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OPTIMISM

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I

THE optimist may be secretly envied, but he is publicly despised. His pronouncements are regarded as expressions of simple-minded blindness or as cynical propaganda. Optimism is not regarded as intellectually respectable. It was not always so: there have been times when optimism was not merely considered worthy of rational argument, but was widely accepted by thinking men. Now, however, we react with a growing embarrassment to passages such as these:

The time will therefore come when the sun will shine only on free men who know no other master but their reason; ... All the causes that contribute to the perfection of the human race, all the means that ensure it must by their very nature exercise a perpetual influence and always increase their sphere of action the perfectibility of man is indefinite.

(Condorcet. *Sketch for an Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind*. 1795)

Evolution can end only in the establishment of the greatest perfection and the most complete happiness.

(Spencer. *First Principles*. 1864)¹

And our embarrassment obliterates distinctions; 'optimism' is a dirty word: all optimists are grey in the dark. Nor can it be claimed that we have graduated to a more realistic pessimism; for that, after all, would be to admit optimism into the arena of rational argument. Life, in our vision, is not admitted to be tragic-merely absurd.

¹ Sometimes Spencer seems to support a cyclical view, predicting the achievement and consequent disintegration of equilibrium *and infinitum-thus* we must be careful in calling him an optimist.

Are we not justified? Once we have taken into account the philosophical insights and the historical and cultural circumstances which underlie our current disillusionment-and this can be done very briefly, it is all too familiar a story-surely we have rung the death-knell of optimism? Most religions are optimistic-but we have been told that God is dead: can optimism survive? Moral 'judgments' are at best subjective, at worst totally irrational-Hume and Sartre have taught us so; how, then, can optimism be defended? Still worse: if we do allow rationality to moral judgments, must we not laugh the optimist out of court? Have we not seen the end of our last Golden Age? The literal bang will eclipse even the literary whimper: the facts, surely, speak for themselves. Why bother with optimists?

I shall claim that we are not justified. We do not distinguish clearly between different forms of optimism; we assume too quickly that the optimist is not prepared for rational argument, and that his claims have no content worthy of discussion. These are questions we should reconsider.

II

What is optimism? There is a minimal sense in which a man may be said to be *an optimist*, but hardly *a supporter of optimism*. Thus a man may *make no claims*, but merely (habitually) describe situations in a 'positive' rather than a 'negative' way, and the question of justification may not even arise. The classic example is the man who describes a bottle as 'half-full' rather than 'half-empty' where there is no dispute about water-level, about the value of water for life, or about whether this is the last bottle or not. The man may not see any necessity to justify his description, in which case it is absurd to suggest that he should give one, and rational discussion is out of place. The *situation* may be agreed to be desperate, but the *bottle* is 'half-full'.

Of course, the man may be prepared to offer a justification, but can only offer a pragmatic defence--such as that defining an ambivalent situation in positive terms generally helps to give one confidence to cope with it more adequately. This is open to rational discussion (one may counter by arguing that, by the same token, such a definition may discourage active attempts to better the situation) and is not necessarily quickly or easily settled, but the issue is psychological rather than philosophical. Whatever the answer, this defence will be independent of and thus auxiliary to any justification of optimism as a credo; to support optimism as a rule of mental hygiene is not to be a supporter of optimism in the philosophical sense.

For the latter it is necessary not merely to make some claims, but to make a set of claims related in a specific way. The set must include three elements: (1) a statement of the facts; (2) a list of value- criteria; (3) a positive evaluation of the facts in the light of the suggested criteria. This model of optimism is indeed vague, for it is the core of different types of optimism, where the differences arise from varying interpretations and specifications of the three elements. Thus it can be used as a basis of comparison for optimistic systems, and gives a framework that suggests the main lines of discussion that can arise.

I shall claim that any *genuine* optimism must have this structure, that only thus can it have any real content worthy of serious consideration. If a system has this structure we can reject it only as a result of making specific criticisms of one or more elements; and even so we may have to accept a large part of its content. Such systems will be largely *a posteriori*, and may be thought by their proponents to be completely so if they assume that an *is* can give rise to an *ought*. The list of values cannot be proved in a strict sense, but whether it follows that there can be no rational discussion of this element is a vexed question, which I prefer to leave open. I shall be content to admit that-because of the logic of valuation-no optimism can be forced upon us on pain of incoherence, but shall not be above allowing some criticisms of systems in evaluative terms.

If a system does not have this structure then it is not a coherent optimism making any genuine claims which we may be required to assess. For instance, if the positive evaluation (3) is made in terms of value criteria other than (or, worse, inconsistent with) those listed in (2), then this is not a genuine optimism, though it may generate one if the list can be amended. Another consequence of accepting this model is that we must refuse the title of 'optimism' to any thoroughly *a priori* system, being able to allow only that such a system may be regarded as a psychological optimism in the sense already discussed. Thus some of the most notorious 'optimists' may not qualify as optimists in my sense; what we lose in orthodoxy of labelling we gain in preparedness to take optimism seriously.

Before discussing examples in any detail, is there any more general restriction to be put upon the model so that we can exclude forms of optimism which are philosophically trivial? There is one: it turns upon the domain of 'the facts' in *A statement of the facts*. We do not wish to consider purely *personal* forms of optimism, by which I mean ones which only mention facts-about-me. A man who not only says, but believes: 'I'm all right, Jack' will certainly be of interest in various ways to the psychologist, but hardly to the philosopher-unless he is some sort of euphoric solipsist. Thus I shall stipulate that 'the facts' must cover more than the man and his immediate circle: they must at least extend to his society, if not to humanity as a whole. Thus we may expect that 'the facts' may well include psychological and sociological theories as to the actual nature of man and society, as opposed to definitions of the Good Life. If we cannot choose between such theories because of lack of evidence, we may have to return an open verdict on some forms of optimism.

III

Let us consider the third element of the model in the light of some examples: how positive is positive enough? This will itself depend upon the range of facts mentioned under (I). Thus someone who declares that the world is in a bad state, and even that it will get worse, may nevertheless be an optimist. Mediaeval Christian society was optimistic in looking to the next world for relief from the prison of this one. Others have looked for their relief on earth: Saint-Simon and Owen were unequivocal in

expressing their disappointment and disgust with the world at the turn of the last century, and Marx later predicted that things would get even worse;² but they all agreed that things could-indeed, would-get better eventually. All these were Utopians, predicting perfection-and perfection is surely positive enough. (Note that it is not enough to *describe* a Utopia. Plato believed that were his Ideal State ever to be realised, which itself was highly doubtful, it would almost certainly degenerate; thus he can hardly be called an optimist. Indeed, any cyclical view of history can harbour only a short-run optimism.)

But one who passes a harsh judgment on contemporary life need not be a Utopian to count as an optimist: genuine hope of improvement is positive enough. Utopian or not, if optimism is not to be empty and facile, this hope itself requires some justification, which should form part of the statement of the facts: a Florence Nightingale will rest her case on the probable effects of bullying one's tame statesmen and disarming Royal Commissions; a Condorcet will rely on the perfectibility of man; a Sumner on the inevitable march of progress. Whether hope of actual improvement is *sufficient* for one who judges present conditions harshly to be termed an optimist is not clear-it would certainly seem somewhat strained to call a doctor optimistic whose patients are all dying of horrible diseases, merely because he knows that he can lessen their agony to some extent.

If an optimist is not relying on predictions of future change, either in this life or the next, then he must at least claim that there is a preponderance of good over evil, happiness over misery, when the world is considered as a whole. This is a vague claim to which I shall return later (Section V), but there is one version of it which seems to be *a fortiori* optimistic, and the reaction to which is an important factor in the general mistrust of optimism. Such a philosophy certainly seems to fulfil our third criterion, for it does not place perfection merely in the future: it claims that this is the best of all possible worlds (and also, sometimes, that it is steadily getting better and better!). If this is not optimism, what is?

In a pure form, this is not a genuine optimism. Consider this statement of it:

All nature is but art, unknown to thee;
All chance, direction, which thou canst not see;
All discord, harmony not understood;
All partial evil, universal good:
And, spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,
One truth is clear, WHATEVER IS, IS RIGHT.

(Pope, *Essay on Man*. 1733)

This is positive evaluation indeed. But what about our first criterion, that of the statement of facts? 'Whatever is, is right'; but there is no attempt to state what is.

² If we accept Marx's claims that he is not at all concerned with morals, merely with historically necessary processes, then we cannot regard him as an optimist, no matter what predictions he may make.

We are not here exhorted to consider the lilies of the field, nor anything else specific. As for the second criterion, we are provided with a list of value-terms- 'art', 'direction', 'harmony', 'good' -only to be told that we are incapable of applying them. These admirable qualities are 'unknown', 'not understood', and thus even our third criterion cannot, strictly speaking, be satisfied. And, of course, the only argument which can be given for this philosophy in its pure form is an *a priori* one claiming the creation of the world by a perfect God. Short of pointing out specific faults in the metaphysical argument, or persuading its proponent of the impossibility of metaphysics in general, there is nothing we can do to shake such a system. Even a Voltaire is powerless to refute it; the most he can do is ridicule it and retire defeated to his garden, or point out that it is not very helpful, let alone tactful, to make such remarks to people surrounded by such horrors as the Lisbon earthquake. This is the pragmatic argument we considered before; this philosophy which looks like optimism turns out to be merely a psychological optimism after all; the cosmic bottle is half-full.

But this can be said only of its pure form; no philosopher gives it in its pure form alone. It is supplemented, to a greater or lesser extent, by *a posteriori* arguments which may be open to reasonable discussion; thus it is by no means a clear-cut question whether a philosopher is or is not an optimist, and if so in what sense. For instance, Leibniz relies mainly upon the *a priori* argument, and explicitly warns us against trying to see the hidden harmonies since this would be blasphemously to enquire into the purposes of God; he thus saves us from some of the absurdities which others espoused.

However even Leibniz admits that in terms of one of the values on his list of criteria, i.e. justice, the facts as we initially state them do not measure up. In this life the wicked often prosper and the virtuous suffer: these are the facts. But they cannot be *all* the facts, since we can be sure that the facts as a whole must measure up; therefore there must be other facts (an after-life in which each man receives his deserts) which we should have mentioned in our original statement. Now this, I should be prepared to say, is a genuine form of optimism; whether it is acceptable is another matter. Leibniz has at least *tried*; it is surely a matter for rational discussion whether there is, or could be, an after-life, and to refuse to call it a question of *fact* is either to beg the question, or to answer it-which is all that is required.

Other philosophers who claimed *a priori* that this is the best of all possible worlds were not so wary as Leibniz in their search for *a posteriori* arguments to buttress their claims. Bernardin de St Pierre undertook to specify nature's 'harmonies' which Pope had assured us were not understood, explicitly contradicting Leibniz' warning that we can know only mechanical, not final causes. Consider what he has to say about the optical properties of rivers and the death of a butterfly:

'... had these waters ... reflected the images of bodies, a thousand deceitful forms would have been mixed with the real ones, and the expanse of the ocean would have reflected in the sky a new world and another sun. Our rivers would have exhibited moving forests, and hills perpendicular to their surface; a

rivulet would have displayed the verdure and the flowers of a neighbouring meadow. Imagination may carry this scene further, and conceive a shepherdess, after leading her sheep to the river side, contemplating a second flock in the water, or recoiling with surprise on seeing in the stream a figure similar to her own.'

'Death ... is a necessary consequence of the enjoyment of life. If the butterfly were not to die, were he to live only the ordinary age of man, the compass of the earth would not be sufficient for his posterity; but he lives without fearing death, and dies without regretting life; When the rainy Hyades bring back cold and the southern blast, he is not grieved at the short duration of his career; but consigns to Nature the care of his progeny which he is destined never to see. He is content with his lot, having fed on flowers, and having lived until the sun was ready to enter the region of darkness. Finally, he seeks the shade at the bottom of his favourite plant, and stretching out his wings, while he fixes his little feet in the ground, he expires in an upright position.'

(Saint-Pierre. *Harmonies of Nature*. 1814 (posth.))

This is heady stuff. It would be positively caddish to question the movement of the forests or the surprise of the shepherdess. Who would have the heart to undermine such a noble and touching vision of the dying butterfly? So are we tempted to laugh, and move on.

But this is a *genuine* optimism: it is just *wrong*. What is wrong with it? Are the values unacceptable? Hardly; Saint-Pierre's basic criterion is the contribution a thing makes to animal or human well being, which is acceptable enough as far as it goes. 'Quite so', you may say. 'And Saint-Pierre's trouble is that he tries to make it go too far.' But what does this mean? Is this a value-disagreement, as when a Christian claims that a utilitarian carries his (acceptable) criterion too far, putting it above the law of God? Surely not, for a utilitarian optimist will himself not wish to be classed with the good Saint-Pierre, no matter how Utopian his world-view. Does it mean that Saint-Pierre goes too far in his evaluation of the facts in terms of his criterion? Partly; we do feel a certain reserve regarding the idyllic biography of the butterfly. Yet when Saint-Pierre elsewhere tells us that the melon is formed in sections so that we can eat it 'en famille', we cannot deny that we do enjoy our melon, and that this arrangement of nature is convenient to us. But that is the point; it is convenient, but we cannot accept that as an *explanation* of its occurrence.

We are now, however, on shifting ground, for we do recognise that some features of living organisms can be fruitfully described in terms of adaptation-value--that only thus are we led to the *explanation* of such features. We speak of variation and natural selection where Saint-Pierre would have spoken of the direct purposes of God; but it is a question of *fact* whether certain features of living things can be explained in terms not suitable to the optical properties of water, and whether *all* features of living things can be so explained. You may object that this is a matter of theory, not of fact: you may say that to ask whether a certain butterfly actually did expire in an upright position, or whether all butterflies generally do so, would be to

ask two different sorts of 'factual' questions-both more easily answered than the more high-level, 'theoretical' question. But this is theory concerned with empirical matters, not with moral evaluation. We may, then, say that Saint-Pierre has, in a systematic fashion, *got his facts wrong*.

IV

I have stressed this because it shows a continuity with other types of dispute over optimism, where what is in question is not the values applied, but the statement of the facts. In particular it highlights the importance of disagreement over theories as to the basic nature of man or society. Now insofar as such theories are definitions of the Good Society or the Healthy Personality, involving value assumptions, they must be discussed later. But such theories may be in *factual* disagreement over what factors exert a basic influence in human life. For example, consider Malthus' response to Godwin, who painted a vivid and widely accepted picture of the future delights of man:

'The system of equality which Mr Godwin proposes is, without doubt, by far the most beautiful and engaging of any that has yet appeared. The unlimited exercise of private judgment is a doctrine inexpressibly grand and captivating.... The substitution of benevolence as the master-spring and saving principle of society, instead of self-love, is a consummation devoutly to be wished. In short, it is impossible to contemplate the whole of this fair structure, without emotions of delight and admiration, accompanied with ardent longing for the period of its accomplishment. But, alas! that moment can never arrive. The whole is little better than a dream, a beautiful phantom of the imagination Mr Godwin says "There is a principle in human society, by which population is perpetually kept down to the level of the means of subsistence..." This principle, which Mr Godwin thus mentions as some mysterious and occult cause, and which he does not attempt to investigate, will be found to be the grinding law of necessity; misery, and the fear of misery.'

(Malthus. An Essay on the Principles of Population. 1798)

Malthus goes on to claim that even if Godwin's ideal society were created overnight, it would inevitably deteriorate in response to population pressures; one by one he examines the natural forces cited by Godwin as ensuring peace and harmony and shows how they would, on the contrary, destroy them. No question here of a clash of values; the good society, if it is to be achieved at all, must come *in spite of* these natural forces. The implication is that deliberate planning of some sort is essential-we cannot rely on the natural goodness or psychological plasticity of man, still less on the perfectibility of nature.

Any optimism which can expect to be taken seriously must make some attempt at an empirical analysis of nature in general and man in particular. Condorcet rightly insisted that politics must be based on psychology, himself accepting the views of

Condillac as to the innate goodness of man and the rule of reason in achieving pleasure and avoiding pain. One root of our dissatisfaction with Condorcet's visions of perfection lies in our rejection of this analysis of the sentiments; Freud showed that reason could not hope for such an easy triumph. Armchair analyses of the basic instincts of man have been many and various; the egoism of Hobbes, Nietzsche and Le Dantec is countered with 'sympathy' or 'gregariousness' by Adam Smith, Godwin and Kropotkin; the pendulum swings from the rationalism of the *Philosophes* to the irrationalism of Schopenhauer, and who is to decide? We may have our doubts about Freud; we may appeal to falsifiability, or counter him with Rogers or Suttie; but at least Freud moved from the armchair and got as far as the couch.

There is an interesting example of an armchair optimist, usually derided, who was surprisingly right in important aspects of his analysis of the passions. It is easy to laugh at Fourier, waiting daily at advertised times for a millionaire to come and set up his dream society; predicting planet-born anti-lions to carry us from Paris to Lyons and Marseilles in one day; planning a division of labour so subtle that men would rush to work instead of to battle, different people growing different types of apple according to their individual tastes, and the children taking out the garbage, revelling in the mess; foreseeing instantaneous communication with Mars, and the seas turned into lemonade. But Fourier did not make the mistake of using the model of super-rational, Economic Man: his plans assumed that the three basic passions were directed towards change and variety of occupation; intrigue, emulation and rivalry; and the composite pleasures of mind and body. Over a century later Elton Mayo was to found industrial psychology in a spurt of glory at the 'discovery' that men do not work for bread alone. Detailed and exhaustive investigations showed that just those factors stressed by Fourier were crucial in determining a person's satisfaction with his work, and also in increasing productivity. We need not claim that this would be true of all men: it is well known that different social norms result in different modal personality-types; but the norms assumed by Fourier were drawn from capitalist society, and capitalist society is what Mayo was investigating.

Thus the rejection of an optimist's predictions may rest on a supposed knowledge of human nature which is a good deal less adequate than the critic realises. One modern Utopian is well aware of this, and claims that he is the first man ever to base his Utopian predictions on detailed experimental knowledge. Thus Skinner, in describing the society of *Walden Two* (1948), draws heavily on his experience in the psychological laboratory. Though he admits to vast extrapolations (e.g. from animal to human, non-linguistic to linguistic behaviour), he defies us to produce any comparable experimental evidence, and thus forces our challenge into the area of values.

V

One of the striking things about *Walden Two* is that many of the features of Skinner's ideal society are reminiscent of those of *Brave New World*, but in the latter they are satirised, not recommended.

Butler and Orwell also depict anti-Utopias with the aim of modifying our values, or at least forcing us to reinterpret the 'facts' in the light of our shared values. Such satire is a powerful way of confronting an unacceptable optimism with a rival view, where values are at issue rather than facts. *Pace* Hume and Sartre, we must be allowed to attack some forms of optimism on moral grounds; to be sure, labelling all moral discourse as 'irrational' has its point, but beyond that point ceases to be helpful. Hitler was an optimist-not merely in the personal sense-and we must not be confined to criticising his anthropology.

Theories as to the psychological nature of man will be used in assessments of the moral nature of man. Acceptance of certain psychological theories might seem to force particular conclusions upon us: for instance, if man is predominantly self-seeking or aggressive, then he is bad; if he is basically altruistic he is good. But it is not so simple as this; Nietzsche and Spencer valued power-seeking and aggression, and Bentham predicted good results as the 'natural' outcome of egoism. Sumner exclaimed: 'Where is the rich man who is oppressing anybody? If there was one, the newspapers would ring with it';³ but presented with an instance he would have criticized not the rich man, but the newspaper.

This reminds us of a notorious example of violently opposed systems of optimism all claiming justification by virtue of the same facts : the extraordinarily diverse group of social theories boasting intellectual descent from Darwin. Evolutionary theory was taken to prove the inevitability of progress; with the result that some first defined progress and then predicted it, while others predicted bloody struggle and then called it progress. The equivocation with words such as 'progress' or 'fittest', the attempt to derive an 'ought' from an 'is', and the failure to see that 'cultural evolution' involves factors quite absent from the biological sphere, all influence the various statements and evaluations of the facts. Once this has been pointed out we can only turn to moral discussion of the different lists of values provided by these theorists, hoping in some cases to dissuade, if not to disprove. Optimism may be countered by an optimist, not only by a pessimist or cynic.

But are we being too hasty here-perhaps all these 'evolutionary' theories contain a common germ of truth, which is itself a limited form of optimism? Mandeville prompted us to question the view that a virtuous man is one who follows his passions, that optimal good and the greatest happiness will result from the mere following of our instincts; but perhaps Darwin has shown us how we may save at least a part of this old doctrine? If we agree that pleasure is to be valued above pain or displeasure (even though we may not give this criterion priority on our value-list); and if we also agree that, on the whole, pleasant experiences are beneficial to the organism and unpleasant experiences damaging; and that natural selection ensures that beneficial variations will survive at the expense of hurtful ones; then can we not say that there must be more pleasure than pain in the natural course of events, and

³ From Sumner's essay *The Absurd Effort to Make the World Over*, first published in the Forum, 1894.

that *thus far* the world is good rather than bad? Surely we shall have to accept as unassailable an optimism with which we agree both on values and on facts?

No: for the trouble comes when we try to use our value-criterion as a measure of the facts. The first move will be to point to nature, red in tooth and claw, or to detail the pilgrimage of *Candide*; the next, to cite the impossibility of applying a felicific calculus; and the next to show the circularity in the hedonist claim that the only goal is pleasure. But our opponent may insist that Darwin showed that the higher animal 'makes a better living as measured by satisfactions achieved'.⁴ Unconvinced, we accuse him of anthropomorphism; and he counters by turning his optimistic claim into a more obviously logical one, whereby he saves his case at the expense of losing it. Imagine, he says, that pleasure had been correlated with damaging and pain with beneficial activities:

Then natural selection would have evolved an animal world all members of which would have constantly sought those things that were beneficial but unpleasant, would have avoided the things that were hurtful but pleasant, and would have experienced a great predominance of displeasure over pleasure. Such a state of things would seem to us profoundly irrational and absurd.⁵

Notice that such a state of things would not merely be *unpleasant*, to be guarded against by the postulate of a good God seeing to it that such things do not occur (as Descartes suggests in the *Meditations*), but *profoundly irrational and absurd*. The only way to account for this absurdity is to reject any dualistic view which regards pleasure and pain as merely *contingently* connected with behaviour; to accept that - in a sense - they *direct* behaviour; and this boils down to the insight that behaviour is described, and must be explained, in terms of purposes and goals. This does not mean that we may accept the hedonist's account of pleasure--or reinforcement--as the only goal; the circularity is still there. It does, however, show how we may attack Skinner's optimism on an issue of fact rather than of value, for his experimental psychology rules out any such teleological explanation.

So, even if we endorse one or more of the values listed by the optimist as criteria, we must look very closely at the way in which he applies them to the agreed facts before we can decide whether to endorse his optimism.

VI

I have argued that any optimism worth the name must have some specific content, and that we can evaluate it only by considering such content in detail. We may disagree on a matter of values--which will affect our reaction to specific policies or predictions; and we may disagree on how to apply an agreed value to agreed facts. The more specific the goals or policies mentioned in the optimist's value list, the

⁴ Hetrick, *The Evolution of Human Nature*, 1956, p. 126.

⁵ Example taken from McDougall, *Body and Mind*, 1911.

more we may draw our ammunition from the facts: 'happiness' or 'progress' may be obvious and unassailable values, while 'humanitarianism' or 'laissez-faire' are not. Alternatively, we may disagree on what I have been calling 'the facts'. I called them 'facts' to contrast them with 'values', but it is clear from the examples I have discussed that this is a portmanteau word which we should not allow to mislead us.

An optimist may 'get his facts wrong' in many different ways: Condorcet described the place of reason in our psychology wrongly; Saint-Pierre was wrong in thinking that all natural phenomena could be explained in terms of adaptive advantage to some living thing; Skinner is wrong in assuming that non-teleological accounts of animal behaviour are sufficient explanations of it, and a fortiori of human behaviour; the social Darwinists were wrong in applying principles of biological evolution without qualification to social phenomena; Godwin did not look closely enough at the implications of the facts that he had stated; Fourier looked to the planets for his anti-lions, instead of to technology. But, though they all got their facts wrong, they didn't get all their facts wrong; Fourier said some things worth listening to, as industry found in the twenties. And in many cases we ourselves are not so sure of our 'facts' that we can confidently dismiss the optimist's claims.

There is no *a priori* optimism: Leibniz is not telling us anything, merely smiling-except when he says there is an after-life; if there *must* be more pleasure than displeasure in the world, this shows only that certain (teleological) ways of describing and explaining behaviour are *de rigueur*, which has nothing to do with optimism. The psychological considerations, of course, remain: optimistic attitudes may make life more liveable, unrealisable ideals may be essential heuristics in promoting any radical reform. These claims can themselves be disputed, leading sometimes to disagreement between optimists in other ways very close: Engels scoffed at the 'Utopian Socialists', and Sumner ridiculed Ward. But they apply - or not - to all systems of optimism, and cannot be used to pick and choose between them. There is nothing for it but to examine the optimist's claims; if we reject optimism it must not be because it is optimism, but because it is *wrong*.

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