that one function of the mind directly requires the other, one possession directly guarantees the other. This is the standpoint of the author, and from it he has endeavored to treat all the questions which are to be taken into consideration. Should he, by his exposition of this standpoint, succeed in helping even a few readers in reaching the conviction of the actual harmony between the scientific, religious, and ethical acquisitions of mankind, or in confirming them anew in such conviction, he would find himself amply rewarded for this first extended venture before the public.

R. S.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO AMERICAN EDITION.

Six years have elapsed since I wrote the book which is now going forth in English dress. The great leader of the theories in question has passed away; the waves of thought he set in motion are assuming smoother shape; and I can only add to what I have already written, that not only have I had no occasion to retract any of the statements or views laid down in the book, but I perceive the religious as well as the scientific world growing more and more into accord with the views I have maintained, and which were at first so vehemently opposed.

I owe so much to the literary men of the English tongue on both sides of the Atlantic, that I shall be glad if, through the devoted labors of the translator, I am enabled to pay them a tribute of gratitude by aiding them in clearing the way for thought in these much disputed fields, or in reconciling in their minds the conflict between faith and science.

R. S.

Schönthal, Würtemberg, *September*, 1882.

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INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN EDITION,

BY THE DUKE OF ARGYLL.

It is well known that Mr. Darwin's theory on the Origin of Species has been accepted in Germany more widely, with more absolute faith, and with more vehement enthusiasm, than in the country of its birth. In Germany, more conspicuously than elsewhere, it has itself become the subject of developments as strange and as aberrant as any which it assumes in the history of Organic Life. The most extravagant conclusions have been drawn from it—invading every branch of human thought, in Science, in Philosophy, and in Religion. These conclusions have been preached, too, with a dogmatism as angry and as intolerant as any of the old theologies. It is the fate of every idea which is new and fruitful, that it is ridden to the death by excited novices. We can not be surprised if this fate has overtaken the idea that all existing animal forms have had their ancestry in other forms which exist no longer, and have been derived from these by ordinary generation through countless stages of descent. Although this is an idea which, whether true or not, is entirely subordinate to the larger idea of creation, it usurps in many minds the character of a substitute. This is natural enough. The theory, or at least the language, of Evolutionists, puts forward a visible order of phenomena as a complete and all-sufficient account of its own origin and cause. However unsatisfactory this may be to the higher faculties of the mind, it is eminently [6]satisfactory to those other faculties which are lower in the scale. It dismisses as needless, or it postpones indefinitely, all thought of the agencies which are ultimate and unseen. Just as in the physical world, some trivial object which is very near us may shut out the whole of a wide horizon, so in the intellectual world, some coarse mechanical conception may shut out all the kingdom of Nature and the glory of it.

Two great subjects of investigation lie before us. The first is to ascertain how far the Theory of Evolution represents an universal fact, or only one very partial and fragmentary aspect of a great variety of facts connected with the origin and development of Organic Life. The second and by far the most important inquiry, is to estimate

aright, or as nearly as we can, the relative place and importance of these facts in the Philosophy of Nature.

Subjects of investigation so rich and manifold as these may well attract all the most varied gifts of the human mind. This they have already done, and there is every indication that they will continue to do so for generations yet to be. Already an immense literature is devoted to them; and every fresh effort of observation and of reasoning seems to open out new and fruitful avenues of thought. The work which is here introduced to the English reader contains an excellent review of this literature, so far as it is represented in the English and German languages. Knowing the author personally, as I have done for many years, I recognize with pleasure in his work all the carefulness of inquiry, and all the conscientiousness of reasoning, which belong to a singularly candid and patient mind.

Argyll.

Inverary Castle, Scotland,

September, 1882.

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NOTE BY THE TRANSLATOR.

The consideration which this work has received from the leaders of religious and philosophic thought in Germany, and, indeed, wherever it has been read in its original form, has led the translator to believe that an English version of it would be acceptable. Especially in America, where religious problems and religious thought are so intimately connected with the processes of scientific and philosophic investigation, and where the agitation of these problems is so peculiarly active and violent, it has seemed that a work marked by so much scholarship, profundity, and comprehensiveness and originality of treatment, must serve an important purpose to the cause of religious no less than of scientific truth. It may be explained here, that the author resided for some years in the family of the Duke of Argyll, and there breathed, to a certain extent, the scientific air of Darwinism in its very origin; and thus his familiarity with all the results of modern scientific research, added to his theological and philosophical acquirements, enable him, with a most admirable blending of the spirit of fairness and toleration with logical severity of treatment, to bring these different domains into their proper relation with each other and to establish between them that essential harmony in which consists the solution of these most profound and vital problems of man's welfare.

Of the translation it may properly be said that, while the aim has been to give the work the clearest possible form consistent with that strict fidelity to the original which is [8]especially demanded by the character of its material, the translator has not hoped to make the work altogether "easy" reading. Peculiarities of the author's style have been, it is believed, largely preserved; and occasional difficulties of apprehension are no doubt to be expected, both from the method of treatment and from the profound and abstruse character of the topics treated. The translator will be well satisfied if it shall be found that he has succeeded in performing his task without adding unduly to the seeming obscurities of certain passages—obscurities which, however, will no doubt vanish before that degree of mental application without which such works may not be read at all intelligibly.

Acknowledgments are properly due and are gladly rendered to George C. Dawson, Esq., of Chicago, and to Mr. Francis F. Browne, editor of *The Dial*, for valuable assistance in revising and perfecting this version.

G. A. Z.

Chicago, *October*, 1882.

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