

SCHELLING'S INTRODUCTORY LECTURE IN BERLIN,

15TH Nov., 1841.

GENTLEMEN,

I FEEL the whole significance of this moment. I know what I am taking upon me. How can I disguise from myself, or how can I wish to conceal from you, what is uttered and declared by my very appearance in this place? Assuredly, gentlemen, were I not convinced that I render an important service to philosophy, nay, a more important one than I have ever yet rendered, by my presence here, I should not now stand before you. This, then, is my own conviction; but I am far from expecting, still less can I think of demanding, that this should be the general opinion regarding me. This, only, do I hope to obtain, that no one may look with evil eye on my present position; that I may have free indulgence of time and place for that explicit answer to the question, *Dic cur hic?* which I am about to give in the whole series of the following lectures. For I, too, have given place to others, and have thrown no stumbling-block in the way of any who strove for the same goal in science with myself. If I have attained to anything, in this department, that deserves to be offered here, and to claim the attention of such an assembly as I now see before me, the way to that attainment was open to all, and no one can say that I have prevented him by a too forward haste.

It is now forty years, since I succeeded in turning over a new leaf in the history of philosophy. One page of it has been filled up, and I would willingly have left it to another to state the *facit*, the result of the same, and then to turn over anew, and begin the following page.

When I declare, that I feel the whole weight and difficulty of the task I have undertaken, and yet have not declined it, I express, it is true, the consciousness of a decided call to this work. But I have not imposed this call upon myself. It has come to me without any forth-putting on my part; and, now that it *has* come, I may not deny nor slight it. I have not proposed myself as a teacher of the time. If I am one, the time has made me so, and I can take no credit to myself in the matter; for, what I have done for philosophy, I have done in consequence of a necessity imposed upon me by my inner nature.

Circumstances compel me, on this occasion, to speak of myself; but I am far from the vanity of self-commendation. The man who, after performing his part in philosophy, thought proper to retire and leave free scope for the experiments of

others; who, himself retired from the scene of action, suffered in silence every judgment that was passed upon him, nor was moved to break that silence by the undue advantage which was taken of it, nor even by falsifications of the history of modern philosophy; who, in possession of a philosophy—not one of those which explain nothing, but rich in earnestly-desired and urgently-demanded solutions—extending the boundaries of human consciousness, quietly allowed men to say that his day was gone by; who now breaks this silence, so entire and complete, only because he is called to do so by unquestionable duty, because indubitably assured that the time has come to speak a decisive word;—this man, gentlemen, has shown, at least, that he is capable of self-denial, that forward conceit is not his infirmity, that he has a higher aim than transient opinion, a cheap and fleeting renown.

I know well, that, to some, I shall be a burden. I had been brought under, I was construed, it was known precisely what was in me. Now they are to begin with me anew, and to see that, after all, there was something in me which had not been understood.

According to the natural order of things, a younger man, and one more equal to the task, should occupy this place instead of me. Let him come! I shall rejoice to make room for him. How often have I not envied the fair talents of a younger growth, which I have, every where, seen perplexing themselves with means and forms, of which I knew that they could lead to nothing—that there was nothing to be gained by them! How willingly would I have taken them to myself! how gladly have helped those who would have nothing of me! But, now that I could no longer avoid the conviction that I must give my own hand to the work, if ever that was to be perfected, which I considered as necessary, as demanded by the time, by the whole course of philosophy hitherto; and that I had been spared for this very work; now that I was solicited to labor, as teacher, in this metropolis, where every word of deeper import is uttered for all Germany, and is even carried beyond the limits of Germany; where, alone, it was possible to act with decisive effect, where, at least, the fate of German philosophy must be decided;—now, in this important moment, since God has spared my life thus far, not to be wanting to that philosophy which has been the guardian-spirit of my days, I have felt to be a duty which might not be put by, and only this thought,—this clear conviction, has determined me. I will not deny, indeed, that there were other motives. To serve, though for a short period, a king, exalted not less by the qualities of his mind and heart than by the splendor of his throne:—whom I had venerated long before the royal purple

adorned him:—the land and people whose moral and political supremacy every true German has, from his infancy, been accustomed to honor, and has learned to honor anew in the ever-memorable events of these latter years; the city which is first named when the seats of Science, and of still advancing culture in Germany, are the subject of discourse; which, indeed, like a mighty deep, is not easily moved by every breath, and has sometimes exerted a retarding influence, (I refer to the time when the philosophy of Kant had found response in every quarter of Germany, except the capital of his native land,) but which seizes and promotes with its might whatever it has once recognised as worthy:—and then the circle of scientific men,—the chief ornaments of this city,—among whom are many known to me as early friends, and others long revered, men with whom I should always have esteemed it a pleasure to live and work; finally, the youth of this place, known by the zeal with which they obey the call of Science, undaunted by difficulty, rejoicing in their career, outstripping their teachers wherever a worthy goal is set before them;—these, gentlemen, were attractions of great, of almost irresistible power. But, powerful as they were, they must have yielded to other considerations, so obvious that I need not name them. Not till I was forced to recognise, in the unsought invitation which came to me, a command which I could not and dared not resist, under penalty of failing to fulfil my true and highest life-calling, did I resolve to come. And, so resolved, I now appear among you, with the conviction, that, if ever I have accomplished anything, be it much or little, in the service of Philosophy, I shall render her a more important service now, if I can succeed in conducting her out of the undeniable difficulties, in which she finds herself, into the free, unfettered, on all sides unembarrassed movement, of which she is now deprived. For these difficulties, with which Philosophy has to contend, are obvious, and may not be concealed.

At no time has philosophy encountered so mighty a reaction from the side of life, as at this moment;—a proof that it has penetrated to those life-questions, in relation to which, indifference is neither lawful nor possible to any. While philosophy abides in its first rudiments, or the earlier stages of its progress, it concerns none but those who make philosophic inquiry the business of life. Others await it at the end of its course. For the world, it becomes important only through its results.

It argues great inexperience, however, to suppose that the world is prepared to adopt any conclusion which philosophy may see fit to impose upon it, as the legitimate deduction of strict scientific investigation. Were this the case, it must, in some instances, accept a doctrine essentially immoral, or one

by which the foundations of morality are removed. But no one expects this of the world, and no philosopher has yet been found, who presumed this facility. The world would not accept, as a sufficient answer in such cases, "You do not understand the principles,—the technical and complicated process of demonstration." Without regard to these, it would maintain, that a philosophy, which led to such results, must needs be wrong in its first principles. What Roman moralists have maintained with respect to the useful,—*Nihil utile nisi quod honestum*,—it would urge as equally applicable to the true. And that which every one acknowledges, in relation to morals, must be equally true of all other convictions, which constitute the security of human life,—especially, therefore, of religious belief. Now, this is the precise position of philosophy at present. It affirms itself religious in its conclusions, while the world denies that it is so, and regards, particularly, its deductions of Christian dogmas as mere illusions. Such is even the confession of many of its faithful or unfaithful disciples. Whether it be so or not, is, for the present, indifferent; enough, that a suspicion of this sort has been awakened,—that such is the general opinion.

But life is always right in the end. And so the very existence of philosophy is endangered on this side. Already, there are those, who profess to quarrel with a particular philosophy, but, in fact, mean all philosophy, and who say, in their hearts, Philosophy in general shall be no more. This is a matter in which I, too, am concerned; for the first impulse to this philosophy—which, on account of its religious bearing, is now looked upon with such evil eye—is supposed to have proceeded from me. In this predicament, how shall I act? Assuredly, I shall attack no philosophy on the side of its last results. No philosophic mind, capable of judging with respect to first principles, will adopt this course. Besides, it is sufficiently well known, that I have all along declared myself dissatisfied, and far from agreeing, with the elements of that philosophy. Accordingly, it may be supposed that I shall make it my chief business to controvert a system, whose results have created such a prejudice against philosophical speculations. Gentlemen, I shall do no such thing. If I were capable only of this, I should not be here. I do not think so meanly of my calling. I willingly commit to others this melancholy task. Melancholy I call it, for it is always sad to witness even the spontaneous dissolution of that which has been put together with uncommon energy. The intellectual and moral world is so divided within itself, so inclined to anarchy, that one may well be glad, whenever a point of union is found, though it be only for a moment. Still sadder is it, to destroy aught, if one has nothing with

which to replace it. To him who knows only to blame, it is justly said, "Do better." Equally just was the saying of that man, whom I sincerely regret to find here no longer, among the living, who, with praiseworthy frankness, declared, "Men must have a system, and a system can be refuted only by a system. As long as that which stands is opposed by nothing stable in the way of substitute, let it stand." *

I agree with him in what he says with respect to system. Single truths will no longer suffice. It is now well understood, that, in this way, nothing can be rightly known. He is right, moreover, in expressing his astonishment at the report, that the author of the *Identitäts-Philosophie* had sought an asylum in history, in a "faith not penetrated by science;"—an asylum to which his new philosophy was made subservient. But I, too, on the other hand, may be allowed to wonder that a man, otherwise so sagacious, before expressing his astonishment, did not take the trouble to ascertain whether the report in question was founded in fact. Had he lived, he would have learned, from the course of these lectures, how wide of the truth was the impression he had received.

Let it be understood, then, that what is usually called polemics is not the aim of these lectures. If anything of this kind appear, it will be only collaterally. It is true, I cannot make the course as instructive as I wish, without, at the same time, referring to the past, and indicating the progress of preceding developments. But I shall labor, not so much to show wherein this man or that man has failed, as to make it apparent wherein we have all failed, and what we all have wanted, in order to effect an actual entrance into the promised land of philosophy. If one has erred more than another, he has dared more. If he has missed the goal, he has struck out a path which his predecessors had not closed to him.

I am not come to exalt myself above another, but to fulfill my calling to the end.

The cognition of truth with a full conviction, is so great a good, that what is usually called reputation, (*Existimation*), the opinion of men, and all the vanity of the world, is not to be weighed against it.

I wish not to inflict wounds, but to heal the wounds which German Science has received in a long and honorable conflict; not spitefully to expose the injuries sustained, but to cause, if possible, that they shall be forgotten. I wish not to irritate, but to reconcile; to enter, if possible, as a messenger of peace, a world so much and so variously divided. I am not here to destroy, but to build up; to establish a stronghold, where phi-

* *Gans*, Preface to Hegel's Philosophy of Jurisprudence.

losophy may henceforth dwell secure. I will build on the foundations laid by earlier efforts. Nothing shall be lost, through fault of mine, that genuine science has gained since Kant. How can I, in particular, renounce the philosophy which I formerly founded—the discovery of my youth? Not to replace it with another philosophy, but to supply its deficiencies with a new science, hitherto supposed impossible, in order to reestablish it on its true foundations,—to give it back the consistency which it has lost by transgressing its bounds,—by attempting to make a whole of that which could only be a fragment of a higher whole;—this is the problem and the aim.

It is a great thing that philosophy, in these days, has become a universal concern. The very opposition which I have mentioned,—the general excitement which I perceived on my appearance here,—shows that philosophy has ceased to be an affair of the schools, and has become the business of the nation. The history of German philosophy is, from the beginning, inwrought with the history of the German people. In that day when it accomplished the great act of disenthralment, in the Reformation, it vowed not to rest till whatever is loftiest, which, till then, had been blindly acknowledged, should be received into a free cognition, pervaded by Reason, and there find its true place. In a time of deepest debasement, philosophy held the German erect. Over the ruins of a glory that had perished, men of power held aloft the banner of German science, around which were gathered the best of our Youth. In the schools of philosophy,—who, in this connection, remembers not Fichte, Schleiermacher?—many found in philosophical contests the resolution, the courage, the self-possession, which, in far other battle-fields, were afterward put to the test. Also, in later times, philosophy has been the German's heritage and praise. And shall this long and glorious movement end with shameful wreck? with the overthrow of all great convictions, and consequently of philosophy itself? Never! Because I am a German,—because I have borne upon my heart and sympathized with, all the woes and sorrows of Germany, with all her weal and all her success,—therefore am I here. For the salvation of the Germans is science.

With such sentiments I have come hither; with no other weapon but Truth, claiming no other protection but that which Truth possesses in her own strength, desiring no other right for myself than that which I freely concede to all—the right of free inquiry, and an unfettered communication of the found. So disposed, I enter your midst. I come with all earnestness of mind and heart. I am in earnest; may they be so who hear me! I greet you with love; with love receive me! The

teacher may do much; but he can do nothing without the scholar. I am nothing without you; nothing, unless you meet me promptly with receptivity, with zeal, on your part. Herewith I devote myself to the calling I have undertaken. I shall live for you, I shall work for you, and not be weary, while a breath remains in me, and while He permits, without whose consent not a hair can fall from our heads, much less a deep-felt word, a genuine product of the inner man, a light-thought of our minds, for truth and freedom striving, be lost.
