

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY  
THEISM OR ATHEISM:

WHICH IS THE MORE REASONABLE ?

A PUBLIC DEBATE

BETWEEN

**MR. W. T. LEE**

*(Lecturer to the Christian Evidence Society)*

AND

**MR. G. W. FOOTE**

*(President of the National Secular Society)*

HELD IN THE TEMPERANCE HALL, DERBY, MAY 15  
AND 16, 1895

CHAIRMAN: J. W. PIPER, ESQ.

*(Editor of "The Derby Daily Telegraph")*

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**Revised by Both Disputants**

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## FIRST NIGHT.

THE CHAIRMAN: Ladies and Gentlemen,—Allow me, in the first place, to express my indebtedness to the members of the local committee who are charged with the management of this meeting, for having bestowed upon me the compliment of inviting me to preside over this meeting. In the next place, I should like to assure you of the deep sympathy I feel in every honest effort to get at the truth with regard to matters vitally affecting the peace of mind and happiness of the people. Believe me, I have as little sympathy or patience with the gay trifler who, referring to matters of this importance, insists that ignorance is bliss, as I have with those persons who blindly take their orders from the priests and from the bookmen. Let me again frankly admit that I have little sympathy with a reckless and indiscriminate discussion on topics of this sacred character; I hold that the truth can best be arrived at, and a satisfactory solution of difficulties best secured, by temperate and orderly discussion. Happily for us to-night, we are surrounded by all the elements of profitable debate. The contending champions are gentlemen of acknowledged ability, and, I believe, of sterling honesty of purpose. In Mr. Lee—(loud applause)—we have a powerful and high-minded expo-

And now, ladies and gentlemen, I have only to express the hope that this discussion throughout may be characterised, both on the part of the disputants and on the part of the audience, with good temper, so that we may hope for profitable and useful results. In accordance with arrangement, I propose sounding a bell three minutes before the expiration of the allotted time to each speaker—you will quite understand what that signifies—and again at the completion of the allotted time.

I will now, then, in accordance with arrangements made, ask Mr. Lee to open the real business of this debate.

Mr. LEE: Mr. Chairman, Mr. Foote, Ladies and Gentlemen,—The question we have met to discuss will necessitate the use of four very important words. These words I propose defining as follows: First, by the word "universe" I mean the sum-total of all conditioned existence. Second, by the term "reasonable" I understand what is in accordance with the logical demands of the mind. Third, by the word "Atheism" I understand that doctrine which rejects the idea that the universe was produced by a Being called God, and, in denying His existence, goes on to show that the universe is eternal, or is the necessary outcome of the necessary working of the substance it calls matter, and speaks of as eternal. Fourth, the term "Theism," the name of that doctrine which regards the universe as the consciously-willed production of the unoriginated Being, who is absolute in wisdom and power, who was before all things, and by whom, and in whom, all things exist and consist. This Being is spoken of by Theists as God.

These being my definitions, I must ask Mr. Foote to accept them as true, or to show them to be untrue by appealing to the great masters of lexicography, whose business it is to treat of the origin, history, and meaning of words. This is due to me, his opponent, and also to you, our judges.

this proposition will sound like a truism ; but in this debate we must take nothing for granted ; therefore it is clearly my duty to prove, as it will be clearly Mr. Foote's duty to analyse, and, if possible, disprove, the proposition which I now advance. Until this is done, nothing will be gained by Mr. Foote, nothing will be lost by me. I assert, then, that the universe is not the eternal existence for which we seek, because the universe has not always existed. There was a time when this universe was not ; a time when this earth, the sun, and all the orbs of heaven were non-existent ; a time when the substance of all material things existed in a highly-attenuated and gaseous state. And not only are we scientifically sure that this universe has not eternally existed—we are equally certain it will come to an end. For, just as our world is slowly but certainly approaching the sun, so all the moving bodies of the sidereal heavens are making for a common centre ; every star and sun is getting cooler, and energy, in the form of heat, is being dissipated, and an end to the universe must be acknowledged.

Under these circumstances, to speak of the universe being eternal, as Professor Haeckel does, is to lay one's self open to the slashing reply of Herbert Spencer : "Haeckel is unphilosophical ; it is the indestructibility of force and the eternity of motion which are *a priori* truths, transcending both demonstration and experience."

But I expect before this debate closes to have the pleasure of showing that Herbert Spencer is as unscientific as Haeckel.

We must, then, admit, from numerous scientific facts and inductions from them, that our universe has not always existed ; and, if this universe is not eternal, its present existence must be an effect due to some cause. But what do we mean by the term "cause," and what by the word "effect" ? By the former we understand something which really exists, something which has power, something which has power enough to account for the existence or happening

as a vehicle of energy with the two attributes extension and inertia, he cannot conceive of matter at all.

Let us see how the Atheistic position is stated, and then how much this position is worth.

Professor Haeckel, the high priest of Monism, tells us that the universe is both eternal and infinite, and that matter and motion, inseparable from matter, remain eternal and indestructible. Now, you will remember what Herbert Spencer said about the statement of Haeckel's—he said it was utterly unphilosophical; and now we will prove this statement of Herbert Spencer's to be true, for, “if matter be infinite in extension, the universe must be full of matter, and if the universe be full of matter, there can be no attractive force; every spot being equally full, no particle can draw closer to another, and there can be no rotatory motion, for there would be no reason for turning one way more than another, neither would there be any primitive heat, for heat is motion, and no change of place is possible in a plenum where no particle has any place to move into that is not already full.” So, then, matter fails to explain itself, while, if it be infinite, motion and the origination of the universe become philosophically impossible. Atheism, then, fails to explain the existence of matter and the possibility of motion, and, failing here, it must fail everywhere; for, if it cannot account for matter, how shall it account for life? If it fails to account for motion, how shall it account for mind? If it fails to explain the atom, how can it explain the universe? If it fails to account for motion, how can it account for that mighty power of human reason which climbs the starry stairs of the universe and reads the history of stars and suns, projects itself into the very heart of things, and then confesses the presence of a power greater than itself, and a reason higher than its own? (Applause.)

Thus far, then, we have shown Atheism to be utterly unreasonable as a doctrine of the universe, and that it always gets more into each succeeding effect than can be

men resemble each other in this one general characteristic, will not this experience warrant us in ascribing to both a similar, though, of course, a proportionate, cause?" Admit the facts, and the induction from the facts is amply justified. But the question naturally arises, Do the facts of nature agree with the productions of men in the manifestation of aim, intention, purpose? I believe they do, and here are my reasons for so believing. Whatever our theory of the origin of the universe may be, we must admit that the earth, the sea, and the sky are full of beauty. From far-off space, where the unresolved nebulae float, in all the millions and millions of suns and systems of suns which glitter in the brow of night, and here, even in this tiny speck we call our world, order is everywhere manifested, order everywhere known. In the midst of numberless varieties there is a deep-seated unity, vast worlds and systems of worlds, the marshalled battalions of heaven, alongside of which our earth and our planets are as nothing, are rolling through space in orbits millions and millions of times greater than that of our solar system; but everywhere the same laws of gravitation, the same laws of light, of heat, of motion, are found. From speck of dust to blazing sun and floating nebulae, order and law everywhere prevail. But order and law are the manifestation of power guided by intelligence. Nowhere do we discover order and law apart from intelligence, and, therefore, I hold that the cause of the universe must not only have power, but also mind and intelligence. (Cheers.) To put this another way, one great irrefutable fact of the universe is this, it is a gigantic intelligible unity, all its laws are mathematical relations, and can be expressed in mathematical formula. This is undoubtedly true of the law of gravitation, and of chemical combinations, the law of colour and of music, the facets of crystals, the pistils of flowers, the feathers of birds. Now, I put this question to Mr. Foote. If it takes the intellect of a Copernicus, a Kepler, and a Newton years upon years of anxious study to

gent, or it could not have put thought into the universe. Thus our third proposition is established; this universe is the manifestation of power directed by intelligence. In others words, we have proved these four facts—first, the existence of an eternal substance; second, the possession of power by this substance; third, that this eternal substance is the cause of the universe; and, lastly, that the order, law, purpose, intention manifested in nature are a proof that the cause of the universe is possessed not only with power, but with intelligence. In so far as these propositions are established, in so far is Theism shown to be true, and in proportion to the proof of the Theistic doctrine of the universe is the Atheistic doctrine disproved.

And now I come to my fourth proposition—that the facts of man's mental, moral, and religious nature cannot be explained on the principles of Atheism, but are easily accounted for by the doctrines of Theism. Every man has, in his own consciousness (the mind's knowledge of its own states) the evidence of the existence of mind; in other words, all of us are conscious of ourselves—we know we exist, and we know we think. We also know that the mind is altogether other than the body; in a word, that mind and matter are not only distinct, but different substances, manifesting themselves to us by sets of different and totally incompatible attributes. If Mr. Foote denies this, I must ask him to show that the attributes of mind and matter are alike. Until this is done, we shall continue to believe that we have two sets of incompatible attributes; and, when we find that this belief is not peculiar to ourselves, but is held in some form by all the peoples of the earth, we not only feel that our belief is justified, but we believe that it brings us into the presence of a fact which calls for explanation; and we turn to those who hold the Atheistic position, and ask, How is the existence of this thinking substance, which we call self, to be accounted for? That it has not always existed is undeniable; and, if it began to be, it

I shall stop by submitting to my friend a few questions, and the first is this: What is the substance of which this universe is composed? [How could an ordered universe arise from an unordered state of physical units? How could an intelligible universe arise out of a mindless physical condition? How could an universe manifesting law have arisen from a condition where no law can be found? How could an universe without a moral nature produce beings with a moral nature? How could a number of elementary substances called atoms have produced the unity everywhere manifested in nature? How could life, the power which moulds and builds up organisms, and preserves them from the disintegrating influences which act on mere matter, have been produced from the non-living? And, in the last place, how could a universe which, according to Atheism, excludes the possibility of God have produced a number of beings, the very flower of that universe, who have become thoroughly persuaded there is a God? (Loud applause.)

THE CHAIRMAN: I have now, ladies and gentlemen, to bespeak, on the part of Mr. Foote, the same conscientious attention that you have given to his opponent, Mr. Lee.

MR. FOOTE: Mr. Chairman, Mr. Lee, Ladies and Gentlemen,—It would be absurd for me to assume that anything more than an encouraging percentage of this audience was in any kind of agreement with my ideas; and as Mr. Lee, in his otherwise extremely temperate speech, was good enough to say that the Atheistic position was an outrage on human intelligence, I must warn you, if that be correct, that I am likely to say things which will be regarded as an outrage on human intelligence. (Laughter and cheers.) You will, therefore, from that point of view, grant me the indulgence which we always expect from an educated, an intelligent, and honest English audience. (Hear, hear.)



In the next place, Mr. Lee was good enough, not only to define Theism, but to define Atheism, and in a fashion which suited himself. When this debate was being arranged, it was suggested that the proposition for discussion should be, "Theism or Atheism: Which is the more reasonable theory of the universe?" and Mr. Lee is quite well aware that I insisted upon the words "theory of the universe" being struck out, because Atheism *per se* does not affirm a theory of the universe. An Atheist like the late Charles Bradlaugh may affirm, as a personal thinker, his theory of the universe; but Atheism *per se* simply means, not denial, but rejection, in the sense of not accepting the Theistic theory of the universe which Mr. Lee has put forward to-night. I suppose everybody will admit that Charles Bradlaugh, whose name was mentioned in such honourable terms by our Chairman, was an eminent, and, in a certain sense, a typical, Atheist. When I am told that I must go to the lexicographers for a definition of terms, I reply that I decline to do anything of the sort. Lexicographers all work on their own individual responsibility. Webster will define a word in one way, Richardson in another, Latham in another; and how can I accept the meaning of important terms on the authority of these conflicting lexicographers? If I want to know what is Christianity, I am bound to find out what Christians mean by the term; if I want to know what Buddhism is, I am bound to have the term explained by Buddhists; and if Mr. Lee wants to know what Atheism is, for the purpose of discussion, he must discover what Atheists themselves mean by that term. Now, Charles Bradlaugh, in the very first sentence of his pamphlet, *Is there a God?* says: "The initial difficulty is in defining the word God. It is equally impossible to intelligently affirm or deny any proposition unless there is at least an understanding on the part of the affirmer or denier of the meaning of every word used in the proposition. To me, the word God, standing alone, is a word without meaning." I endorse

of the old raw material of theology, or, as I should call it, superstition. There is, in this respect, even in modern days, nothing new; it is but a fresh presentation of old material in a new form. The masses of the people never believe religion upon grounds of reason, but upon grounds of authority and early education. The grounds of argument are only adopted by the apologists of religion when they are hard pressed by the critics of religion. (Applause.)

I deny, therefore, that Atheism *per se* denies the existence of God; I deny that Atheism *per se* affirms the eternity of matter; and I decline to accept responsibility for any theory of the universe. I tell Mr. Lee that, notwithstanding his ability, his mind is not large enough to comprehend the universe—"Oh, oh"—or to formulate a satisfactory theory about it. Further, I say that there is *no* intelligence on this earth adequate to form a satisfactory theory of the universe. And why? Because, in the very language which Mr. Lee has employed, infinity is predicated; and how can the mind of man, which is admittedly finite, formulate a satisfactory theory of an infinite existence? The thing is a contradiction in terms—(applause)—and it is no insult to Mr. Lee to say that his powers are inadequate to an infinite task. (Hear, hear.)

I noticed that Mr. Lee fell into, what seemed to me, at any rate, a confusion about the universe. He spoke of the universe and of the matter composing it. Are they two distinct things? The universe simply means the whole, and the whole is made up of what composes it. You cannot have the universe separate, and the matter which composes it separate. The universe is simply a term for the total quantity of its composition. When Mr. Lee said that this universe was not eternal, he took an illustration from our solar system. Does Mr. Lee mean, because there is a dissipation of energy from our planet, that energy is lost? Does Mr. Lee mean, if a planet should ultimately, in some sidereal cataclysm, become broken and scattered through

and, if you predicate a mind in the universe outside ours, you must either endow it with the essential powers of our own mind, or you must give some reason for believing that it belongs to an entirely separate category of intelligence. Now, I ask anyone to inquire of himself what he knows of creation. We say the poet creates, the artist creates. But *what* does he create? He does not produce something out of nothing. He works with matter that existed before he was born, and will exist after he is dead. He changes matter from one combination into another, but he cannot create an atom of matter, and he cannot destroy an atom of matter. I, therefore, say the term creation, in the metaphysical sense of producing absolutely out of nothing, or out of something discrete, is, to my mind, utterly unintelligible; and I cannot possibly accept what conveys no reality to my own intelligence.

Mr. Lee says that the Atheist begins with matter and ends with mind. Then he talks about the grave, and says the Atheist begins with dust and ends with dust. But we all have to pass through the same stages of being. Mr. Lee was born as I was; Mr. Lee will die as I shall, for the age of miracles has passed. What is the use of complaining of the Atheist, when the Theist has to go through exactly the same career? You may tell me, of course, that after you are dead something very agreeable is going to happen to you; but I will wait until I know it before I assume it as a fact which should serve as the basis of a discussion.

We came eventually to that something which was the cause of this material universe, and that something is intelligent, and that something is eternal; that is, this something eternally existed before it made up its mind to create the material universe. Has Mr. Lee any idea of what could have occurred to put a new thought into an infinite mind? Why, an infinite mind must live in an infinite now. Being infinite, there is neither past, present, nor future to it; for

ness. As a matter of fact, very few of us are as good-looking as we could wish to be, and I don't really think that you can ground the existence of God upon the argument of beauty. You yourself will admit that man has existed for thousands of years; surely by this time his Creator, with that high sense of beauty, ought to have made him a more presentable object than he is.

Then we are told there is intelligence because there is law and order. I have to complain that Mr. Lee has used for metaphysical purposes two terms which are commonly used in another sense—in political and social conversation. We speak of law and order in the political and social world, and what do we mean? By order we mean good behaviour; by law we mean edicts, decrees, or acts promulgated either by the king or the parliament of the country, and for the infraction of which there is a prescribed penalty. I deny that you have any right to use the word law in nature in any such sense as that. All you mean by law is a certain method in which things occur, and the question behind that which Mr. Lee is asking is this, Is that method in which things occur settled by intelligence, or is it the result of the absolute, unchangeable, inherent properties of matter? When you use the word "law" in a metaphysical sense, you are begging the very question at issue; for under cover of the term "law" you introduce the law-giver, which is the very subject we are met this evening to discuss.

Mr. Lee says that he can think about the stars, and that he can get thought out of them. (A laugh.) He cannot. Let an idiot look at a star for a thousand years, if he lived so long, and what thought would he get out of it? (Hisses.) Let a poet look at a star, and he might, to use this fashion of speech, get thought out of it; but the thought is not in the star—the capacity for thought is in the poet's brain. (Applause.) Mr. Lee did not get thought out of the star; he got it out of his own active intelligence.

Mr. Lee says that there is thought in the universe, and

that the best way to answer a prophet is to prophesy the opposite. As a matter of fact, one of our greatest jurists, Sir Henry Maine, in his powerful work upon *Popular Government*, argues that there are perceptible limits to man's intellectual capacity for improvement; and, in the face of this, it is idle to ask me to accept as an established fact what is only a conjecture about the future on the part of Mr. Lee himself.

Then man has aspirations for the true, the holy, and the eternal, and there must therefore be the true, the holy, the eternal! But does the Atheist say there is nothing true? Surely the Atheist can aspire to truth as well as the Theist. The motto of the National Secular Society, which does me the honor to elect me President, is "We seek for Truth." It is again idle to tell us the aspiration after truth involves the existence of the Being whom Mr. Lee is endeavoring to establish. And what do you mean by the word *holy*? Holy, as generally used, is something connected with religion. A clergyman is "a holy person," a church is "a holy building," and a Church festival, or Sunday, is "a holy day." Very well; if you use the word in that sense, I will leave you its full possession. But if by the word *holy* you mean anything which is dignified, honest, or pertains to the highest moral nature of man, then *we* aspire to the holy quite as much as any of the Theists who speak from the platforms or preach from the pulpits of the world.

A word, in conclusion, about man's moral sense. It is imposed from without by God, says Mr. Lee. I say that even men in your own Church, like Professor Henry Drummond, contend that morality is a natural evolution, without anything supernatural in it from beginning to end. God imposes morality upon us! Then why did he not impose it so that in all parts of the world it was understood alike? You say we know when we do right and when we do wrong. Do we? If you commit bigamy in England, you will get seven years' imprisonment; but if you commit it

of Atheism, no matter what you say against Theism. Theism may, or may not, be true ; but, if you say nothing in favor of Atheism, you have not established your position.

Our friend said I defined the universe as the sum-total of all conditioned existence. I did ; and I abide by that. But Mr. Foote says I assume to know something of an unconditioned existence. I do ; and Mr. Foote cannot think of any material object without thinking of that object as conditioned ; and he cannot think of the conditioned without being driven to the recognition of the unconditioned—you are bound to go on to the unconditioned. Mr. Foote may say there is nothing but the conditioned. I say there are the conditioned and the unconditioned.

But our friend went on to say that I defined reasonable as that which conforms to human intelligence. I did nothing of the kind. Mr. Foote has managed to leave out two very important words. I defined reasonable as that which conforms to the *logical demands* of man's mind. This is not saying that what is reasonable is reasonable, but that that is reasonable which is in harmony with the logical demands of the mental life we all possess.

But Mr. Foote says I defined Atheism and Theism to suit myself. I did not. I defined them in harmony with the great masters of language ; and I say, when we come to debate terms which stand for great doctrines, we must use those terms, not as any individual wishes them to be used, but as the great masters of speech everywhere use them.

But he went on to say : "Atheism does not affirm *per se* a theory of the universe." Will Mr. Foote kindly tell me how Atheism can affirm anything *per se* ? Mr. Bradlaugh said that, to him, the word "God" was a word without meaning. Then how could Mr. Bradlaugh justify his attempt to get rid of an affirmation which has a great deal of meaning to others, but none to himself ? But Mr. Foote says he will quote Mr. Bradlaugh's words : "The Atheist does not say there is no God." I admit that. Mr. Bradlaugh

God, we must have a knowledge of God. This Mr. Foote regards as impossible. But I would remind Mr. Foote that some of the great German philosophers hold that, before we can say anything is unknown and unknowable, you must be above and beyond it. But, if you are above and beyond it, you make it known ; and so you destroy your doctrine that it is unknown. Thus, in getting rid of my proposition, Mr. Foote has got rid of his own contention that God is unknown and unknowable.

But Mr. Foote says I fell into a mistake when I spoke of matter and of the universe as different. I did so purposely—in other words, I was dealing in the first part of my remarks with the visible universe ; but the matter which makes the universe, though a part of it, is not visible ; and, when I used these two terms, I meant by the universe that which we can see, and by matter that which is resolvable into the atom, which we cannot see. I fail to see any difficulty in this position. Then as to the atoms which I referred to as bearing the marks of manufactured articles. Mr. Foote says this is a metaphorical expression, as nobody has seen them. Very well. If these atoms have not been seen, how do you know they do not bear the marks of being manufactured ? In other words, Mr. Foote has to go through a process of reasoning in order to say these atoms do not bear these marks, just as great physicists like Clerk Maxwell have gone through processes of reasoning and say they do bear the marks. Personally, I prefer taking the statements of the physicists before those of Mr. Foote.

But, says our friend, if we think of this universe as the outcome of an existence which is eternal, and which is related to this universe as cause to effect, we are face to face with this difficulty : we cannot possibly conceive of creation. If by that you mean I cannot form an idea or image in my mind as to the way in which it was done, I agree with you ; but if you say I cannot understand or apprehend the bringing of something into existence by a

sensation are abolished unilaterally ; *but mental operations are still capable of being carried on in their completeness through the agency of one hemisphere.*"

Mr. FOOTE : Mr. Lee demands—" Oh, oh "—I repeat that Mr. Lee demands what he has no power to exact. I have already declined, as any man of sense would decline, to answer questions read out to me, and not furnished to me. Mr. Lee, by his own act, robbed himself of the right to put questions. In the original conditions, as the Joint Committee know, there was to be a certain space of time—a quarter of an hour or so—allowed for questions between the disputants. It was Mr. Lee's own suggestion that the time for questions should be struck out.

Mr. LEE : I rise to a point of order. The part that was struck out was the part relating to a Socratic method of debate, in which the question should be put and immediately answered ; but that does not rob me of the right to put questions in the course of my address. In every debate in which I have taken part these questions have always been recognised and answered.

Mr. FOOTE : Then, with whatever explanation Mr. Lee may qualify the statement, the statement is accurate, that at Mr. Lee's suggestion the time allotted for questions and answers was struck out from the original articles of debate ; and I decline altogether to come here with the responsibility of answering questions that have not been furnished to me—questions that no memory could charge itself with the task of accurately retaining. If Mr. Lee wants questions of that kind answered, he shall furnish them beforehand, so that one could get an acquaintance with their terms and bearing. Every man knows that you can ask more questions in a couple of minutes than the wisest man on earth can answer in twenty-four hours. At any rate, Mr. Lee may



sistent with those facts, then Atheism would have a perfect right to deny the existence of that God so defined. That is what Atheism does. If Mr. Lee tells me there is a God all-powerful, all-wise, and all-good, I tell him that the facts of life contradict the existence of such a being. ("No, no.") We have heard the names of scientific men. Well, the greatest naturalist that ever lived, Charles Darwin—(a laugh)—the man that smiles at that name cannot know what he is smiling at—I say, the greatest naturalist that ever lived, Charles Darwin, said there is too much suffering in the world ; and he, the greatest scientific intellect since Newton, in face of the facts that science has revealed, felt himself utterly unable to accept the God that Mr. Lee has put forward to-night, and predicated as absolutely necessary to logical human thought.

Now, we had a little merriment about "Atheism *per se*," but there is really nothing metaphysical about that. "*Per se*" simply means, as Mr. Lee knows, "by itself." You cannot think of a thing in universal connections. Man's powers being finite, he must isolate, for purposes of convenience, the objects of his thought ; although, in external nature, they are all in infinite relations to each other. Thus, when you define a line, owing to the imperfection of human powers, you define it as "length without breadth" ; but you never find this in actual experience. It is a device you have to resort to ; you take the idea of length separate from the idea of breadth, although the two things are never found except in conjunction with each other. Very well. Atheism in itself, apart from the personal notion of individual Atheists—or, as I expressed it, "Atheism *per se*"—does not affirm a theory of the universe. I said that individual Atheists, like Mr. Bradlaugh himself, might affirm Monism (like Spinoza, who was charged with Atheism, but affirms Pantheism) ; but that is a different thing altogether from what are the logical contents of the term Atheism. I deny that Atheism affirms a theory of the universe. And if Mr.

than the atom itself; and how can this mystery explain the other? I will tell you how a thing is explained. A thing is explained when Science shows us exactly its origin, its growth, its development, and possibly its decay and disappearance; tracing it from its initial stage to the completion of its career. That is a scientific explanation; and, when Science explains a thing like that, we understand it; but it is not a scientific or a rational explanation of a thing to say, "God did it." That is what ignorance has said in all ages. (Applause.)

It used to be asked, "Who made the world?" until the nebular hypothesis explained to us the history of worlds. Then the question was shifted farther back, and it was asked, "Who made all the various species of life upon this planet?" Darwin explained the Origin of Species—I will not say to the satisfaction of all parties, but to the satisfaction of scientific men. And now the question is put farther back—"Who made life? Or who made the atoms?" In other words, the banner of Theology is always planted at the point where knowledge ends and ignorance begins. It is driven farther and farther back. It is the banner, not of Knowledge, but of Mystery. It is the flag of Superstition, under which all the priesthoods of the world have gathered for the exploitation of the people. (Applause.)

Mr. Lee said that he used the word universe to signify visible matter. Now, there is no distinction between visible and invisible matter, except in Mr. Lee's powers of perception. Visible matter means matter large enough to be seen. But if you have millions upon millions of invisible atoms forming a visible combination of matter, there is no difference in the condition of the atoms because they are in collection, and large enough for our organs of vision to perceive them. That is a distinction without a difference.

A word about brain and thought. Who ever said that man—who has two brains working in combination, though sometimes not in entire harmony—who ever said that he

us it is a question of conviction. Mr. Foote tells us the National Secular Society is in *search* of truth. *We* Theists believe we have *found* it. (Cheers.)

Mr. Foote says, no matter what Mr. Lee demands, Mr. Lee struck out the part of the conditions of debate which referred to a Socratic debate, and, therefore, has no right to ask questions. The reason I struck that part of the conditions out was this. I do not believe in mixing up things that differ. If we want a Socratic debate, we will have it; but I object to wedging in half-an-hour of Socratic debate in a debate of another character; but I still have the right to ask questions respecting matters which are fundamental to my position and to Mr. Foote's. If we have no right to ask such questions, why are we here to discuss?

But Mr. Foote says that I have not been able to produce a single fact in favour of Theism. Well, now, I have produced a series of propositions; I have shown that something must be eternal. Mr. Foote has not attempted to deal with that. I have shown you that that something must have power; Mr. Foote has not attempted to deal with that. I have shown you that something must be the cause of the changes in this universe; Mr. Foote has not attempted to deal with that. I have shown you that the different movements going on in this universe are going on in accordance with law; Mr. Foote has not attempted to deal with that. And I have shown you that we have reason, mind, a religious and moral sense; but Mr. Foote has not attempted to deal with that. The whole of my propositions stand untouched—(applause)—and not only untouched, but the banner of theology, which Mr. Foote has spoken of as floating above the place where ignorance begins and knowledge ends—this banner of theology—this banner, sir—floats high above our heads, not as the symbol of “we do not know,” but as the sign of a coming victory which has already been shown to be ours by your refusing to deal with these questions. (Loud applause.) Ah, Mr. Foote says, “the banner of

do not believe in fighting definitions, unless I know that those definitions are part and parcel of the thing I fight. I have not attempted this evening to give you a definition of God ; I have given you a few suggestions as to what I understand God to be. I told you I believe him to be an eternal something, having power and intelligence, and such-like. But, while I do not know all about God, I know something of God ; I do not know all about Derby, but I know something of Derby. Still, I have often said—I said it three months ago—I am not one of those who say they believe in God ; I have got a knowledge of God. I go beyond belief—I *know* God.

Our friend talked to us about the defects of definitions and such-like, and went on to say that the atom is something, and that the universe is only a bigger atom. Well, now, I object altogether to this position of Mr. Foote's, because he said that an atom is something which cannot be seen. Now, not only is an atom that which cannot be seen—he has told us that—but he went on to say that this world of ours must be the same as the matter which is unseen. Now, if that is so, then the unseen atom must be under the same conditions as this seen table ; and, as this seen table cannot move itself, how came the atom to move itself ?

But our friend says that I simply get rid of one difficulty—the origin of the atom—in order to bring in a greater difficulty—God. No, I do not. Mr. Foote has told us that an atom is that which is so infinitely little that it cannot be seen ; yet Mr. Foote must, if he is logical, seek to build up this wondrous universe, with its teeming forms of living activity, from a thing that cannot be seen, and that is so infinitely powerless that it can do nothing of itself—because “the unseen must be the same as the seen.” Then he says I bring in another subject which is equally unthinkable. Did I not show you that something must be eternal ? Does Mr. Foote believe the atom is eternal ? If so, he is opposed

there is food, if your mental hunger proves that somewhere there is knowledge, the hunger of the soul proves that somewhere there is God. Mr. Foote may say, "I have not got this appetite, I know nothing about it"; but, as we do not trust a blind man when we wish to know something about the sun, neither do we trust an Atheist when we want to know something about God. (Cheers.)

THE CHAIRMAN: Ladies and Gentlemen,—I am sure you must have undergone considerable inconvenience in the heat of this crowded hall, especially those of you who are standing; but it seems to me so in harmony with the instincts of fair play that Mr. Foote should have a full, a fair, and impartial hearing to the end that I trust no one will leave the meeting until Mr. Foote has finished his concluding address.

Mr. LEE expressed a similar wish.

Mr. FOOTE: I am extremely obliged for the kindly spirit which was manifested in the hint just given, but I hardly think it is necessary. I do not feel so profoundly upon the matter as it seems to be imagined, and if any lady or gentleman, at any time, does not want to hear me, I really do not object to their withdrawing. On the other hand, I do not think it is a right thing to assume that anybody *would* leave the meeting. Personally, I think we ought to accept people's innocence until there is reason to believe they are guilty. (Dissent and interruption.) Apparently one disputant is free to introduce a matter which the other disputant is not to say anything about. Is that fair play?

Mr. Lee said that the child and the fire meet, and the fire burns, and what I have got to do is to explain why it burns. ("No, no.") I repeat that Mr. Lee said I was bound to explain how it came to burn. Now, I say I am under no such necessity. All I am obliged to do, if I want to be

to convert me, and, if I had answered all his propositions to his satisfaction, he would not become an Atheist. What is the use, then, of his saying I have not answered his questions? All I can do is to reply. I do not expect Mr. Lee to think that I have shattered all his positions.

Mr. Lee says he knows the unconditioned; but I deny that he knows, or can know, the unconditioned. He is himself distinctly conditioned, every moment of his life being absolutely dependent upon his environment. When he talks about matter being incapable of moving itself, I tell Mr. Lee that he himself, except in relation to external nature, would lose all capacity of thought. Mankind can only work under the stimulus of the external universe. We begin with sensations, perceptions; we weave them into ideas; but it is the stimulus of the external universe that furnishes us with the sensations, and it is the stimulus of that external universe that keeps alive the activity of our powers.

Mr. Lee said it was no use fighting definitions. What else can we fight in a discussion? It is idle to talk about fighting God: we are here to fight over *the defined God*. If God exists, he does not require any man's defence; and if God do not exist, no man's defence can establish his existence. Our object is discussion, and discussion can only proceed upon definitions; consequently it is really definitions that we are here to debate.

We were told that the religious banner is a sign of victory. Not necessarily. Both armies carry banners into the field, and in general it is only one side that wins. And banners are not confined to battle; they are floated in times of peace as well as in war. I do not think it is right to found an argument upon a metaphor. A metaphor is a very good thing as an adornment, a help, an illustration—but no more. And when you say your banner is triumphant, I say the very fact that, after thousands of years of priestly teaching, and of the authority of religion over the child's mind—I

of matter than any common man that walks the streets. He can tell you how atoms combine, and how they divide; he can show you their chemical properties; but he has no knowledge whatever of their creation or origination. The doctrine accepted by all scientists is that man cannot create an atom, man cannot destroy an atom; and I say that, arguing from analogy, it is reasonable—at any rate, *more* reasonable—to suppose that what cannot be destroyed will never cease to be, and that what cannot be made never began to be.

Finally, we were told, in poetical language, about God's kindness; and we were given a poetical recitation, which I hope Mr. Lee did not think was any contribution to the debate. I might cite poetry, but then is that discussion? Shelley said the name of God has fenced about all crime with holiness. You talk of the kindness of your God! I fail to see the kindness when I look at the history of the world. The great Cardinal Newman, the keenest theological intellect that this country has produced in the present century, said that, although his being was full of the idea of God, yet when he looked into the universe the impression made upon him was as though he had looked into a mirror and saw no reflection of his face. What he saw in the world was incompatible with the doctrines of theology in which he had been educated. The kindness of God and religion! The kindness of the *auto-da-fé*! The kindness of the thumb-screw, the rack, the torture chamber! The kindness of the heretic's dungeon! The kindness of perverting and distorting the mind of the child! I prefer the kindness of Humanity to the kindness of all the gods the world has ever known. (Loud applause.)

course, had the opportunity of deciding the direction of the evening's debate. To-night that opportunity lies with me. I do not suppose that anybody who differs from me (and in this I will include my opponent) will be quite satisfied with the direction I take ; but I am in the conduct of my own case, and I intend to do what I consider to be justice to it, quite irrespective of the opinions of anyone else. (Hear, hear.)

Now I wish, at the outset, to say just a few words about the direction the debate took last night. It was mainly of a metaphysical character, and chiefly turned upon the problem of the origin of the universe, if I may express it in that summary fashion. Mr. Lee told us a great deal about matter and atoms, and the whole argument really turned upon what is admittedly incomprehensible—that is, incomprehensible in the present state of our knowledge. I am not one of those who say that no particular problem will at some future time be solved ; but one *is* entitled to say that a certain specified problem is insoluble in the present condition of human knowledge ; and, as a matter of fact, when you discuss the origin of matter, you are discussing a thing which, from the very nature of the case, you are not in a position to determine. And it appears to me that you may mix up with a discussion of that kind a great deal of very questionable physics. For instance, we were told last night that, if the universe were full of matter, there would be no possibility of motion ; but, of course, that overlooks the fact that combinations of matter are of various degrees of density. Every time Mr. Lee and I walk along the street we walk, as it were, through matter, for the air around us is as much matter, although in a gaseous condition, as this table or the floor upon which we stand. To illustrate this from another standpoint : if you were to take a bottle and put half-a-dozen marbles in it, and then fill the bottle right up with water, and hermetically seal it, you would find that, as you moved the bottle about, the marbles, under the law of



words, that Atheism does not explain the universe. Well, no Atheist attempts to explain the universe. He is more modest than to pretend to do anything of the kind. The Atheist declares that the finite intelligence of man is not capable of solving the infinite problem of the inconceivably distant origin of this universe. (Cheers.) But if you pressed me, and said that, as a thinker, I must have *some* idea upon the subject, I should say: "Very well; I am not prepared to assert that matter is either eternal or not eternal; I am not in a position to make a positive assertion where I have no positive evidence; but it is as open for me to conjecture as for any man, and perhaps my conjecture would be as true as his; and, if you tell me there must be an eternal something, I should start from what I know, for I would rather believe in the eternity of what I know than in the eternity of something that I have not been able to discover. And so, I say, matter exists; matter is all about us; our bodily organism, at any rate, is material; and I would prefer to believe that the matter which, according to physical teaching, is, by us at any rate, indestructible in its atoms, is *essentially* indestructible; that it never began to be; that, as it exists now, and did exist eternally in the past, so it will continue to exist eternally in the future." In other words, if there is to be an eternal something, I prefer an eternal something which I know, to an eternal nothing which is only the postulate of an opponent in a discussion. (Applause.)

Atheism and Theism, except they come into dogmatic relationship to morals and conduct, are speculations, and it is well known that speculations—the *very same* speculations—can be entertained by men of all varieties of moral character and condition. Indeed, when one speculation is before the world, and another is opposed to it, and when the world has been discussing these speculations for thousands of years, and is still discussing them, with no hope of arriving at a satisfactory conclusion, an impartial, honest, and careful thinker is tempted to ask himself, What is the

of the universe ; and, when the words were put down for discussion, I declined to admit them. The Atheist has no such theory. He does not set out to explain the universe ; he tries to learn as much as he can about it ; and, if he learns any new truth to-day, there is more to be learned to-morrow. As long as man's mind is finite, and he has to inhabit this world—which is really but as a speck of dust in the infinitude of space—however far he advances, there will be the same old horizon of knowledge. However we may gather knowledge in the years to come, our far-off posterity will have a similar opportunity, and may they put it to a similar use ! (Applause.)

Now, if we have to enter upon a trial of Theism, we must understand what Theism is. Mr. Lee, last night, refrained from defining God. His God accounts for everything, but the very thing which was all-important in the case was never defined.

I shall define Theism as "that form of belief which declares that the visible, tangible, conditioned universe is created and governed by infinite intelligence, which belongs to an infinite personality, which is characterised by infinite power and infinite wisdom ; nay, more—it is characterised, according to Theistic teaching, by infinite goodness or benevolence." What I am going to do in the trial of Theism is to ascertain whether the facts fit in with the theory. I am not going to rush off to a supposed centre, to which the sun, with all our system, is hurrying. I am not going to peer with the microscope in the vain hope of discovering the origin of the atom. I am going to speak about what we know of the facts of life, instead of rushing off into infinite space. I am going to see what can be found in this world, the world in which we live. (Applause.) I submit that, if Theism can be proved at all, it ought to be proved from what we thoroughly know, rather than from what we are only inadequately acquainted with.

Now, what is the great teaching of men of science—a

Now, what does this struggle for existence mean? It means that the world, ever since the rise upon it of organic life—at least, ever since the advent of beings who are capable of feeling pleasure and pain—has been one great cock-pit, running red with the blood of mutual slaughter. In this struggle for existence there is no quarter given. You are not let off to fight another day. As Professor Huxley says, the result for the vanquished is death. And this red cock-pit, which the world has been ever since sentient organisms appeared upon it, I am told by the Theists was designed, and that the Being who designed it foresaw all that would happen, sees what does happen, and, in spite of all our efforts to improve it, continues it as it is. I say that this is too hard for common flesh and blood to believe, if we realise what it means. I would rather be an Atheist, who says, "I know nothing of God, and your definition of God does not commend itself to my intelligence, in the face of the facts of existence," than be a Theist, believing in a God who permits—nay, as Creator, *ordained*—that which every tender-hearted man and woman would put a stop to, if possible, to-morrow. (Applause.)

What is human history? Looked at through the long records that have come down to us, it is more or less a long succession of quarrelling, largely about religion, and wars of dynasty and ambition, and the sacrifice of the lives, liberties, and happiness of the great masses of the people, in the interests of those who leaped into the seats of power, and used mankind for their own purposes. Why, it is only within recent memory that the people, even in civilised countries, have been brought within the pale of a free constitution. Their whole lives were previously decided for them by a handful of upper classes. I can no more see in human history, than I can see in Evolution, the signs of an intelligent and moral governor. Even when we take man as he now is, where and how does Theism justify itself? The human organism is extremely imperfect. Take the most

responsible for them, then God is responsible for them. If God produces eyes that cannot see, or eyes that can only see very inadequately, it is idle to tell me that his wisdom and power are infinite ; for infinite wisdom would know how to produce better eyes, and infinite power would be able to second the designs of infinite wisdom.

Then look at the disasters that occur in the world. Man is encouraged to build his house, to found his home, and suddenly, without warning, the earthquake shatters it and kills him ; or, if he is spared himself, perhaps his dearest are buried beneath its ruins. Do you mean to tell me that an infinite intelligence is responsible for this ? Do you mean to tell me that the work of that infinite intelligence is prompted by infinite wisdom, and is carried out by infinite power ? I say that these disasters that are constantly desolating the world, that these pestilences, these blightings of crops, are all confutations of your Theistic theory. Here in England we send missionaries out to India, and when a famine occurs in India through the failure of the harvest we subscribe money in order to save from starvation the people who, if left to providence, would starve by the action of this God of infinite wisdom and goodness and power.

How, upon the Theistic hypothesis, can you reconcile yourself to the fact of disease ? Disease is ever baffling the man of science. Often, as we master one disease, another becomes more malignant. As we learn how to treat fevers, cancer becomes more severe in its ravages ; and, as we manage, by improved sanitation, to get a better condition of general health among the people, we suffer from that disease which is known as insanity, and which is gaining ground in every civilised country. Now, what is the *cause* of these diseases ? You may tell me it is the microbes ; but who made the microbes to produce diseases ? Your infinite deity planned the microbe and planned the man ; he arranged it so that the microbe would get into the man's blood, and set up an action there which produces terrible

champion will, in due course, have the opportunity of replying. I must, further, press this point, because, with every desire to be impartial, I cannot be blind to the fact that the majority of persons present are in distinct opposition to the views expressed by the gentleman who has just sat down.

I will take the liberty of saying that the attribute of fair play demands that the courage he displays in standing before an hostile audience, and so fearlessly expounding his principles, should secure for him a patient and respectful hearing.

I make these observations in good faith, and I also bespeak for Mr. Lee your kindly consideration, as he has been seriously indisposed to-day, and I can only regard his presence here to-night as an indication of his pluck and determination in carrying through his part of the program.

MR. LEE: Mr. Chairman, Mr. Foote, Ladies and Gentlemen,—I have listened to the address which Mr. Foote has given us with a very great deal of attention, but, I must say, with a very great deal of disappointment. I gathered that Mr. Foote wished us to understand that Atheists had no theory of the universe; but, before Mr. Foote sat down, he showed us that they have a theory of the universe; that they are able to judge of the Theistic theory, and declare it to be bad, and speak of another—the Atheistic—as better.

In spite of these facts, Mr. Foote has repeated his statement that Atheism does not deny God, and that Atheism has no theory of the universe. I hold in my hand Mr. Charles Bradlaugh's debate with the Rev. T. Lawson, of West Hartlepool, on *Is Atheism the True Doctrine of the Universe?* Mr. Foote quoted Mr. Bradlaugh several times last night; I am therefore appealing to his own authority to refute his statements. Mr. Bradlaugh says: "By Atheism I mean the affirmation of one existence. This affirmation is a positive, not a negative, affirmation, and is properly

observations on the phenomena of disease and accident in man, that the substance of the cerebrum is itself insensible—that is, no injury done to it, or physical impression made upon it, is *felt* by the subject of it.” And Dr. Carpenter goes on to say: “It is clear, therefore, that *the presence of the cerebrum is not essential to consciousness.*”

So much for Mr. Foote’s contention that, where he finds a certain physical condition, there he finds thought. Dr. Carpenter distinctly opposes that view. Indeed, it is agreed by all great mental physiologists that it is impossible for us to explain the passage from the physics of the brain to the facts of self-consciousness ; while Professor Tyndall assures us that self-consciousness is the rock on which Materialism splits.

But Mr. Foote says that he denies my right to assert that matter has originated. I repay the compliment by denying his right to assert that it did not originate.

But what does Mr. Foote mean by the word “matter” ? He has used the term several times. Every word I used I defined as I used it. I therefore demand an explanation of this word “matter.”

Mr. Foote last night denied that he is compelled to think of something as eternal, and he spoke of the changing phenomena of this earth and the worlds around us, implying that an infinite series of causes and effects is the explanation of the evolution of the visible universe. That was the implication ; or, if it was not, what was the implication ? And if it was, then Mr. Foote *can* think of the eternal, for he speaks of an eternal series of causes and effects. But if we carefully analyse what is meant by an infinite, or eternal, series of causes and effects, we find it means that a long series of finite changes can make up a total which is infinite. This is opposed to common sense, educated reason, and the first principles of scientific induction. You cannot get an infinite total by the multiplication of finite units. Mr. Foote may try, but he will fail.

of intellect with intellect, and mind against mind, we shatter the beliefs of those who say there is no God. (Applause.)

In reference to my statement that we have certain bodily, mental, and spiritual appetites, Mr. Foote says: "Yes, I admit we have these appetites for knowledge; but have we not room enough in the universe to satisfy these appetites?" I say, No; and the *fact* that all the progressive races of the earth have not been content to rest in the universe is a proof that man is not satisfied with the universe. When he looks upon this universe, as it comes within the field of his vision, he sees upon its face the indications of a Being behind and above the universe—a Being to whom he must go on, and before whom he must bow. No, our friend has not shown that we must be satisfied with the universe which is around us; rather, we rise "through nature up to nature's God."

Our friend has referred to a sentence which occurred in the little poem\* which I recited to you last night, in which the "*sweet kindness*" of God is spoken of. He said (and I think I never heard a more illogical argument in my life)—"Kind," said he, "when this God has designed thumbscrews and racks to tear and rend men?" God designed thumbscrews and racks! Why, it is man who has done this, not God. No, not God, but man, on the nature of whom Mr. Foote builds his philosophy, saying there exist guarantees of morality in human nature. Guarantees of morality in human nature! History and experience refute the statement, and show that, when man is astray from the moral Governor of the universe, these guarantees become guarantees of so many ferocious appetites, which wreak themselves on the weak, the defenceless, the poor, and the holy. The fact is, no trust can be put in man; our trust must be in the living, eternal God. (Applause.)

\* This poem will be found at the end of this report, the reporter having omitted to take it down in its proper place.

until our friend shows this to be impossible, our position is unshaken.

But Mr. Foote says: "Can God have designed this universe, when the law of it is 'eat or be eaten'?" I will deal with this doctrine in a few minutes, and probably I shall be able to eat it before I have done.

Our friend says, when I speak of motion being impossible in an infinitely extended universe of matter, I forget the different densities of matter. I do not. I say that you cannot have different density in matter where you have a perfect vacuum. Every particle of matter must be of the same weight in a perfect vacuum. If, however, the universe be *full* of matter, every point of space must be occupied. Therefore, there can be no space unoccupied. To talk of the *different densities* of matter is to say there is room in space, points where matter is not.

Our friend says he is not prepared to say matter is eternal or not eternal. That is standing on the edge—not going one way or the other; and, if Atheism is in that position, I do not envy it.

Our friend says he would rather believe in the eternity of something which he knows than of something he does not know. But he does not know matter; he knows only his sensations. In other words, *he can think of matter only in terms of mind*. Now, Sir, if you can think of matter only in terms of mind, the most certain fact is mind, and you reach matter by inference. You really know mind; you only *infer matter*.

Our friend says we have these perpetual discords and debates because we have not got at the facts; but the universe is all around us, and we are seeking to understand it. Men have understood it, and, in proportion as they have understood it, they have risen above the universe, and found themselves in the presence of One "greater than I, and holier than thou."

But our friend says he falls back upon the fact that man



out teleology there would be no mechanism, but only a confusion of crude forces; and without mechanism there would be no teleology, for how could the latter effect its purpose?" Against Mr. Foote's statement I place this quotation from Dr. Weismann.

But our friend says he cannot imagine a God designing a world in which "eat or be eaten" is the law of existence. Our friend forgot to tell us how he gets this fact of "eat or be eaten." In other words, he got the eater before he got the life to eat; and I want to know where he gets the life before he gets the eater. But if this universe, or this world, is, as he described it, "one great cock-pit, running red with human slaughter," I ask him how he can reconcile this with his coming here to-night and advocating the teaching of Atheism, when this blind, mindless, cruel, biting, slaying machine, which he calls the world, grinds the lives, and blasts the hopes, and crushes the affections of those whom it has produced, *only to destroy*. No future life, no future good; but blindly, aimlessly, uselessly, simply to play with, it produces men only to destroy them, only to crush them, only to make them suffer. That, Sir, is the teaching of Atheism. But we Theists believe that, through these sorrows and sufferings, there is a great purpose being worked out—that God is working out a plan; and, until our friend can show that the plan is not being realised, he has no right to reject the belief that there is such a plan.

Now, if Evolution means anything, it means that everything which is, and which has been, has a purpose and a function; and therefore Evolution itself witnesses to the great Being who has arranged it thus and thus.

But is it true that this universe is a great, brutalising, "eat-or-be-eaten" machine? ("Yes," "No.") There are more smiles than tears in the world, more days of sunshine than rain; and, on a mere balance of probabilities, there is more good in God than evil. So that our friend has not in

that, when Helmholtz had pointed out what he regarded as imperfections in the eye as an optical instrument, he concluded his address by saying that, if every improvement which he had suggested were put into the eye, it would render it *less fit* for its purpose than it now is ; and he went on to say that no sane man would think of taking a razor to cleave blocks—he would take an axe ; and that for the rough-and-ready work which the human eye was called to perform, it could not be improved. So, then, our friend has his own authority with whom to settle. But I want our friend to answer this : If it is necessary for an optician to make my glasses and his glasses (which cannot be compared to the wondrous mechanism of the human eye), does not the human eye itself demand a maker who shall be greater in wisdom and power than all the opticians on earth ?

But our friend says we see men destroyed all around us. Yes, but there is this difference between the position of the Theist and that of the Atheist. The Theist does not say the man is destroyed. God has given him life, and God has a right to remove that life to any other sphere He pleases. He does not destroy the being of man, He simply changes the place of being, and, therefore, He has a right, if a man does not square with His demands, or if He thinks fit to elevate him to some other condition, to do it, because He is the originator of all life, and in Him only can life exist.

But our friend says there are diseases. Yes, even microbes. Again, I ask you to think. If we were travelling on your Midland Railway, so long as the engines kept their proper lines, we should say the powers in the engine were good ; but if two engines coming in opposite directions collided, that power which was good would become an evil. Why ? Because the arrangements which had been laid down for their safety had been violated, either by the carelessness or wickedness of man. Now, the vital forces of our body and of all living organisms God intended should

should have been disappointed had it been so, because my estimate of Charles Bradlaugh was that, whether right or wrong, he was one of the most careful thinkers and one of the most careful expressers of his thought. Now, Charles Bradlaugh says in explicit terms, as I read to you last night, that Atheism does not say there is no God ; and I submit that a man's explicit statement to that effect is of more importance than any inference which Mr. Lee or anyone else may derive from some other passage which he has penned or spoken, in written or oral debate. Here is a man's written and explicit declaration which cannot be evaded : " The Atheist does not say there is no God." The Atheist takes the definitions of God which are laid before him for his acceptance, and, finding that they do not fit in with the facts of existence, he contradicts them, because the facts contradict them. Now, if that is not an intelligible position for a man to take up, then we must admit that we use words in a totally different signification, and any further discussion, at least upon that point, is simply a waste of time.

But we were told that what Mr. Bradlaugh's statement came to was that Atheism denies Theism, including Pantheism, Polytheism, and Monotheism. Well, I admitted as much in my opening speech, and there was no occasion to elaborate what was admitted.

It was stated by my opponent that Atheism had no foundation. It has the same foundation that anything else has, or possibly can have. The only foundation for anything, as Mr. Lee knows well, is man's knowledge. Mr. Lee also knows that there have been Atheistic scientists, like Professor Clifford, and that there have been Agnostic scientists (which comes to the same thing), like Charles Darwin, Professor Huxley, and Herbert Spencer, whose names will stand as high as any upon the Theistic roll that Mr. Lee can produce.

Mr. Lee wants to know what I mean by "conditioned,"

made Theists before they are able to judge for themselves. I was charged with "robbing the community of its faith in God." Robbing! that is a term from the Old Bailey.

Mr. LEE : I did not wish to use it in that sense, and, if it is repugnant to Mr. Foote, I will withdraw it.

Mr. FOOTE : Every man who thinks he has a glimmer of truth not only has the right to present it to his fellow-men, but is under a duty to do so. If a man finds, in listening to another man, that a belief which he thought true is only half true, or not true at all, instead of being deprived of anything valuable, he is deprived of something which occupied the door of his mind, and kept the truth out of it. When this intruder is removed, the truth can enter in the place of the falsehood that usurped its situation. (Applause.)

We were told, too, that there was no guarantee of morality in human nature, and that we must trust entirely to God ; yet I find that some of the most notorious villains of our time have been well-known professors of religion. I do not say they were so *because* of their religion, but in the face of their profession, and in the face of the statistics of crime, it is idle to tell me we must trust to God for morality. Wherever a human heart beats with sympathy ; wherever mothers love their children ; wherever fathers protect them ; wherever parents will, with their own lives, save the lives of their dear ones ; wherever one man will rush to the aid of another—*there* is the guarantee of morality. Your argosy of faith floats upon the great sea of humanity. You declare that the water would dry up without your fleet ; yet, if your fleet were to sink, the mighty ocean of humanity would roll on the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. (Applause.)

Now, we come to what has been said about my opening speech. Mr. Lee quoted from Weismann, and said that he put against Mr. Foote's views of design the words of a great German. But there is no particular sanctity about a

apparatus to inflict agony upon every part of their being—if I could not stop it, I would denounce it, and disown all responsibility for it. Such things were done in the name of your God, yet he never stopped it, but let it go on. It is science and humanity that have put down the brutalities of your religion. (Applause.)

There are, says Mr. Lee, more smiles than tears in the world, and so he strikes a balance in favour of his God. A balance in favour of infinite wisdom, infinite power, and infinite goodness! And man strikes it! I can understand a balance to a man's credit; but a balance to God's credit! And this is the God I am asked to believe in. I cannot believe in a God like that.

If God makes poor eyes, and the oculist sees their defects, how is it—Mr. Lee asks—that the oculist cannot make better ones? Why, "making" is a term of art, and not a term of nature. Eyes are not made; human beings are not made; lower animals are not made; plants are not made; you cannot even make a crystal; you cannot make the crystallised frost upon your window-pane. The word in nature is "growth," and, if the eye has grown, it is God's method, according to Mr. Lee's argument, of bringing it into existence; and God is responsible for his handiwork. It is idle to say we have not the right to point out errors in a theory unless we have a better theory of our own. We have such a right. I may not be able to explain the universe, and I admit I cannot; yet, if you put forward a theory that is contradicted by facts which you and I alike admit, I have a right to say that, whatever may be the *true* theory, yours is *false*; because a theory which does not fit the facts *is* false, according to the canons of logic. (Cheers.)

Mr. LEE: You will observe that the questions which I put to Mr. Foote in my last speech have not been dealt with. Mr. Foote has not told us what he believes or under-

tion is. I am bound to say that Mr. Bradlaugh himself seems to me to fail to construct anything, and all Atheists must share in the same fate.

Our friend says I used, last night, the word "conditioned." Yes. And I also said what I meant by it—(cheers)—namely, that which witnesses to something other than itself, and demands for its existence some other thing. Now, Mr. Foote has no right to say that we do not explain our words where we take every care to explain them. But Mr. Foote says that by conditioned he means "existing in relation to other things"; but this universe is one, not many. Then what does this witness to, what is it in relation to? If in relation to something, what is that something? If not in relation to something, then it has no relation at all; and, if it has no relation at all, then it is not conditioned, and you do not know it, for you know only the conditioned.

Our friend quotes a number of scientists, Darwin and others, and he says these men were men who believed in Atheism or Agnosticism. I say that these men, almost without exception, repelled the charge of Atheism. Tyndall said that this word was affixed to him unfairly, and repelled it. Huxley has rejected the name again and again, Darwin never said he was an Atheist, and not one of the men to whom reference has been made ever said he was an Atheist. In order to show their humility, they took up the position that they did not know whether there is any God, but they did not say there is none, and they did not try to prove there is none; they simply said they did not know. So our friend failed altogether even in his references to these men.

But our friend says, in reference to the problem of knowledge, that knowledge is only relation. Very well. If knowledge is only relation, and this universe is one, and, therefore, according to your position, is not relative to any other thing, how can you, a part of the universe, be conscious of another part, unless that other part be other than yourself; and if that other part be other than yourself, then you are in

to this earth, and this earth alone, and fixing their affections and their minds on things of time and sense alone, they have thought themselves to be part and parcel of a brutalising world; and so they have crushed and torn each other, not because of God, but because their hearts have been opposed to God.

God, our friend says, has allowed this to occur, and, in a very thrilling statement, he said: "Now, if any man were to injure another in my name, if I could not stop it, I would denounce it." Yes, and the great God has put into men a power of mind which we call conscience, and that power of mind has bitten men like a serpent when they dared to break the law of God's world, "Love thy neighbour as thyself." (Applause.)

Our friend says God has not interfered in this world. We have no right to go into the question of revelation to-night, but we believe God has interfered. But our friend, Mr. Foote, does not believe in God because he has not interfered to stop certain cruelties; and when he did interfere for the salvation of man from sin, our friend denied that he had interfered at all! This is a very strange contradiction, and a very strange position to be in. (Derisive laughter.)

Mr. Foote referred to Weismann, and seems to imagine that I thought there is a strange charm in a *German* scientist.

MR. FOOTE: I said there is no magic in a German name.

MR. LEE: That implied the same. The reason I emphasised that Weismann was a German was that a great deal of our philosophy and science comes from Germany. The foremost thinkers in Europe to-day are to be found in Germany; great experimenters and observers in Germany have given to the world facts, and inferences from facts, which English and other thinkers have been careful to follow out. That is why I emphasised German.

But our friend says that these quotations from Weismann

A word as to Darwin and his *Descent of Man*. Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace, the co-discoverer with Darwin of the principle of Evolution, has gone into the question of suffering very thoroughly, and, in his work on *Darwinism*, he shows, in some three or four pages, that what Mr. Foote has attempted to establish on that point to-night is not what is in nature, but what exists only in Mr. Foote's mind. (Applause.)

THE CHAIRMAN : We have now reached the final stage of this debate. I am about to call upon Mr. Foote to give us his last contribution to it ; and I would take the liberty of again saying that he is entitled, and I hope will receive, your careful and courteous attention. It is more than probable—I do not say I expect it—that he will adduce arguments and make statements which may trouble the minds of some who listen to them ; but I will again remind such persons that they will, on this occasion, have the opportunity of hearing the final word from their own champion.

MR. FOOTE : My attention is drawn to the fact that no new matter is to be introduced into the last speech. That is a point which my opponent must be careful about, as he has got the last speech, not I. My position is one which I generally find the Atheist has to accept. Theism, of course, is true, and Atheism, of course, is false ; yet Theists usually feel the advantage, even in the case of truth against error, of having the last word.

Now, with respect to Germany, I do not object to Germany ; my only surprise was that "German" should be put before "science," as it was. Science is not English, French, German, or of *any* nationality. Science is universal. Science speaks an universal language when it speaks fact and truth. And I deny that all our English science and philosophy comes from Germany. It is a libel upon England. Charles Darwin, the greatest biologist of this



Then, again, Mr. Lee says that Atheism and Agnosticism are different. What is the difference? It is very largely the difference between courage and timidity. I have defined—rather ironically, it may be, but I may repeat it as I have said it before—I have defined an Agnostic as an Atheist with a tall hat on; and really Agnostics, who, as Mr. Lee says—giving the names of Huxley and Spencer—declare they do not know there is a God, are, to all intents and purposes, in the same position as the Atheist. If they do not *know* there is a God, it is clear that they are *without* God, and to be without God is to be an Atheist.

Then we were told that God made man, but man's heart went astray and was opposed to God. ("Oh.") I should be sorry to misrepresent Mr. Lee.

Mr. LEE: The words were "but man has sought out many devices."

Mr. FOOTE: That is not the expression I was referring to. Mr. Lee said that man's heart had got opposed to God. I should be sorry to misrepresent him, but that is what I have written down, and what, I think, I heard—at any rate, it is the substance of what Mr. Lee said upon this point. Just take a human father and his child. If a child of mine go astray, and I have fulfilled all my duties towards him, I am not responsible for his wandering; because, in bringing him into the world, I was not able to determine absolutely his intellectual and moral character. But if a father *could* absolutely determine the intellectual and moral character of his child, and that child went astray, the father would be responsible for not exercising his power. (Applause.) God is not in the position of an earthly father. An earthly father works under what to us, however inscrutable, are laws of heredity; for a child is not simply the child of his father, he is a child of his father's father, and his mother's father, and their mothers and fathers. Heredity

purposes, and we are striving to abolish it, and so to prevent the ethical education which you say God intends by his infictions.

God, we are told, has a right to take the life he sends. For the sake of argument I will not impugn that. There is no time to discuss it. But, assuming that God has the right to take life, let us see how it works out. Under the law we have a right to take life. A criminal is tried and sentenced to execution. But society insists that, if he is to be killed, he shall be killed in the most painless manner possible. We insist that the hanging shall be done with the utmost dispatch. In America they are trying whether electricity is not even less painful than hanging. In short, although we must (as we say) kill (though I doubt if anybody has that right), still, if we must kill, we are refined enough to say we must kill swiftly and painlessly. But that is not God's method; what we see in nature is not *swift* killing; it is *slow* killing. When man is killed by "the act of God," it is often done very slowly; not in a moment as by the hangman's noose or by electrocution. A lingering disease comes on and kills him week by week, month by month, and year by year. It is an agonising form of cruelty. If God has the right to take life, I deny that he has the right to take it in that way. If life must be taken, it should be taken swiftly and painlessly. All this cruelty in nature, all this killing of human beings by slow disease and long agony, gives the lie to the statement that your God is a being of infinite kindness and love.

Mr. Lee says that I object to revelation because I am told that God *does* interfere in the world, and that I object to Theism because God *does not* interfere in the world. He says that is a contradiction. There is no contradiction; it is a harmony. I object to Theism, because God does not interfere to prevent injustice, cruelty, and suffering. You try to justify his non-interference. Afterwards you offer me a revelation, in which he does interfere. The contradiction

(so far as I am concerned) must be brought to a close. I do not expect that what I have said in this debate will have pleased everybody. All I can say is that it was my duty to say what I thought necessary. I took my own position and defended it, and attacked what Mr. Lee himself advanced. The world moves by this constant agitation. You find sound water in the eager, flowing current. The still pool is stagnant and loathsome. And when the air gets overcharged at times, we see the beautiful spectacle of the lightning. But you cannot have the lightning without the clash of the thunder-clouds. And when we differ in opinion we have these friendly meetings, so that out of the thunder-clash of debate there may leap forth the lightning of truth. (Loud applause.)

THE CHAIRMAN : In fifteen minutes more this debate will be brought to a close. That space of time will be occupied by Mr. Lee, whom I now call on.

Mr. LEE : I do not know whether I understood Mr. Foote to say that Theists like the last word. If I did understand him to say that, may I remind him that he suggested that I should open the first night, and he would open the second night? That is not my arrangement, but his. So, then, our friend has made a mistake in saying I *like* the last word.

Our friend says that the putting of the word "German" before the word "science" was what he quarrelled with, because science is universal. It does not belong to Germany or England; it is universal. If science is universal, then knowledge is universal, and the great Scientific Being—if you will allow me to use the word—must be an universal Knowing Being; and that Being can be no other than God. The truth is that, out of all the scientific facts to be found everywhere in nature, we can get lines of evidence which lead up to one great fact—God is, and God reigns.

But our friend says it is an insult to England to say most

to ask for a definition ; and Mr. Foote, in answer to my request, ought to have given me a definition. But we have it now, and it comes to this—matter is the substance of all the phenomena which come under his sensations. But what are your sensations ? Sensations are not matter ; they are the *mind's* recognition of material existences and connections. Then there is something other than matter ; and the thing for which I have been contending, the recognition of *mind* as a separate entity and substance, is now established in the confession of Mr. Foote. (Applause.)

Mr. Foote says that Atheism does not construct, any more than Theism constructs ; it is a speculative system. But the speculation has shown itself in this way—that, while I have been brave enough to lay down a series of given propositions, each of them leading up to another, and to construct an argument on definite propositions and evidences, Mr. Foote has not constructed any argument, but has simply been criticising the ideas and theories which he fancies represent Theism. So, then, Atheism, in the person of Mr. Foote, has not constructed anything. Theism, in the person of Mr. Lee, has constructed something ; and that something has not been touched. (Applause.)

But Mr. Foote admits there is a difference between Atheism and Agnosticism. The one, he would say, represents courage, and the other timidity. But is it not funny that some of the men to whom he has referred as not believing in God are the men who write themselves down Agnostics, and, therefore, are characterised by Mr. Foote as being too timid to say what their belief is ? Not by any means a flattering position to be in.

But Mr. Foote objects to the statement that man's heart is opposed to God. I am not sure whether I made use of those words—probably I did ; but, whether I used them or not, they describe a great fact, and facts are stubborn things. Man's heart *is* opposed to God, for what has Mr. Foote shown us to-night ? "Tell me," he said, "that a God like

Our friend says that the idea of God was of slow growth, and he gave us a remarkable history as to how the idea of God grew ; but, while the story was pretty, it was opposed to ascertained facts, for we know, by the science of comparative religion, that the first form of religion known to man was not belief in many Gods, but belief in one God.

Ah, says our friend, but in battles of this nature clouds come together, and in the shock the lightning flash of truth comes forth. Yes, yes ; but what is truth ? I feel sometimes, as I think of the sufferings through which I have seen some small section of the human race pass, that I also know something of suffering. I have seen my little ones taken out of my home and hidden in the earth ; but to tell me, Sir, that I have been produced by a mindless, brainless, purposeless, heartless universe, only to have affections quickened in my heart, only to have children born and placed in my arms, and then for this blind, ruthless thing you call the universe to wreck those affections and destroy those lives, is to say that your universe is an incarnate fiend. But if there be a God, and that God possesses mind, intention, heart, my children are not dead—they live. And out of the shock of brain with brain, and heart with heart, there comes this truth : “ Thank God, heaven is above all yet, and there lives a Judge whom no king can corrupt.” (Much applause.)

Mr. LEE, again rising, said : It is now my duty, my pleasurable duty, to move that the very best thanks of this meeting be given to our worthy chairman for so generously, patiently, and ably presiding over our meeting on these two evenings of debate.

Mr. FOOTE : I beg, with the most profound sincerity, to second that vote of thanks.

Upon being put, the vote was carried by acclamation.

*(Poem omitted through Reporter's error (see page 61).*

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Who shall say that to no mortal  
Heaven ere ope'd its mystic portal?  
Gave no dream or revelation,  
Save to one peculiar nation?  
Souls sincere, now voiceless, nameless,  
Knelt at altars, fired and flameless;  
Asked of nature, asked of reason,  
Sought through every sign and season,  
Seeking God. Through darkness groping,  
Weeping, praying, panting, pining  
For the light on Israel shining.  
Ah, it must be God's sweet kindness  
Pities erring human blindness;  
And the soul whose pure endeavor  
Strives toward God shall live forever—  
Live by the great Father's favor,  
Saved by the all-sufficient Savior.