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ART. I.—*Remarks on the Ethical Philosophy of the Chinese.*

WIDELY as the Chinese have departed from the meagre outline of a religious system, left them by Confucius, they have generally adhered to his moral teachings. Developed by his followers, received by the suffrages of the whole people, and enforced by the sanctions of the "Three Religions," the principles which he inculcated may be said to have moulded the social life of one-third of the human family. These are nowhere to be found digested into a scientific form; but diffused through the mingled masses of physics and metaphysics which compose the *Sing-li Ta-tseuen*, or sparkling in the detached apophthegms of "The Sages"; happily for our convenience, we have them brought to a focus, in the chart, a translation of which is given below.

We shall confine ourselves to the task of explaining this important document, as the best method of exhibiting the system in its practical influence; though an independent view would afford freer scope for developing its principles.

This chart is anonymous; but the want of a name detracts nothing from its value. The author has no merit beyond the

idea of presenting the subject in a tabular view, and the pictorial taste with which he has executed the design. Of the ethical system so exhibited he originated nothing; and the popularity of his work is due mainly to the fact, that it is regarded as a faithful synopsis of the Confucian morals. In this view it is highly esteemed by the *Seen-sangs* of Ningpo, a city which ranks among the foremost in the Chinese empire in point of literary culture.

Note.—The half-illuminated sphere prefixed to the chart has scarcely more connection with its subject matter, than the royal coat-of-arms stamped on the title-page of some editions has with the contents of King James' Bible. It represents the mundane egg, or mass of chaotic matter, containing *Yin* and *Yang*, the seminal principles from whose action and reaction all things were evolved. *Woo-keih* produced *Tai-keih*; *Tai-keih* produced *Yin* and *Yang*; and these dual principles generated all things. This is the lucid cosmogony of the Chinese; and it adds little to its clearness to render the above terms, as they are usually translated by the "great extreme," the "male and female powers," &c.

The primitive signification of *Yang* and *Yin*, is *light* and *darkness*, a meaning exhibited in the shading of the diagram. *Tai-keih* may be rendered the Great Finite, and *Woo-keih*, the Indefinite or Infinite. We have then the following statement as the starting point of their philosophy and history.

The Infinite produced the Great Finite, and the Great Finite (the universe) evolved light and darkness. The passage, thus given, is equally rational and beautiful. It admits a creative power anterior to chaos, makes the production of light one of the earliest of creative acts, and, with at least poetical truth, ascribes the generation of all things to the action of light and darkness, or the succession of days and seasons. It is so far consonant with the Genesis of the Christian Scriptures; and may have originated in some indistinct tradition. Whether it was ever so understood, it is impossible to affirm; though it is certain that no such meaning is attached to it at the present day.

The dual principles of the Chinese, as explained by themselves, are not light and darkness; neither are they, like those of the ancient Persians, the antagonistic powers of good and evil. The creation and preservation of the universe are ascribed to them; and yet they are not regarded as deities, but as unconscious impersonal agents. Popularly they are understood, in a phallic sense, as the energies of the universal sexual system; and philosophically, as certain forces, positive and negative, to which, automatic and uncontrolled by any intelligence, are referable all the changes in the universe. They are the pillars of a materialistic atheism.

A CHART OF CHINESE ETHICS.

IN FOUR PARTS.
Part I.—CHART OF THE GREAT STUDY.



Heaven having given existence to man, the doctrine of the

Restricted in its sphere, it produces the perfection of individual excellence—a Holy Sage.

His aim is,
PERSONAL VIRTUE.
The means to its attainment are—

From the Son of Heaven
down to the private man, every one must begin
with the Cultivation of Personal Virtue.

{ Fidelity and Truth.
Suavity and Respect.
Dignity of Carriage.
Precision of Words and Actions.

1. Propriety of Conduct.

{ Avoiding Prejudice.
Restraining the Passions.
Cherishing Good Impulses.
Adhering to the Just mean.

2. Right Feeling.

{ Self-examination.
Scrutiny of Secret Motives.
Religious Reverence.
Fear of Self-deception.

3. Correctness of Purpose.

{ Rejection of Error.
Comprehension of the Truth.
Quickness of Moral Perception.
Insight into Providence.
Study of the Laws of Nature.
Study of the Constitution of Man.
Study of the Records of History.

4. Intelligence of Mind.

The Great Study stops only at Perfection.

{ This contains the True Tradition of the Holy Sages.
Whoever obtains this doctrine may live in prosperity and die in peace. I have accordingly condensed it into a chart, to be hung on the right of your easy chair, to aid your study of virtue, just as the ancients made use of inscriptions on their girdles and wash-basins.

Great Study succeeded, and established order in society.

With free scope for its exercise, it makes a Reformer of the World—a True King.

His aim is,
SOCIAL IMPROVEMENT.
The means to its attainment are—

{ Filial Piety.
Fraternal Love.

{ Conjugal Fidelity.
Care in Choice of Associates.

{ Strictness in Intercourse of the Sexes.
Attention to Established Rules.
Instruction to Children.

{ Caution against Partiality.
Harmony with Neighbours.
Regard for Frugality.
Science of Government.

{ Power of Combination.
Reverence for Heaven and Ancestors.

{ Discrimination in Choice of Agents.
Love for the People.
Zeal for Education.

{ Strictness in Executing the Laws.
Wisdom in Conducting War.

{ Righteousness in Rewards and Punishments.
Liberality in admitting the Expression of Sentiment.

{ Frugality in Expenditures.
Skill in Legislation.

1. The Discipline of the Family.

2. The Government of the Empire.

3. The Subjugation (i.e. Pacification) of the World.

Part II.—A CHART OF THE HEART.

The Chart of the Great Study will acquaint you with the principles of virtue; but as the keeping of the heart is a matter of great difficulty, I accordingly subjoin this chart of it.



The Wisdom Heart is minute and subtle,
(i. e., the germ of virtue is small and feeble.)

The Human Heart is in constant jeopardy,
(i. e., beset with dangers, and prone to evil.)

Point of Divergence

between *Shun* and *Tseih* (scil. Cato and Nero.)
Influence of Primordial Harmony.

Influence of Gross Matter.

The Human Heart.

The Wisdom Heart.

1. Obeys Heaven.

(a) In Propriety of Conduct.

By { Regulating the External Actions,
and

(b) In the Exercise of Charity.

By { Conquering the Malevolent Affections,
and
Governing the Desires and Aversions.

2. Restrains Self.

(a) In Subduing the Lusts.

By { Repressing Self-love,
and

(b) In Guarding Solitude.

By { Not injuring one's body, soul, nature, or life;
Not forgetting the reverential exercise of self-control.

He who pursues this course will daily rise in illumination, and finally become a saint or sage. Propitious stars will shine on him, and happiness attend his footsteps.

1. Indulges Self.

(a) In Habits of Indolence.

Leading to { Gluttony and Drunkenness,
{ Illness and Waste of Time.

(b) In Carnal Lusts.

Leading to { Shameless Excesses,
{ Abominable Immoralities.

(c) In Avarice.

Leading to { Filthy Lucre,
{ Violent Extortion.

2. Dismisses Conscience.

(a) In Yielding to Impulse.

For { Sensual Pleasure,
{ Anger, Strife, &c.

(b) In Treachery.

Involving { Flattery and
{ Deceit.

(c) In Hypocrisy.

Involving { Dissimulation and
{ Falschood.

He who follows this course, daily drifts into deeper corruption, and finally becomes a beast or monster. Evil stars glare on him, and calamity overtakes him.

* *Sing*, the Chinese character for *heart*.

The two roads of virtue and vice are clearly treated in the above chart, but as the virtues are not easy to practice, I add a chart of moral excellence.

Momentarily keep it in mind.

BENEVOLENCE.

Public Spirit.—Give all their dues, and let not self set up an opposing interest; but find your own good in the common weal.

Charity.—Do not to others what you would not have done to you. Remember not old injuries, and treat men according to their several capacity.

Filial Piety.—Gratify the wishes of your parents, and worship your ancestors;

Mercy.—Carry out their purposes, and reflect honour on their name. Treat all children with kindness, not your own only.

Magnanimity.—Pity the widow and fatherless, and give succour to brute animals. A great soul can bear an offence without resenting it. He mingles with men on easy terms, and affects no superiority. Kindness must be repaid, but not injury. Rather suffer a wrong than do one.

WISDOM.

Knowledge of Man.—Detect false pretences, cleave to the virtuous, and avoid the vicious. Let not floating rumour move you to dislike a good man.

Knowledge of Nature.—Be erudite, inquisitive, thoughtful, discriminating. Investigating heaven and earth, the past and present.

Knowledge of Fate.—Practice virtue, take care of yourself, do your duty; and let good or ill fortune come as it may.

Use of the Eyes and Ears.—Keep the distant in clear view, and have an open ear for good counsel. Read no immoral books, hearken not to flattering words.

POLITENESS.

Respect.—Proceeding from an inward feeling. It manifests itself in apparel and demeanour.

Caution.—Treats the fruits of observation, hides the bad, and publishes the good.

It preserves conjugal harmony, and maintains decorum in the intercourse of the sexes.

Humility.—When rich, feels poor; when full, feels empty.

Makes no boast of abilities, nor prides itself on place or reputation.

Deference.—Declines much, and takes little; And is only solicitous to find a lower place than others.

Manliness.—If you fail in anything, seek help in yourself. Stand to your post, and let not vague desires draw you from it.

Fraternity.—Respect your elder, and be kind to your younger brothers. Reverence age, and give precedence to years.

Courage.—When you see the right, do it; when you know your fault, correct it.

Neither truckle to the rich, nor disdain the poor.

Integrity.—Hold it fast, change not for custom. Be content with simple fare, and when you see gain, ask, Is it just?

Modesty.—Let the men be continent, the women chaste. Abhor evil, and fear falling.

GOOD FAITH.

Simplicity.—In word and deed, in and out, one and the same. In study or action, uniform from beginning to end.

Truth.—The words of the inner chambers should bear repeating in the palace.

Your private life should be such that heaven and earth might witness it.

Sincerity of Purpose.—Complete your engagements.

And be faithful in behalf of others.

Honesty of Intention.—So live that your heart will not condemn you, the people dislike you, your family shame you, or your friends reproach you.

Part IV.—A CHART FOR SELF-EXAMINATION.

The virtues may be copied from the chart of moral excellence, but lest vices should creep in unawares, I conclude with a formula for self-examination.

If guilty, correct your faults.

OFFENCES AGAINST BENEVOLENCE.

- Cruelty.**—Inflicting misery on family relatives.
And finding pleasure in giving pain to man or beast.
- Envy.**—Jealous of the advantages of others, obstructing their promotion.
Offended at the superiority of others, indulging in detraction.
- Malice.**—Playing wicked pranks, and forgetting favours.
Delighting to hear of others' faults, and taking pleasure in publishing them.
- Selfishness.**—Consulting its own interest, and seeking its own advantage.
- Treachery.**—Inveigling others into evil, and involving them in calamity for its own ends.
- Petulance.**—With spirit so contracted as not to endure an accidental touch.

OFFENCES AGAINST WISDOM.

- Depravity.**—Neither inquiring right nor wrong,
Nor distinguishing good from evil.
- Levity.**—Leading to inconsiderate words and actions.
Prying and meddling.
- Shallowness.**—Mistaking slight praise or blame for glory or shame.
Interpreting slight favour or opposition as love or hatred.
Holding to its own opinions, and refusing to be convinced.
- Obstinacy.**—Holding to its own opinions, and refusing to be convinced.
- Narrowness.**—Content with a humble circle of familiar thoughts, and unwilling to extend the view, or enlarge the sphere of knowledge.

OFFENCES AGAINST POLITENESS.

- Pride.**—Using wealth and power for self-magnification.
Employing talents and learning to eclipse others.
- Arrogance.**—In modest in language, disrespectful to the aged.
Perverse in action, and heedless of advice.
- Carelessness.**—In affairs negligent of details,
In disposition harsh, in manners blunt.
- Ostentation.**—In all things tending to excess.
In general aiming to outshine others.

If innocent, redouble your zeal in the pursuit of virtue.

OFFENCES AGAINST JUSTICE.

- Cupidity.**—Never satisfied, but always longing.
Indulging the senses, coveting fame, and pursuing gain.
- Flattery.**—With artificial smiles and simulated voice,
Playing the sycophant in hope of power.
- Parimony.**—Neither succouring the needy, nor rewarding the deserving.
Concealing its wealth, and consorting with the poor.
- Indecision.**—Indolently procrastinating, and shifting with custom.
Drifting with the current, and bending before power.
- Discontent.**—Uneasy in its condition, and destitute of self-satisfaction.
In everything it murmurs against heaven, and finds fault with man.
- Perversity.**—Capricious in choices and aversions, not seeking the right,
Following inclination, and regarding neither good nor evil.

OFFENCES AGAINST GOOD FAITH.

- Superficiality.**—Without solid virtues, seeking an empty reputation.
Making a fair show, but hasty and insincere in friendship.
- Insincerity.**—With heart and life at variance,
Coveting the name of virtue.
- Deceit.**—In words false, in actions dishonest.
- Intrigue.**—Scheming, calculating,
Plotting and tergiversating.

Part I. is an epitome of the *Tahio*, the first of the four chief canonical books of the Chinese, and the most admired production of their great philosopher.*

Voluminous as an editor, piously embalming the relics of antiquity, Confucius occupies but a small space as an author; a slender compend of history, and this little tract of a few hundred words, being the only original works which emanated from his own pen. The latter, the title of which signifies the "Great Study," is prized so highly for the elegance of its style and the depth of its wisdom, that it may often be seen inscribed in letters of gold, and suspended as an ornamental tableau in the mansions of the rich. It treats of the Practice of Virtue and the Art of Government; and in the foregoing table these two subjects are arranged in parallel columns. In the first we have the lineaments of a perfect character, superscribed by the word *Sheng*, a "Holy Sage," the name which the Chinese give to their bright ideal. In the other, we have a catalogue of the social virtues as they spread in widening circles through the family, the neighbourhood, the state, and the world. These are ranged under *Wang*, the "Emperor," whose duty it is to cherish them in his subjects; the force of example being his chief instrument, and the cultivation of personal virtue his first obligation. The passage which is here analyzed, and which constitutes the foundation of the whole treatise, is the following:

"Those ancient princes who desired to promote the practice of virtue throughout the world, first took care to govern their own states. In order to govern their states, they first regulated their own families; in order to regulate their families, they first practised virtue in their own persons. In order to the practice of personal virtue, they first cultivated right feeling. In order to insure right feeling, they first had regard to the correctness of their purposes. In order to secure correctness of purpose, they extended their intelligence. This intelligence is to be obtained by inquiring into the nature of things."

* The doctrines of Confucius are well exhibited in an article by the Rev. J. K. Wight, in the *Princeton Review* for April, 1858.

This diminishing series is beautiful. However widely the branches may extend, the quality of their fruit is determined by the common root. Virtue in the state depends on virtue in the family, that of the family on that of the individual; and individual virtue depends not only on right feelings and proper motives; but as a last condition, on right knowledge. Nor is there anything in which Confucius more strikingly exhibits the clearness of his perceptions, than in indicating the direction in which this indispensable intelligence is to be sought, viz. in the nature of things—in understanding the relations which the individual sustains to society and the universe. The knowledge of these is truth, conformity to them is virtue; and moral obligations, Confucius appears, with Dr. Samuel Clarke, to have derived from a perception of these relations, and a sense of inherent fitness in the nature of things. Just at this point, we have a notable hiatus. The editor tells us, the chapter on the “Nature of things” is wanting; and Chinese scholars have never ceased to deplore its loss.

But whatever of value to the student of virtue it may have contained, it certainly did not contain the “beginning of wisdom.” For skilfully as Confucius had woven the chain of human relationships, he failed to connect the last link with heaven—to point out the highest class of our relations. Not only, therefore, is one grand division of our duties a blank in his system, but it is destitute of that higher light, and those stronger motives, which are necessary to stimulate to the performance of the most familiar offices.

The young mandarin, who said to a member of one of our recent embassies, in answer to a question as to his object in life, that “he was desirous of performing all his duties to God and man”—was not speaking in the language of the Confucian school. He had discovered a new world in our moral relations which was unknown to the ancient philosopher.

The principal relations of the individual to society are copiously illustrated in this and the other classics. They are five—the *governmental*, *parental*, *conjugal*, *fraternal*, and that of *friendship*. The first is the comprehensive subject of the treatise; and in the second column of the chart, all the others are placed subordinate to it. Though not expressly

named, they are implied in the statement of the first four relative duties—*filial piety, fraternal love, conjugal fidelity, and choice of associates*. The last comprehends the principles which regulate general intercourse. *Conjugal fidelity*, in the sense of chastity, is made obligatory only on the female. *Fraternal* duty requires a rigid subordination, according to the gradation of age, which is aided by a peculiarity of language; each elder brother being called *hiung*, and each younger, *te*; no common designation, like that of “brother,” placing them on equal footing. This arrangement in the family, Confucius pronounces a discipline, in which respect is taught for superiors in civil life; and filial piety, he adds, is the sentiment which the son, who has imbibed it at home, will carry into the service of the prince.

Nothing in fact is more characteristic of Chinese society, than the scope given to filial piety. Intensified into a religious sentiment, by the worship which he renders to his ancestors, it leads the dutiful son to live and act in all situations with reference to his parents. He seeks reputation for the sake of reflecting honour upon them, and dreads disgrace chiefly through fear of bringing reproach on their name. An unkindness to a relative is a sin against them, in forgetting the ties of a common ancestry; and even a violation of the law derives its turpitude from exposing the parents of the offender to suffer with him, in person or in reputation.

It is thus analogous in the universality of its application to the incentive which the Christian derives from his relation to the “Father of spirits;” and if inferior in its efficacy, it is yet far more efficacious than any which a Pagan religion is capable of supplying. Its various bearings are beautifully traced by Confucius, in a discourse which constitutes one of the favourite text-books in the schools of China.

It is not the book that teaches it; but the art of governing thus founded on the practice of virtue, that is emphatically denominated the “Great Study,” and this designation expressing, as it does, the judgment of one from whose authority there is no appeal, has contributed to give to Ethics a decided preponderance among the studies of the Chinese.

Other sciences, in their estimation, may be interesting as sources of intellectual diversion, or useful in a subordinate degree, as promotive of material prosperity; but this is *the science*, whose knowledge is wisdom, whose practice is virtue, and whose result is happiness. In the literary examinations, the grand object of which is the selection of men who are qualified for the service of the government, an acquaintance with subjects of this kind contributes more to official promotion than all other intellectual acquirements; and when the aspirant for honours has reached the summit of the scale, and become a member of the privy council, or Premier of the empire, he receives no higher appellation than that of *Ta-hio-sze*—a Doctor of the Great Study—an adept in the art of government.

The Chinese empire has never realized the Utopia of Confucius; but his maxims have influenced its policy to such an extent, that in the arrangements of the government a marked preference is given to moral over material interests. Indeed, it would be hard to overestimate the influence which has been exerted by this little schedule of political ethics, occupying, as it has, so prominent a place in the Chinese mind for four-and-twenty centuries—teaching the people to regard the empire as a vast family, and the emperor to rule by moral influence, making the goal of his ambition not the wealth, but the virtue of his subjects. But it is certain that the doctrines which it embodies have been largely efficient in rendering China what she is, the most ancient, and the most populous of existing nations.

Part II. is chiefly interesting for the views it presents of the condition of human nature. It is not, as its title would seem to indicate, a map of the moral faculties; but simply a delineation of the two ways which invite the footsteps of every human pilgrim. On the one hand are traced the virtues that conduct to happiness; and on the other, the vices that lead to misery. Over the former is written *Taou-sing*, "Wisdom heart," and over the latter, *Jin-sing*, "Human heart," as descriptive of the dispositions from which they respectively proceed.

These terms, with the two sentences of the chart in which they occur, originated in the *Shu-king*, one of the oldest of the

sacred books, and are there ascribed to the emperor *Shun*, who filled the throne about B. C. 2100. quaint and ill-defined, they have been retained in use through this long period, as a simple expression for an obvious truth—recording as the result of a nation's experience, that "to err is human." They contain no nice distinction as to the extent to which our nature is infected with evil; but intimate that its general condition is such that the word *human* may fairly be placed in antithesis to wisdom and virtue.

Yet the prevailing view of human nature, maintained by Chinese ethical writers, is that of its radical goodness. Though less ancient than the other, this latter is by no means a modern opinion; and it is not a little remarkable that some of those questions which agitated the Christian church in the *fifth century*, were discussed in China nearly a thousand years before. They were not broached by Confucius. His genius was not inquisitive—he was rather an architect, seeking to construct a noble edifice, than a chemist, testing his materials by minute analysis; and, if none are philosophers but those who follow the clue of truth through the mazes of psychological and metaphysical speculation, then he has no right to the title;* but if one who loves wisdom, perceiving it by intuition, and recommending it with authority, be a philosopher, there are few on the roll of time who deserve a higher position.

The next age, however, was characterized by a spirit of investigation which was due to his influence only as the intellectual impulse which he communicated set it to thinking. The moral quality of human nature became a principal subject of discussion; and every position admitted by the subject was successively occupied by some leading mind. *Tsz-sze*, the grandson of the sage, advanced a theory which implied the goodness of human nature; but Mencius, his disciple, (B. C. 317,) was the first who distinctly enunciated the doctrine. *Kaoutsze*, one of his contemporaries, maintained that nature is destitute of any moral tendency, and wholly passive under the plastic hand of education. A discussion arose between them, a

* "Perhaps the subtle genius of Greece was in part withheld from indulging study in ethical controversy by the influence of Socrates, who was much more a teacher of virtue, than even a searcher after truth." *Sir J. Mackintosh.*

fragment of which preserved in the works of Mencius, will serve to exhibit their mode of disputation, as well as the position of the parties.

Nature, said *Kaoutsze*, is a stick of timber, and goodness is the wooden bowl, that is carved out of it.

The bowl, replied Mencius, is not a natural product of the timber; but the tree requires to be destroyed in order to produce it. Is it necessary to destroy man's nature in order to make him good?

Then, said *Kaoutsze*, varying his illustration, human nature may be compared to a stream of water. Open a sluice to the east, and it flows to the east; open one to the west, it flows to the westward. Equally indifferent is human nature with regard to good and evil.

Water, rejoined Mencius, is indifferent as to the east or the west; but has it no choice between up and down? Now human nature inclines to good, as water does to run downward; and the evil it does is the effect of interference, just as water may be forced to run up hill. Man, he repeats, with rhetoric slightly at variance with his philosophy, inclines to virtue, as water does to flow downward, or as the wild beast does to seek the forest.

A few years later, *Seuntsze*, an acute and powerful writer, took the ground that human nature is evil. The influence of education he extolled in even higher terms than *Kaoutsze*, maintaining that whatever good it produces, it achieves by a triumph over nature in obedience to the dictates of prudence:—that virtue is the slow result of teaching, and vice the spontaneous fruit of neglected nature.

Yang-tsze, about the commencement of the Christian era, endeavoured to combine these opposite views; each contained important truth, but neither of them the whole truth. While human nature possessed benevolent affections, and a conscience approving of good, it had also perverse desires, and a will that chose the evil. It was, therefore, both bad and good; and the character of each individual took its complexion, as virtuous or vicious, according to the class of qualities most cultivated.

In the great controversy, Mencius gained the day. The two authors last named were placed on the *Index Expurgatorius*

of the literary tribunal; and the advocate of human nature was promoted to the second place among the oracles of the empire, for having added a new doctrine, or developed a latent one in the Confucian system. This tenet is expressed in the first line of the *San-tsze-king*, an elementary book, which is committed to memory by every school-boy in China—*Jin che ts'u, sing peng shen*—"Man commences life with a virtuous nature." But notwithstanding this addition to the national creed, the ancient aphorism of *Shun* is still held in esteem; and a genuine Confucian, in drawing a genealogical tree of the vices, still places the root of evil in the *human* heart.

To remove this contradiction, *Chuhe*, the authorized expositor of the classics, devised a theory somewhat similar to Plato's account of the origin of evil. It evidently partakes of the three principal systems above referred to; professing, according to the first, to vindicate the original goodness of human nature, yet admitting, with another, that it contains some elements of evil—and thus virtually symbolizing with the third, which represents it as of a mixed character. "The bright principle of virtue," he says in his notes on the *Ta-hio*, "man derives from his heavenly origin; and his pure spirit, when undarkened, comprehends all truth, and is adequate to every occasion. But it is obstructed by the physical constitution, and beclouded by the animal (lit. *jin-yuh*, the *human*) desires, so that it becomes obscure."

The source of virtue, as indicated in the chart, is *Tai-ho*—"primordial harmony;" and vice is ascribed to the influence of *Wu-hing*—"gross matter." The moral character is determined by the prevailing influence, and mankind are accordingly divided into three classes, which are thus described in a popular formula:—Men of the first class are good without teaching; those of the second may be made good by teaching; and the last will continue bad in spite of teaching.

The received doctrine in relation to human nature does not oppose such a serious obstacle as might at first be imagined, to the reception of Christianity, though there is reason to fear that it may tinge the complexion of Christian theology. The candid and thoughtful will recognise in the Bible a complete view of a subject which their various theories had only presented in

detached fragments. In the state of primitive purity, it gives them a heaven-imparted nature in its original perfection; in the supremacy of conscience, it admits a fact on which they rely as the main support of their doctrine; in the corruption of nature, introduced by sin, it gives them a class of facts to which their consciousness abundantly testifies; and in its plan for the restoration of the moral ruin, it excites hope and satisfies reason.

The doctrine of human goodness, though supported by a partial view of facts, seems rather to have been suggested by views of expediency. Mencius denounced the tenets of Kaoutsze as pernicious to the cause of morality; and he no doubt considered that to convince men, that they are endowed with a virtuous nature, is the most effectual method of encouraging them to the practice of virtue. In the absence of revelation, there is nothing better. But, while faith in ourselves is a strong motive, faith in God is a stronger one; and, while the view that man is endowed with a noble nature, which he only needs to develop according to its own generous instincts, is sublime; there is yet one which is more sublime, viz., that while fallen man is striving for the recovery of his divine original, he must work with fear and trembling, because it is God that worketh in him.*

Part III., the Chart of Moral Excellence, (as I have called it, or more literally, of that which is to be *striven after* and *held to*.) presents us with goodness in all its forms known to the Chinese. It is chiefly remarkable for its grouping—the entire domain being divided into five families, each ranged under a parent virtue. The Greeks and Romans reckoned four cardinal virtues; but a difference in the mode of division, implies no incompleteness in the treatment of the subject. The Chinese do not, because they count only twelve hours in the day instead of twenty-four, pretermitt any portion of time; neither when they number twenty-eight signs in the zodiac, instead of twelve, do they assign an undue length to the starry

* The writer acknowledges a suggestion or two on this branch of the subject from an able paper of the Rev. Griffith John, in the Journal of the North China branch of the Royal Asiatic Society for September, 1860, which, however, did not come to hand until this article had assumed its present form, and been read on a public occasion.

girdle of the heavens. The matter is altogether arbitrary; and Cicero makes four virtues cover the whole ground, which the Chinese moralist refers to five.

But while, in a formal treatise, definition and explanation may supply the defects of nomenclature or arrangement, the terms of a general class, like that of the cardinal virtues, are not without effect on the popular mind. In this respect, the Chinese have the advantage. Theirs are, *Jin, E, Che, Sin, Le*—Benevolence, Justice, Wisdom, Good-faith, Politeness.* Those of Plato and Tully are, Justice, Prudence, Fortitude, and Temperance. In comparing these, Prudence and Wisdom may be taken as identical, though the former appears to be rather more circumscribed in its sphere, and tinged with the idea of self-interest. Temperance and Politeness, as explained in the respective systems, are also identical—the Latin term, however, contemplating man as an individual, and the Chinese regarding him as a member of society. The former, Cicero defines as *το πραπον*, and a sense of propriety or love of order, is precisely the meaning which the Chinese give to the latter. In the European code, the prominence given to Fortitude is characteristic of a martial people, among whom, at an earlier period, it, under the name of *αρετη*, usurped the entire realm of virtue. In the progress of society, it was compelled to yield the throne to Justice, and accept the place of a vassal, both Greek and Latin moralists asserting that no degree of courage which is not exerted in a righteous cause, is worthy of a better appellation than that of audacity. They erred, therefore, in giving it the position of a cardinal virtue; and the Chinese have exhibited more discrimination by placing it in the retinue of Justice. They describe it by two words, *Chih* and *Yung*. Connected with the former, and explaining its idea, we read the precept, “When you fail, seek help in yourself; stand firm to your post, and let no vague desires draw you from it.” Appended to the latter, we have the injunction—“When you see the right, do it; when you know a fault, correct it. Neither

* Though *politeness* is the common acceptation of the term, as expressing a regard for propriety and order in social intercourse; in Chinese ethics it has a wider and higher signification. It is precisely what Malebranche makes the basis of his moral system, and denominates “the love of universal order.”

truckle to the rich, nor disdain the poor." What a noble conception of moral courage—of true fortitude!

Benevolence and good faith, which are quite subordinate in the heathen systems of the West, in that of China are each promoted to the leadership of a grand division. In fact, the whole tone of the Chinese morals, as exhibited in the names and order of their cardinal virtues, is quite consonant with the spirit of Christianity.* Benevolence leads the way in prompting to positive efforts for the good of others; justice follows, to regulate its actions, and restrain its antagonistic qualities; wisdom sheds her light over both; good faith imparts the stability necessary to success; politeness, or a sense of propriety, by bringing the whole conduct into harmony with the fitness of things, completes the radiant circle; and he whose character is adorned with all those qualities, may be safely pronounced *totus teres atque rotundus*.

The theory of moral sentiments early engaged the attention of Chinese philosophers, and particularly the inquiry as to the origin and nature of our benevolent affections. Some, like Locke and Paley, regarded them as wholly artificial—the work of education. Others, like Hobbes and Mandeville, represented them as spontaneous and natural; but still no more than varied phases of that one ubiquitous Proteus—self-love. Mencius, with Bishop Butler, views them as disinterested and original. To establish this, he resorts to his favourite mode of reasoning, and supposes the case of a spectator, moved by the misfortune of a child falling into a well. Hobbes would have described

* Cicero thus argues that there could be no occasion for the exercise of any virtue in a state of perfect blessedness, taking up the cardinal virtues *seriatim*:—"Si nobis, cum ex hac vita migraremus, in beatorum insulis, ut fabulæ ferunt, immortale ævum degere liceret, quid opus esset eloquentia, cum judicia nulla fierent? aut *ipsis* etiam *virtutibus*? Nec enim *fortitudine* indigeremus, nullo proposito aut labore aut periculo; nec *justitia*, cum esset nihil quod appeteretur alieni; nec *temperantia*, quæ regeret eas quæ nullæ essent libidines; ne *prudencia* quidem egeremus, nullo proposito delectu bonorum et malorum. Una igitur essemus beati cognitione rerum et scientia."

He has failed to conceive, as Sir J. Mackintosh well suggests, that there would still be room for the exercise of love—of benevolence. The Chinese, educated to regard benevolence as the prime virtue of life, would naturally give it the first place in his ideal of the future state.

the pity of the beholder as the fruit of self-love acting through the imagination—the “fiction of future calamity to himself.” Mencius says, his efforts to rescue the child would be incited, not by a desire to secure the friendship of his parents, nor the praise of his neighbours—nor even to relieve himself from the pain occasioned by the cries of the child—but by a spontaneous feeling which pities distress, and seeks to alleviate it. The man who thus vindicates our nature from the charge of selfishness in its best affections, sometimes expatiates on their social utility. He does so, however, only to repress utilitarianism of a more sordid type. When the Prince of Liang inquired, “what he had brought to enrich his kingdom?”—“Nothing,” he replied, “but benevolence and justice;” and he then proceeded to show, with eloquent earnestness, how the pursuit of wealth would tend to anarchy, while that of virtue would insure happiness and peace. An earlier writer, *Meh-tsze*,* made the principle of benevolence the root of all the virtues; and in advocating the duty of *equal* and *universal love*, he seems to have anticipated the fundamental maxim of Jonathan Edwards, that virtue consists in *love to being*, as such; and in *proportion to the amount of being*. This led him to utter the noble sentiment, that he would “submit his body to be crushed to atoms, if by so doing he could benefit mankind.”

The doctrine of *Meh-tsze* is rejected by the moralists of the established school as heretical, on the ground of its inconsistency with the exercise in due degree of the relative affections, such as filial piety, fraternal love, &c. They adopted a more cautious criterion of virtue—that of the moderate exercise of all the natural faculties. *Virtus est medium vitiorum et utrinque reductum*, is with them a familiar maxim. One of the “Four Books,” the *Chung Yung*, is founded on it. But instead of treating the subject with the inductive accuracy with which it is elaborated by Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, the author kindles with the idea of absolute perfection, and indites a sublime rhapsody on the character of him who holds

* See an interesting paper on the writings of *Meh-tsze*, by the Rev. J. Edkins, in the *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, for May, 1859.

on his way, undeviating and unimpeded, between a two-fold phalanx of opposing vices.

Part IV. is the counterpart of the preceding, and is interesting mainly on account of the use for which it is designed. The whole chart is practical, and is intended, the author tells us, to be suspended in the chamber of the student as a constant monitor. The terms in which he states this, contain an allusion to a sentiment engraved by one of the ancient emperors on his wash-basin: "Let my heart be daily cleansed and renewed, and be kept clean and new for ever." This part of his work has for its special object to aid the reader in detecting the moral impurities that may have attached themselves to his character, and carrying forward a process of daily and constant improvement.

To some it may be a matter of surprise to find this exercise at all in vogue in a country where a divine religion has not imparted the highest degree of earnestness in the pursuit of virtue. The number who practise it is not large; but even in Pagan China, the thorny path of self-knowledge exhibits "here and there a traveller."

Tsang-fu-tsze, an eminent disciple of Confucius, and the Xenophon of his *Memorabilia*, thus describes his own practice. "I every day examine myself on three points. In exertions on behalf of others, have I been unfaithful? In intercourse with others have I been untrue? The instruction I have heard have I made my own?"

An example so revered could not remain without imitators. Whether any of them has surpassed the model, is doubtful; but his "three points" they have multiplied into the bristling array displayed in the chart, which they daily press into their bosoms, as some Papal ascetics did their jagged belts. Some of them, in order to secure greater fidelity in this unpleasant duty, are wont to perform it in the family temple, where they imagine their hearts laid bare to the view of their ancestors, and derive encouragement from their supposed approval. The practice is a beautiful one, but it indicates a want. It shows that human virtue is conscious of her weakness; and in climbing the roughest steep, feels compelled to lean on the arm of religion.

In a few cases this impressive form of domestic piety may

prove efficacious; but the benefit is due to a figment of the imagination, similar to that which Epictetus recommends when he suggests that the student of virtue shall conceive himself to be living and acting in the presence of Socrates. If fancy is thus operative, how much more effectual must faith be—that faith which rises into knowledge, and makes one realize that he is acting under the eye of ever-present Deity!

It is one of the glories of Christianity that by diffusing this sentiment she has made virtue not an occasional visitor to our earth, but brought her down to dwell familiarly with men. What otherwise would have been only the severe discipline of a few philosophers, she has made the daily habit of myriads.* How many persons in how many lands now close each day of life by comparing every item of their conduct with a far more perfect “chart for self-examination” than our author has furnished.†

Next to the knowledge of right and wrong, Confucius placed “sincerity of purpose”‡ in pursuing the right, as an essential in the practice of virtue; but as he expressed only the vaguest notions of a Supreme Being, and enjoined for popular observance no higher form of religion than the worship of the ancestral manes, a sense of responsibility, and, by consequence, “sincerity of purpose,” are sadly deficient among his disciples. Some of the more earnest on meeting with a religion which reveals to them a heart-searching God, a sin-atoning Saviour, a soul-sanctifying Spirit, and an immortality of bliss, have joyfully embraced it, confessing that they find therein motives and supports of which their own system is wholly destitute.

GENERAL INFERENCES.

On this sheet, (the chart above translated,) we have a projection of the national mind. It indicates the high grade in

* “Religion,” says Sir J. Mackintosh, speaking of Plato, “had not then besides her own discoveries, brought down the most awful and the most beautiful forms of moral truth to the humblest station in human society.”

† There are many evening hymns, in which the review of the day is beautifully and touchingly expressed, but in none perhaps better than in that of Gellert, commencing, “*Ein tag ist wieder hin.*”

‡ In the chart “Correctness of Purpose,” the word *Ching* combines the ideas of “correctness” and “sincerity.” No Chinese writer would speak of a person as “*ching*,” in doing wrong.

the scale of civilization attained by the people among whom it originated, exhibiting all the elements of an elaborate socialism. Political ethics are skilfully connected with private morals; and the virtues and vices are marshalled in a vast array, which required an advanced state of society for their development.

The accuracy with which these various traits of character are noted, implies the same thing; and the correctness of the moral judgments here recorded, infers something more than culture—it discloses a grand fact of our nature, that whatever may be thought of innate ideas, it contains inherent principles which produce the same fruits in all climates.

These tables indicate at the same time that the Chinese have made less proficiency in the study of mind than in that of morals. This is evident from some confusion (more observable in the original than in the translation) of faculties, sentiments, and actions. The system is on the whole pretty well arranged; but there are errors and omissions enough to show that their ethics, like their physics, are merely the records of phenomena which they observe, *ab extra*, without investigating their causes and relations. While they expatiate on the virtues, they make but little inquiry into the nature of virtue: while insisting on various duties, they never discuss the ground of obligation; and while duties are copiously expounded, not a word is said on the subject of rights.

The combined influence of an idolatrous religion, and a despotic government, under which there can be no such motto as *Dieu et mon droit*, may account for this latter deficiency. But similar defects are traceable in so many directions, that we are compelled to seek their explanation in a subjective cause—in some peculiarity of the Chinese mind.

They have, for instance, no system of psychology, and the only rude attempt at the formation of one, consists in an enumeration of the organs of perception. These they express as *wu-kwan*, the “five senses.” But what are they? The eyes, ears, nose, mouth; and not the skin, or nerves, but the heart—the sense of touch, which alone possesses the power of waking us from the Brama dream of a universe floating in our own brain, and convincing us of the objective reality of an external

world, being utterly ignored; to say nothing of the absurdity of classing the intellect (for so they intend the word) with those passive media of intelligence.

This elementary effort dates from the celebrated Mencius; and perhaps for that very reason the mind of the moderns has not advanced beyond it, as one of their pious emperors abdicated the throne rather than be guilty of reigning longer than his grandfather.

Another instance of philosophical classification equally ancient, equally authoritative, and equally absurd, is that of the Five Elements. They are given as *king, muh, shwuy, ho, tu*—i. e., metal, wood, water, fire, and earth. Now, not to force this into a disparaging contrast with the results of our recent science, which recognises nothing as an element but an ultimate form of matter, we may fairly compare it with the popular division of “four elements.”

The principle of classification being the enumeration of the leading forms of inorganic matter which enter into the composition of organic bodies, the Chinese have violated it by introducing wood into the category; and they evince an obtuseness of observation utterly inconsistent with the possession of philosophic talent, in not perceiving the important part which atmospheric air performs in the formation of other bodies. The extent to which they adhere to the quintal enumeration or classification by “fives,” illustrates, in a rather ludicrous manner, the same want of discrimination. Thus, while in mind they have the five senses, and, in matter, the five elements, in morals they reckon five virtues; in society, five relations; in astronomy, five planets; in ethnology, five races; in optics, five colours; in music, five notes; in the culinary art, five tastes; and, not to extend the catalogue, they divide the horizon into *five quarters*.

These instances evince a want of analytical power; and the deficiency is still farther displayed in the absence of any analysis of the sounds of their language, until they were brought acquainted with the alphabetical Sanscrit; the non-existence, to the present day, of any inquiry into the forms of speech, which might be called a grammar, or of any investigation of the processes of reasoning, corresponding with

our logic; and the fact, that while they have soared into the attenuated atmosphere of ontological speculation, they have left all the regions of physical and abstract science almost as trackless as the Arctic snows.

It would be superfluous to vindicate the Chinese from the charge of mental inferiority, in the presence of that immense social and political organization which has held together so many millions of people for so many thousands of years; and especially of arts, now dropping their golden fruits into the lap of our own civilization, whose roots can be traced to the soil of that ancient empire. But a strange defect must be admitted in the national mind. We think, however, that it is more in its development than in its constitution, and may be accounted for by the influence of education. If we include in that term all the influences that affect the mind, the first place is due to language; and a language whose primary idea is the representation of the objects of sense, and which is so imperfect a vehicle of abstract thought, that it is incapable of expressing, by single words, such ideas as space, quality, relation, &c., must have seriously obstructed the exercise of the intellect in that direction. A servile reverence for antiquity, which makes it sacrilege to alter the crude systems of the ancients, increased the difficulty; and the government brought it to the last degree of aggravation by admitting, in the public-service examinations, a very limited number of authors, with their expositors, to whose opinions conformity is encouraged by honours, and from whom dissent is punished by disgrace.

These fetters can only be stricken off by the hand of Christianity; and we are not extravagant in predicting that a stupendous intellectual revolution will attend its progress. Revealing an omnipresent God as Lord of the Conscience, it will add a new hemisphere to the world of morals; stimulating inquiry in the spirit of the precept, "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good," it will subvert the blind principle of deference; and perhaps its grandest achievement in the work of mental emancipation may be the superseding of the ancient ideographic language, by providing a medium better adapted to the purposes of a Christian civilization. It would only be a repetition of historic triumphs, if some of the vernacular dia-

lects, raised from the depths where they now lie in neglect, and shaped by the forces which heave them to the surface, should be made, under the influence of Christianity, to teem with the rich productions of a new literature, philosophy, and science.

ART. II.—*The Philosophy of the Absolute.*

THE use of a theological nomenclature, viewed in a moral light, has an advantage balanced by a disadvantage. While it may be a relief to some minds, when reasoning about abstract deity, to have recourse to such terms as the Infinite, the Absolute, the First Cause, instead of those more devotional names of God, implying his personality and presence; yet there may be other minds inclined to lose rather than to foster reverence, by carelessly employing phraseology which, in many cases, if translated into common speech, would seem but little better than refined blasphemy. On the one hand, it is surely well that the dialect of worship should be kept distinct from the jargon of the schools; but on the other hand, there are “profane babblings to be shunned, as increasing unto more ungodliness.”

We do not raise the question to discuss it, since necessity, convenience, and custom, have already placed it beyond discussion, but simply prefix it, as an introductory thought, to some reflections in which the reader can test for himself the good and evil of the current vocabulary.

The Philosophy of the Absolute, as ontology or speculative divinity is now termed, has been brought by the latest metaphysics to a curious issue. Two rival schools, founded in different nations, and headed by the most powerful thinkers of the age, are pitted against each other upon the question whether such a philosophy is possible. The German metaphysicians not only include it among the legitimate pursuits of