

THE MAN OF GENIUS.¹

GALTON, in his book on Hereditary Genius, presents a classification of men according to their natural gifts, and taking an average analogous to that used in measurements of stature, finds by the method followed by Quetelet an ascending and descending series outside of the average; that is to say, categories of men above and below the average. There are seven of these categories above and seven below the average, those below being designated by the small letters, *a* to *g*, those above by the capitals *A* to *G*. Two other categories, *x* and *X*, are put down as exceptional in order to indicate grades of men below *g* and above *G*. Men in *g* and in *G* may be as rare as one in a million, or even one in ten million. Those in *g*, and more particularly in *x*, would be inferior to dogs or other intelligent animals which on being classified in the same manner would appear in *G*.² Following this classification, Galton confines himself to defining the characteristics of those men who stand above the average. He finds them endowed with a natural intellectual ability, united with an eagerness for work and a great power for working.³ Such qualities urge a man to open for himself a way to eminence by overcoming obstacles of every kind

¹ Translated from the MS. of Professor Sergi by I. W. Howerth, Ph. D., of the University of Chicago.

² Galton, *Hereditary Genius*, p. 12 et seq., second edition, London, 1892.

³ "By natural abilities I mean those qualities of intellect and disposition which urge and qualify a man to perform acts that lead to reputation. I do not mean capacity without zeal, nor zeal without capacity, nor even a combination of both without an adequate power of doing a great deal of very laborious work." *Op. cit.*, p. 33.

which he may encounter. Whether the social conditions are favorable or not, a man endowed with these qualities cannot be prevented from rising. Favorable social conditions never produce superior men unless there exist in these men superior individual qualities. Hence it may be said that such men are exceptional. They rise above the average, and therefore above mediocrity. They are superior to social conditions, adverse or favorable; are born with natural endowments, and become eminent in spite of their conditions. Galton attempts to show how such men are the result of heredity; hence the motive of his excellent book.

One may seek in vain, however, in Galton's book to find beyond heredity an analysis of the man of genius, or, better still, of men of genius in their particular manifestations and in their physiological and psychological conditions. To prove his thesis it is only necessary for him to deal with their genealogy, and to show that the elements appearing in the man of genius are gifts of inheritance. For this reason such a book is no longer satisfactory. I say no longer, for we now seek to investigate the personality of men of genius and to explain their superiority over the average man.

Passing over certain opinions with weak attempts at demonstration, Cesare Lombroso was the first to attempt a complete explanation of the nature of genius. While there have been researches similar to his outside of Italy, in no other country has the problem awakened so much popular interest, or engaged actively so many minds, and even aroused a reaction with more or less intensity of feeling.

The psychological motive of this reaction lies in the popular conception of the man of genius, namely: That he is a sort of abstract being despoiled of the qualities common to men in general. According to this conception the man of genius ought to act in a different manner from other men. He ought to eat, dress, love, converse, even walk, in a manner peculiar to himself. He ought to have no vice or defect; or, if he does have, they should be peculiar to him alone, quite removed from those belonging to the common run of men. An example of this conception may be found

in a book by Giovanni Bovio upon genius. By creating a genius according to his own fancy, an ideal and abstract being, and not by examining the personality of a real living genius, he naturally arrives at the conclusion that all theories by which the origin of genius is sought to be explained on a basis of observation, and especially that particular one which finds in degeneration the cause or one of the causes of genius, are erroneous. With all such theorists there is no ground for discussion. They are like the worshippers of the saints or of fetishes, who do not recognise the material of which the fetish is made, or the human origin from which the saint has sprung, but, on the contrary, believe them to be endowed with the supernatural or superhuman virtues attributed to them. Such worshippers will not admit any research, critical or otherwise, which may result in revealing the true nature of their object of worship. This need not surprise any one. It is the eternal psychological process revealed in our attitude toward the dead. With rare exceptions the process of abstraction begins as soon as a man passes away. The many or few good qualities which he may have are exalted, the bad eliminated, and in time the bad qualities are totally forgotten, and the good exaggerated, or created if there should not happen to be any. The epitaph inscribed on his tombstone can hardly be said to be mendacious, because in it appears the unconscious and involuntary idealisation which eliminates all his defects.

This phenomenon, manifested by the friends of almost any man who passes away, becomes universal and all the more intense in the case of a really superior man, noted for his qualities as an author, an artist, a savant, or a general. Such a man is soon apotheosised. His vices, however conspicuous, are soon forgotten. It is only necessary to remind the reader of what has happened, and what is now happening, in the case of Napoleon Bonaparte. Only a few persons find in his life any inferior or despicable qualities. His adorers are innumerable. If one goes to the Invalides in Paris one may find a Napoleonic worship like that at the Sepulcher of Christ in Jerusalem. So also of Marie Antoinette, who is

idealised by Frenchmen and who has her altar at the Concergerie. Who would dare to speak of the vices of Marie Antoinette?

This explains the reaction against critical investigation into the character of men of genius, and especially against the degenerative theory of genius; that is, there is an unconscious and popular psychological process which, after death, eliminates the bad qualities and exalts the good, and renders the man of genius abstract and ideal. This process is accentuated by another fact, namely, that the man of genius while living is less esteemed and often without honor at all, or only abroad, because then all his acts are before the public and known. Only after death is he immortalised and apotheosised. Bovio, like others of his kind, does not escape this psychological process. On the contrary, he seems to me to have wonderfully, though unconsciously, illustrated it above all other men, almost as a universal interpreter.

After this explanation I need not trouble myself further with him.

II.

In his *Uomo di Genio* Lombroso embodies a series of observations concerning men of genius, and arranges such men into categories in accordance with the degenerative characteristics which they present, and not according to their productions indicative of genius. Above all he has endeavored to study these degenerative characteristics in the mass, and, to tell the truth, he finds them everywhere and in abundance. But his idea must have originated from noticing the existence of mad geniuses. In fact his book at first bore the title "*Genio e Follia*." Little by little, as such things usually happen, he distinguishes mad geniuses properly so called from those which have marks of degeneration, somatic and functional, as the psychologists understand them. Hence his degenerative theory naturally arose as a logical sequence of premises grounded upon extended observations.

But this was not sufficient for Lombroso. There was still necessary a general theory which would recognise the genius not simply as a degenerated personality, but also as a person who

works and creates the products of genius. This theory is summed up in the epileptoid psychosis of genius, which is closely analogous to his other theory of the epileptoid nature of the delinquent.

It may be worth while to sum up briefly the arguments advanced by Lombroso to sustain this theory.

First of all I may say that Lombroso gives a very wide, almost indefinite, signification to epileptoid psychosis, and adduces good reasons for doing so. Hence, it must not be understood as that common clinical form with its well-known features of convulsions, loss of consciousness, etc., but as a form more or less hidden, frequently evanescent, and which may escape analysis and observation. Its principal indications are found in lack of character, instability, variation of pursuits, excessive originality, absurdity and absent-mindedness, contradictions, delirium; in erethism and extravagant atony; in creative excitement, in exhaustion and in the unconsciousness of productive effort. To these may be added other indications of more or less importance.

Let us pause here to consider two indications which, according to Lombroso, really assume in the case of genius the force of proofs in regard to epileptoid psychosis. He writes as follows:¹

"Now, to any one familiar with the so-called binomial or serial law according to which no phenomenon happens by itself, but is always the expression of a series of less obvious but analogous circumstances, the frequency of epilepsy in great men cannot fail to suggest that it is more extended among them than one is at first inclined to believe, and that the very nature of genius itself may be epileptic.

"Moreover, in connexion with this it is important to notice that in those persons in whom convulsions appear only at rare intervals, the psychic equivalent which in this case is the reaction of genius, is more frequent and intense.

"But above all, the identity is shown by the analogy of the epileptic fit to the period of excitement, that violent and active unconsciousness which acts in one creatively and merely throws another into convulsions.

"Remember, too, how much we have pointed out in the confessions of men of genius. In this they all agree, not excluding the chemist and the mathematician whose preparation is certainly more slow and gradual, that the creative fit always manifests itself instantaneously, unconsciously, and intermittently.

"That which more than anything else convinces me," he continues, "is the

¹ *L'uomo di Genio*, Sixth Edition, p. 563, and pp. 23, 27, 40, 126, 127.

analysis of this creative fit, which suggest the identity even to those who are ignorant of the recent discussions in regard to the nature of epilepsy. And it does so not only from the fit being associated frequently with painful insensibility, irregularity, of the pulse, somnambulism, and from its being instantaneous and intermittent but also from its being accompanied by convulsive movements of the limbs, from the amnesia, which frequently follows it, from its being provoked frequently by substances or conditions which give place to or increase cerebral hyperemia and powerful sensations; and finally from its transmuting itself into and being followed by hallucinations."

The conception of degeneration in the man of genius, the idea which has been most bitterly opposed in the Lombrosian doctrine, is just this theory of the epileptoid psychosis; as it is also the idea which is most opposed in his similar doctrine in regard to the delinquent man. This opposition arises chiefly from the fact that the meaning given by Lombroso to epileptoid forms is considered too extended and arbitrary, and because it is not believed that a congenital, degenerative psychosis is to be encountered in all geniuses and delinquents, whether impulsive or not. Other opponents have a general aversion to the degenerative theory of genius on account of many objections more or less important.

But Lombroso does not stop with what we have quoted from him. He seeks a proximate cause of the phenomenon which heretofore has been studied as a clinical fact. He desires to find a fundamental, biological characteristic which may explain the origin of genius; and this biological theory, which is that of the phagocytes, is as follows: "The explanation and the origin of genius is to be found in degeneration; its anomalies, its atavistic regressions, are explained by that struggle which is carried on by the phagocytes of the organs, described by Roux and Metchnikov, which takes place in all great transformations of living organisms, and which leads necessarily to the predominance of one organ, and to the atrophy of others.

"Now (on the basis of the discoveries of the above-named authors) it is easy to explain the inequalities and the atavistic regressions of geniuses. The more powerful one part of their wonderful organisms becomes, the more the other parts become weakened; the more the brain and therefore the intelligence increases,

the weaker becomes the stomach, the muscles, and even the bones. . . . Always one part of the organism suffers from the superior excellence of other parts."¹

But a few years after he promulgated this biological theory of genius, the author published another book,² in which, under the influence of the works of Vandervelde and Massart concerning regressive evolution,³ he introduces without saying anything more of phagocytes, this new conception, of regressive evolution, in order to explain the origin of the genius. This conception, however, seems to me erroneous, as does even the expression, *regressive evolution*; because this is only *involution* of organs or parts of organs, as one may see clearly from the very examples given by the two Belgian authors. The wish to apply such a theory, whatever be its name, seems strange to me, and the attempt is not conclusive.

The involution (the regressive evolution of the authors cited) of an organ, or of parts of an organ, while a new one appears, or is developed if already existing, implies that it has already been developed and active, and that on account of changed conditions or new adaptations it has been reduced, or has disappeared, while another has grown or has been brought into existence. Does this happen in the case of the man of genius? I think not, because in him genius is entirely an individual phenomenon and has no relation to the conditions of existence which may or may not be changed. It might even be said, that in genius almost the reverse happens, that is, his individuality does not always conform to external conditions, and frequently is antagonistic to them. This new attempt by Lombroso at a biological theory of genius, shows only one thing, as it appears to me, and that is that up to date the author who has established the fact of degeneration in the man of genius, has not been successful in finding a safe biological theory which explains the origin of genius.

Lombroso's theory of genius, as he has been presenting it for many years, especially that part of it respecting its degenerative

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 630 et seq.

² *Genio e degenerazione*. Palermo, 1898.

³ Paris. Alcan, 1897.

genesis and the manifestations of epileptoid psychosis, has been widely discussed both in Italy and elsewhere.¹ In Italy the inquest held to determine the madness of Guy de Maupassant² resulted in the acceptance of it, either in whole or in part, by some of our psychiatrists. Among these the first place belongs to Tamburini, who has written that "Genius is undoubtedly an anomaly in the human species, hence the efficient cause of it can only be an anomalous congenital condition of the brain, whose reasoning power in men of genius (especially in those in whom the manifestations of genius have an especially one-sided character) is based upon a hereditary, degenerative neuropathic condition."

Silvio Tonnini concludes one of his communications by saying that "This precious and rare fruit, which is genius, finds a better soil in degenerates, because degeneration signifies asymmetry and an unbalanced condition. . . . Genius being understood to be a result of this unbalanced condition of the nervous system, Lombroso's idea of the epileptic equivalent of genius is quite correct."

Dr. Silvio Venturi, who also advances a theory, claims in substance that "Genius is a *divergent characteristic*, and expresses a congenital anomaly; is a product of a degenerate condition, and yet the genius himself may not be a degenerate although degeneracy is a factor in every variety of genius."³ This leaves much to explain, for the divergence which produces a variety, as in the animal species, is a phenomenon of progressive evolution. It would appear that Venturi regards genius in the same light as Morselli, since he congratulates himself that Morselli "has accepted his doctrine." But it seems to me that the idea of Morselli may be different, although it apparently coincides with that of Venturi.

Venturi in fact, although he claims that genius is a divergent characteristic, accepts the Lombrosian idea that it is a product of degeneracy, a doctrine which Morselli concedes. According to this

¹ Even the editor of *The Monist* has given it some attention—April, 1896, in the "Nature of Pleasure and Pain," p. 432 et seq.

² Bianchi. Milan, 1892.

³ *Le degenerazioni psico-sessuali*, p. 272 et seq. Turin, 1892. See also the letter to Bianchi, *cit.*

psychiatrist, genius is a phenomenon of *progressive, divergent variation*; for he says, "If organic evolution has resulted in the development of lower forms into higher forms; if the mind is perfected parallel with and in proportion to morphological development, it is evident that in every epoch of the world, in every phase of the phylogenetic series, there have existed *divergent variations in a progressive sense* and hence individual geniuses." And he adds, "Nor may it be objected that this idea is in the nature of a paradox. Comparing the one with the other, I do not believe the *biological* conception of genius is any more extravagant than the *pathological* conception that it has a degenerative basis."¹ This biological conception points toward that of Max Nordau, according to which genius "is the first appearance of an individual of new functions, and hence of new tissues, destined to become typical for the entire species."²

This interpretation of the nature of genius errs from an inexact application of the Darwinian hypothesis. Any one who is thoroughly acquainted with the doctrine of organic evolution knows very well that according to Darwin a useful variation may constitute a divergent characteristic, and may serve in the survival of those better fitted to the conditions of existence. This divergent characteristic, when it is fixed by heredity, creates a variety, which may slowly pass into a species. Now any one who will consider a variation which in a certain individual is looked upon as a mark of genius will find, as a rule, that it does not represent an adaptation to the conditions of the environment, or that it is so only exceptionally, and hence is in opposition to the characteristics of organic variations which serve toward adaptation. Oftentimes a genius leaves no descendant, which is contrary to the supposition that genius is a characteristic aiding survival. Consequently there are found in genius these two conditions which do not correspond to philogeny in the sense of Morselli and of Nordau. There cannot

¹ Bianchi. *Inchiesta. cit.*

² In Lombroso, *Genio e degenerazione, cit.*, p. 247. Compare the preface of the sec. edition of *Degenerazione* by Max Nordau. Turin, Bocca, 1896.

be in it, therefore, that characteristic which is invoked by the two authors as a biological interpretation of the appearance of genius. Even the expression of Morselli that, "The mind is perfected parallel with and in proportion to morphological development," is not always correct. It is a vague expression which may be easily contradicted.

The conception of Venturi, who claims that genius is a divergent characteristic and a factor of variation, but still finds that it is the product of degeneracy, reminds one of that other conception of Virchow, who believes himself able to explain pathologically every organic variation, and would so explain even the origins of the human races.¹ But this coincidence is accidental, although it is true that Venturi himself rejoices that Morselli has accepted his idea of *progressive variation* in genius. Now on account of the character of these variations one is not able to accept the opinion of these two illustrious authors; for it is not rational, nor does it conform to the evolutionary theory, nor to the facts in regard to men of genius. Another matter is the proposition that genius brings on social, scientific, and artistic evolution. Such evolution, being the effect of the activity of genius, would not serve to explain the nature of the authors of progress. This is not, however, the proposition of Lombroso, who is interested in explaining the personality of genius, never its effects.²

III.

If we turn to the researches of Galton, we find that the genius is a rather rare being; may be so rare that we shall have scarcely one in a million, or even one in ten millions of men. True it is that Galton establishes a proportion between geniuses and men below the average, but I believe it does not correspond to the number of those below the average. Because if it is true that in the population of the United States of America there are one hundred

¹ *Rassenbildung und Erblichkeit*, Festschrift für Bastian. Berlin, 1896.

² There may be found in the *Inquest* of Bianchi the opinions of Tanzi, Amadori, Fugerio, Zuccarelli, and of others. And besides, Prof. L. Bianchi of Naples, Del Greco, Montalto, have written on the subject in various scientific reviews.

thousand defectives, this is beyond the calculation of Galton, and has no correspondence to the actual number of geniuses who are quite few in comparison with them. There ought to be about seventy geniuses to seven hundred defectives. Inferior men are not then so exceptional as geniuses, but they must always form the extremity of the scale of human intelligence opposite the superior men.

At all events it may be affirmed that these extreme individuals, whatever their number may be, constitute divergence from the human average, and a divergence is an abnormality when it does not consist in a slight oscillation about the average of intelligence. It is an eccentricity when it does not enter into the common orbit. Just as the orbit of a comet, which is so widely divergent from that of the other bodies which move around the sun, is also eccentric. Concerning the characteristics of defectives, idiots and other individuals of this kind, there is no question. They are considered by all as being abnormal, with the title of degenerates, as we are accustomed to call them to-day. All doubt and discussion is in regard to the other divergents from the average, the geniuses.

If we should stop with the Galtonian proportion alone, we should affirm that even geniuses are degenerates; abnormal, since they are exceptional, and then we should have before us the Lombrosian doctrine complete. If then we should wish to look upon men of genius not as to their complete personality, but as to the superiority of their productions and their actions, we should have to say with Morselli, Nordau, and Venturi that they constitute an evolutionary and progressive divergence. If we should stand by the abstractions of the philosophers and the sentimentalists, we should regard perfection as the human ideal. But we have already said that the latter do not study the living man of genius with all of his attributes, and hence they have no concrete conception of him; while the former have not demonstrated, and cannot demonstrate, that their theory is in accord with the doctrine of evolution, which they inaccurately invoke. From the earliest times, men of genius have always been rare and exceptional. There has never existed a race or a new variety which preserved the characteristics of su-

periority. On the contrary, it often, almost always, happens that with them the intellectual superiority is extinguished. Biologically, then, geniuses are not to be studied as a new variety, nor do all divergent characteristics which they possess constitute characteristics of a variety.

There now remains for the interpretation of the superior nature of genius only the theory of degeneration; and this I propose to examine to find out whether it truly corresponds to the facts, and to the manifestations of the man of genius; and as to whether that peculiar and personal theory of Lombroso is complete and able to sustain itself in its special and characteristic features.

IV.

On restudying Lombroso's book on genius, it appears to me that he has undoubtedly demonstrated that intellectual excellence, in whatever form it may manifest itself so as to be considered of the nature of genius, is united to physical and mental degeneration, understanding by this apparently vague and indefinite expression the unbalanced condition of the psychologic functions; physical and functional arrests of development of every kind, disease well determined from a clinical aspect, etc. It must be understood, however, that all these conditions ought not to be found, and are never to be found, united in a single individual who may have some of these conditions of degeneracy. Even many of the adversaries of the Lombrosian theory have been constrained to admit this fact, if it is such, at least in many cases; but it must be observed that it is quite another thing to speak, as some do, of phenomena and manifestations of degeneracy as effects of abuses of physical and mental energy, and of phenomena which appear in childhood and go on developing through life, as is the case in ordinary individuals.

It is necessary, however, to take into account the effect consequent upon the abuse of energy, in order to measure the resistance of the organism. Alexander von Humboldt was able to work laboriously up to eighty years of age, and manifested no weakness or exhaustion as effects of excess of work. Even Goethe was able

to employ all his mental energies up to the last days of his life, and at eighty-one years finished the writing of the second part of *Faust* without showing any signs of weakness in the work. But Alessandro Manzoni after his thirtieth year could work no more. His intellectual work is therefore insignificant in comparison with that of the two Germans. The only valuable work of his which remains is his *Promessi Sposi*, although he lived to be an old man, and was apparently in good health. Hence resistance to labor must be brought into calculation in a judgment concerning the personal conditions of men of genius. A precocious exhaustion of the intellectual powers may indicate a degenerate state in the individual who undergoes it.

But the problem, as I look at it, is quite a different one. Admitting degeneration in the genius it is this: what are the relations existing among the activities, the degenerate states, and the highest superiority of mind in the genius? Are they causal, are they simply concomitant, or are they accidental, as even some alienists contend?

Lombroso did not set out to show that degeneration is an efficient cause of genius, but he has clearly shown that this is his conception. I say that he did not set out to show this, because he did not so state the problem, but he really attempted to solve it. His demonstration, however, does not appear to me satisfactory or complete, because he chiefly studied to reveal all the degenerative marks of the man of genius, and then presented them as general characteristics of geniuses. It is true that he finally found an epileptoid psychosis in which he wished to include all the operations of genius; but even this could only serve to explain generically the moment of the creative activity, and not the presence of the many different degenerative characteristics, which are found in men of genius and influence their activity.

He himself felt the need of filling up the gap, and as we have seen had recourse once to the phagocytic theory, and then to regressive evolution, in order that he might have a general theory of the mental conditions of the genius. If we should admit one of these two theories, we should find ourselves, curiously enough, accepting the evolutionary theory of Morselli, of Nordau and of Ven-

turi; for the so-called regressive evolution implies, as we have seen, progressive evolution; and, as a result, phagocytism is referred to the same phenomenon. That is to say, it would not be want of equilibrium, but adaptation (hence equilibrium) of the genius to the conditions favorable to his existence. Now this is not the conception of Lombroso, nor can it be found in the conception of genius according to his degenerative theory. It would indeed have been in contradiction to it.

It must be confessed that, in spite of the fact that so many besides his own have been unfolded, and in spite of the fact that so many have attempted to beat it down, no one up to date has brought forth better a better theory concerning men of genius than Lombroso. And we cannot help admiring this man of genius, who unites with a profound intuition a copious analysis of the facts and observations before which all the adversaries of every type attempt, in vain, by every means to overthrow him. He is firm in his position, and fights without yielding a step, and without wavering in his convictions. This firmness in him, and the esteem united with admiration which I feel for him, embolden me to speak my opinion of his theories, and to express a judgment concerning the man of genius.

In the first place it appears to me that genius must be something more simple than it is usually supposed to be; and that in undertaking to investigate it by analysis it flees from us and vanishes, leaving only qualities common to all men. Such an investigation is in some degree analogous to that concerning æsthetic beauty, of which, when we strive to investigate the elements of which it is composed, there remain only straight or curved lines, or a combination of them; just as we find in objects of common beauty, and even in those not beautiful.

It is worse still when it is affirmed that genius exists in the fineness or profundity of perceptions, or in large imaginative faculties, or in strong and multiform memory, or in tenacious and indomitable will; for it is easy to find men of genius with weak imaginative powers, with one-sided memories, or with superficial perceptive faculties; and, more frequently than is supposed, *abulia*

is found instead of a strong and energetic will. All this arouses the suspicion that the characteristics of men of genius are not to be found in such psychological elements.

The delusion becomes all the greater when it is thought that the man of genius must be complete in all his faculties, integral, universal, so that he is of more value than many men ; that he sees everything at a glance. Men of genius are very frequently one-sided, with a limited horizon, and have only one direction in which they turn their minds and their activities, and outside of which they are nothing, inferior to common men, frequently infantine. Very rarely are they men who are relatively complete. Such one-sidedness makes them appear strange, even mad, as sometimes they are, always eccentric and frequently unbalanced. Examples may be found in the book of Lombroso, and I may therefore dispense with them here.

The man of genius, therefore, from what I have said, is and must be an eccentric, one who departs from the common orbit in which other men are accustomed to move ; and if it is admitted that in the normal man, in his psychic functions, there ought to be found a correlation of development and manifestation, in the genius, on the contrary, this correlation is interrupted—one function finding itself exalted by the abasement of another ; that is, there is an unbalanced condition.

But the unbalanced and the eccentrics do not constitute a unique class, nor are they such from a single cause. I do not believe that there can properly be constructed a scale of one to a thousand, or one to a million, to gather them up and classify them, as some have wished to do. There are those who are defectives in the widest signification of the word, retarded in their development, and who possess no eminent qualities. But in a classification, these should not be brought into relation with those in which, along with deficiency, is found an excellence of one quality which almost serves as a recompense for the weakness of others. There are others who have common qualities like those of normal men united with deficiencies, as in the lower grades of the Galtonian scale. Hence it would be inexact, even erroneous, to put together these

three categories which may have in common some defects but not any other quality. It would not be logical to classify together delinquents, mattoids, cretons, defectives, and men of genius. The Galtonian scale may be considered exact only in so far as men superior to the average are placed opposite those who are inferior.

Here we have come, however, upon a confirmation of the degenerative theory of Lombroso, and we ask at once, From what is the unbalanced condition in the man of genius derived? It seems to me that it ought to be derived from the physical degeneration more or less visible of the organs, understanding by degeneration, that which departs from the normal nature, or from the proper correlation of parts or organs, or of psychological and physiological functions. Degeneration may be complete, or partial, and may be little noticeable or not at all, that is, it may escape observation from the absence of exterior signs. This is well known and is always encountered in mental diseases in which the physical degenerative characteristics are sometimes distinguishable either before or after death; and in other cases in which they may escape analysis of any sort whatever. The same thing may be affirmed of the great, unbalanced degenerate who is called a genius.

Of this we are convinced, and hence we think that one kind of genius has its origin in degeneration. The great difficulty consists now in determining the specific conditions favorable to the various manifestations of genius. Galileo, Newton, Rossini, Beethoven, were geniuses, but how much diversity among them! Lombroso recognises the unbalanced condition of such men, not so much in regard to those qualities or to those characteristics which make them geniuses, but rather in regard to those qualities, I would say, which are negative, and which produce an unbalanced condition, that is, their deficiencies. This is why the common herd has tried to cry down the psychiatrist of Turin, while some scientists consider such deficiencies accidental, not comprehending that this recognition points naturally to a solution of the problem and opens a just way to study it and to interpret it.

Certainly the degenerative characteristics of a man of genius cannot be of a nature different or opposed to those of a delinquent,

for they are found in organs and functions of beings alike human. There exists no assimilation, however, between the man of genius and the delinquent, but an assimilation between the degenerative characteristics of men, whatever may be their value, their merit or demerit; just as the normal organs of the genius are not different from those of other men.

The opponents of the degenerative theory, while they are astonished to learn that degenerative characteristics are found in men of genius as they are found in the insane and the delinquents, do not comprehend that they ought equally to be astonished to find that the stomach and the heart of Galileo functioned just the same as those of any other man. They ought to know that the problem presents itself in the form of a paradox, that is, that those characteristics which apparently ought to degrade an individual, really exalt him and render him superior. It is, therefore, necessary to explain the paradox, if one is able to do so, not to deny the facts which in my belief are well established.

v.

But is the epileptoid psychosis of Lombroso the common characteristic of men of genius, the universal degenerative mark to which all the manifestations of genius may be reduced? Lombroso does not exactly say so, but from a fair interpretation of his thought it would seem that all degenerative characteristics or marks of degeneration which he has found in men of genius, can be nothing else than an index of the epileptoid nature of every one of them. If this is not so, it is impossible to understand what purpose these degenerative characteristics may serve, what function they have, or whether they are something in addition to the epileptoid psychosis. This leads me to an analysis of the Lombrosian doctrine and of the arguments he adduces to establish it.

In the preceding pages I have transcribed literally the principal and characteristic reasons which led Lombroso to think that the manifestations of genius, as for instance its products, confirm the idea of its epileptoid nature. These are the analogy of the epileptic fit with the period of creative excitement, both being an

active and violent unconsciousness which acts creatively in the genius and convulsively in the epileptic, and that whatever the intermittency of the creative fit, it is always instantaneous and unconscious. The apparent analogy is wholly in favor of Lombroso, and more than that, it appears to me that the conception of the *psychic equivalent*, corresponding to the creation of products indicating genius, and which takes the place of the convulsive movements of epileptics, has a great value. While it may not be true, this conception is profound, and I may add that though it is not universal among men of genius, as its author believes, it may certainly easily be found in some, and hence is true for some manifestations of genius.

Before all we must know whether those somatic and psychological anomalies discovered in men of genius, independently of the creative instant, have any direct or causal relation with it; whether these characteristics which reveal the epileptoid nature of a man have an intimate relation or not with the creative instant in genius. Now, this is difficult to establish. But Lombroso does not doubt that, given the morbid nature of the man of genius, such relation exists; and it is possible.

But there is one point upon which I do not agree with Lombroso, and that is that unexpected and instantaneous production and unconsciousness of the phenomenon is peculiar to genius. In an analysis which I have recently made,¹ I think I have established the fact that the thought of every man is *always* elaborated in unconsciousness, and is manifested in consciousness only when it is complete. Not only this, but I have also shown, I think, that although the thought is completed and elaborated in unconsciousness, its appearance is instantaneous, and this is so in every man, even in early life. Hence I have resurrected the doctrine of Sir William Hamilton, who many years ago in his lectures at the University of Edinburgh, after some analysis affirmed that "What we are conscious of is constructed out of what we are not conscious of,

¹*Pensare senza coscienza.* In *Rivista moderne di cultura.* Florence, 1897. II., 1.

—that our whole knowledge, in fact, is made up of the unknown and the incognisable. . . . It is thus demonstratively proved that latent agencies—manifestations of which we are unconscious—must be admitted as a ground-work of Phenomenology of Mind.¹

I have referred to many examples of this phenomenon which are well known in psychology but badly interpreted; and I have also given an interpretation which would put an end to the discussion concerning the psychological and the physiological element in psychic phenomena.

It appears to me, therefore, that instantaneous and unconscious production are not peculiar to the genius, but facts which are common to all men. I have elsewhere written: "If consciousness is only a form of the manifestation of psychic phenomena when they are complete, if the elaboration of thought and invention under every aspect takes place in the cerebral depths without producing the least hint of labor, it does not seem to me that there is the least question as to whether the creations of genius are unconscious or not. Necessarily the creative work of the genius, like that of all ordinary men of talent, is occult, and there is nothing new or extraordinary about it. . . . If it happens that the products of genius seem to be due to a kind of inspiration, in art as well as in science, it is because these products have an exceptional value, while those of other men pass unobserved.

"If Newton and Galileo had been dependent upon voluntary or conscious reason for finding those natural laws which they arrived at, they would never have found them, because they would never have been able consciously or voluntarily to find out all the paths which lead to these results, being more ignorant in regard to them than we are to-day. These paths are as intricate as a labyrinth, and no one could find the way out unless he were led by a fixed and definite idea which would serve as a guide and a light in the obscure cerebral depths. Cerebration took place around that fixed idea and led to the discovery or the solution." To what I have here said, and elsewhere demonstrated, I may add that when we

¹ *Lectures on Metaphysics and Logic.* Sec. 18 and 19. Edinburgh, 1877.

wish to think consciously upon a problem, we almost never succeed, because then the thought is superficial and not profound as when it takes place in absolute unconsciousness. From this other fact we arrive at another deduction, namely: that the depth of unconsciousness is in direct relation to the intensity of thought, and that those men who think less unconsciously than others are the superficial, the vulgar, the common, and hence they have not produced anything new and extraordinary, like those who think in absolute and profound unconsciousness. Perhaps then the emergence of a new thought from such a depth gives to it an appearance more surprising and striking than that of superficial thought; but this does not prevent the one or the other from being unconscious elaborations and instantaneous appearances. This interpretation of the work of the brain in thinking takes away the pathological character of cerebral activity, and of the instantaneous appearance of the productions of genius which Lombroso would claim for them.

This condition of unconsciousness in the phases of psychic phenomena, I think I have shown also by examples. I would recall the fact that I have thus interpreted psychic phenomena for more than twenty years. This being the case if I am not deceived, I do not wish any misunderstanding to arise as to my contentions in relation to those of Lombroso; that is, I would not wish to be understood as saying that the productions of genius in the moment of cerebral excitement, to use Lombroso's phrase, remains unconscious as in an epileptoid fit when the movement and everything in regard to the afflicted person remains unconscious to him; because if it were so the genius could never have created anything, or his production would be worth nothing, not being able to be made available. I mean to say that unconsciousness exists in the cerebral preparation, in the working out of the phenomena. But when all this has been completed the phenomenon becomes conscious. And this is true with the man of genius when he creates any new thing whatever, either in science or in art.

If the idea of Lombroso concerning the epileptoid, and therefore pathological, character of the bursting forth of genius in an instantaneous and unconscious manifestation does not appear to me

tenable, the affirmation of Morselli that he would attribute to genius a hyper-consciousness, that is a consciousness clearer and more intense than that of the normal and common man, because, as he says, the conscious mental energy of the genius is concentrated at a single point and not diffused or suspended, seems to me completely erroneous; and for reasons accepted, and which it is not necessary to repeat, this conception signifies nothing.

But if the instantaneous appearance of the product of unconscious activity indicating genius is, as I have said, neither epileptoid nor pathological may not the whole unconscious process be determined by some other pathological characteristic? This appears to me to merit some consideration.

Newton on being asked how he managed to discover the law of gravitation replied, "By always thinking about it;" and Sir Rowan Hamilton, the author of Quaternions, confesses that for fifteen years the problem, the solution of which came to him suddenly while crossing a bridge in Dublin, had so to speak knocked at the door of his consciousness. Now who does not see in this the influence of a fixed idea which continually tormented the man of genius, and which became a focus around which all the rays of his intellectual activity converged! It appears to me that one thought gained possession of his mind, became a delirious idea which continually persecuted and tormented him until the solution of the problem it represented was found, that is, until he arrived at the satisfaction of the sentiment which had aroused it. The difference between such a fixed idea of the genius and that of the common insane person is chiefly in its content. The fixed idea of the insane person can have no realisation, no definite end; that of the genius has a possible realisation. If this is so, the phenomenon has a pathological character which fortunately has a relief and an end in the creation of the genius. This demonstrates also the one-sidedness of the genius, on account of which other activities may not have a normal and correlative unfolding as in the well-balanced man.

But there is another difference between the man of genius who is tormented as in a delirium by a fixed idea, and the ordinary de-

ranged person. To the first, the idea arises from a clear vision of observed, even common place, phenomena; but to the other it is a superficial sensation which dominates in consciousness. And this points to another difference in regard to the profundity of the unconscious activity which both the normal man and the genius have in common, and that is that in one it is like a shallow sea, while in the other it is a sea of unfathomable depth, and thought arising from the cerebral abyss to the light of consciousness seems so much the more instantaneous and unconscious as the depth is great.

This is pathological, not normal, and accords with the Lombrosian idea of the pathology of genius, if it is separated from it in some particulars through its interpretation. But it agrees also in the fact of the anomalous condition of men of genius, and hence in the various marks of degeneration which are encountered in them, as also in abnormal beings.

But even here it is necessary that we pause to say that while what we have said of a fixed idea like that of Newton, of Columbus and others, is true in certain cases of the manifestations of the man of genius, and as a rule happens in science, in mechanics, and in scientific applications, it does not always hold. There is not always the phenomenon of a fixed idea which occupies the whole thought of the genius. There are other different forms of the manifestations of genius, if not wholly at least in part, and in their mode of presenting themselves. To reduce all to a simple unity and to a unique cause would be a scientific ideal, but it would not always correspond to reality.

A little while ago I said that the fixed idea arises in the man of genius from a clear vision of observed phenomena, and in fact, whether it is Newton seeking the law of falling bodies in the movement of bodies around a greater one; whether it is Galileo studying the isochronous movements of the pendulum; whether it is Columbus, who *sees* the sphericity of the earth, all this is a vision of phenomena which all observe, that is, which present themselves to all but which no one really sees but the man of genius. Commonly this vision is called intuition, which signifies *to see*, and is applied to the power of seeing deep into things, and not to a su-

perfidious vision. Let us examine it a little further. I will be as brief as possible.

VI.

Intuition according to my interpretation is referable to perceptivity, and while there is a perceiving that which stands outside of ourselves, commonly called external reality, with the sensible qualities of matter which provoke sensations, there is also a perception of the relation of sensible qualities themselves with that which may be understood as reality deprived of them. Such a perception may not be wholly referred to visible and tangible objectivity, but remains as a mode of seeing that which is not visible, and becomes an interpretation of that which is visible or sensible in general, anterior to every analysis and to every judgment, which facts may in consequence conform to the exactness of the intuition. But a precisely similar internal sense, as it should be denominated, may also delude and draw into errors of many kinds, especially in the facts which have a direct relation to practical life or to the consequences of scientific principles. The principal characteristic of intuition is its immediate presentation; that is to say, it manifests itself without any other intermediate function beyond that which presents the matter by which it is explained.

Hence in order to be better understood, I may indicate intuition as an intellectual vision, as a characteristic internal sense which may be obtuse or acute, which may be slow to reveal itself, or rapid and instantaneous. In men of genius this vision ought to be like the direct and clear vision of the central part of the retina, hence it ought to have greater intellectual clearness united with greater profundity of penetration. The revelation of an idea leading to the solution of a problem, is the effect of this intuition, and then the problem becomes the object of persistent research; it is like a delirious idea. Here there is no doubt that the excess of mental development in this direction must be interpreted by the state of functional unequilibrium which the phenomenon indicates.

It is in science and in intellectual activity where this intuition of genius is most manifested. In this case it ought not to be con-

founded with automatic activity produced by experience or by adaptation. When Napoleon, having come upon the field of battle, sees at once the outcome of the struggle between the two hostile armies, it is intuition; and this is true also in regard to those discoveries of a scientific character which have reference to the interpretation of reality. Inventions depend absolutely upon it. Nor is this intuition easy to acquire, for it is a congenital phenomenon; as congenital as the intuitive obtuseness, the mental half-blindness, called by me on another occasion, mental ambliopia.

But in men of genius of another type, as artists for instance, there is often, it seems to me, another form of intuition which has another basis and another manner of manifesting itself. In true intuition as an inward sense, the sensible qualities of matter which produce sensations have no real and primary value, but are valuable only as matter of interpretation. To the artist, however, as for instance the painter, they acquire an exceptional value from an intensity of impression which they produce on him. This impression is superficial in respect to intuition which is profound, sensory only and not intellectual, for which reason it may be called *impressionability*, and the artist who feels it an *impressionist*.

In such a case the intuition, or the visual mentality in regard to sensible qualities, is almost nothing, and the whole is sensory impression. Color, form, situation, light in various gradations, make such powerful impressions upon the artist as cannot be comprehended by those who have not experienced them. But such excessive sensibility to external impressions of sensible qualities is at the expense of pure mentality. While the artist truly represents phenomenal nature, he has no index of the signification of the rock which he pictures, or of the living nature which he attempts to represent with artificial colors.

So any one who looks closely will perceive a characteristic difference between the intuitionist and the impressionist in men of genius. The one has a penetrating and profound insight into sensible forms which make superficial impressions, but sufficient because they are observed. The other receives an intense but superficial impression of the sensible forms themselves but stops there.

Hence I would say that defects of an opposite character, and developments of an equally opposite character, may give two types of genius, the inventor or scientist, and the artist.

Nor does it seem to me that there is any difference between the painter and the musician. The musician is also an impressionist, and must have a most agile and lively fancy for the creation of various and multiplex musical combinations. But fancy does not arise out of a superficial order of sensory impressions of which it is a reproduction and a recomposition. The exaggerated activity of such a faculty leads necessarily to an unbalanced condition in the mental life of the artist. We therefore do not wonder at what is known of Beethoven, Donizetti, Wagner and others; just as we do not wonder at Salvator Rosa and other celebrated eccentric artists unbalanced in their functions. The liveliness of their impressions ought naturally to bring illusions, hallucinations, deliriums, disturbances and even instabilities in the practical activity of the artists.

If I should attempt here to interpret all kinds of genius and all the forms of this manifestation, I would say the same thing of poets and all other kinds of artists, and show how the differences of poetic production depend upon temperament, and upon certain special and personal conditions; how there are poet colorists and poets who may be called intuitionists, who neglect objective nature, and represent in art the intimate manifestations of the individual or universal life. But I must regard the limits imposed upon me in this study, and perhaps what I have already said will be sufficient.

VII.

From what has been said up to this point it is easy to argue that as men of genius are unbalanced because the correlation of development in their psychological functions is not preserved, and because some of these functions are developed at the expense of others, there is degeneration; as may easily be shown by the characteristic signs which are encountered in these men. And this may reach often to madness, as is illustrated in the undeniable examples of Donizetti and Tasso, or to an unbalanced condition which is

little short of madness, or to peculiarities in manner of living, or of comporting themselves in every-day life, or inability to adapt themselves to practical exigencies, or childishness in certain psychological manifestations, etc.

But this does not solve the problem in its paradoxical form that degeneration is a cause of genius, for it may still be objected that degeneration is not a cause but only a concomitant more or less necessary or accidental, and the objection is not a light one. If it should happen that genius is always and everywhere found constantly united to degeneration, and should not be considered from a biological aspect, as some would wish, as a superiority arising from the fact of evolution in humanity, and as a pathological phenomenon, perhaps the solution of the problem would be less difficult. And here is just the most difficult point to get around, although Lombroso has, as it appears to me, already largely demonstrated it. Then comes that other problem above enunciated. Admitting the constancy of the relation between genius and degeneration, it is not a question of simple concomitance but of causal relation, and there appears as the result the incontestable fact that genius, if it is a pathological, abnormal divergence, must have its origin in degeneration. Of this we are fully convinced.

This problem being solved, others appear. May all the degeneration in genius, for example, be reduced to a single cause, to the epileptoid psychosis of Lombroso? From the analysis which I have made, I must reply in the negative. It is possible that there may be, even are, facts which confirm the epileptoid psychosis. But it does not appear to me that this is a universal cause, or that it explains all the manifestations of genius. Intuition, as I have said, united with unconsciousness is not an exceptional phenomenon; nor is a diseased condition, much less if it is of an epileptoid type, that is, the increase of degree and therefore of intensity and profundity at the expense of other psychological manifestations, or the lack of it from a compensation of excessive development in other manifestations, able to explain the unbalanced condition, which may not be referred to epileptoid degeneration, at least not always.

For these reasons I believe that the forms of psychosis which may be encountered in genius are various; and instead of reducing them to a single cause not always capable of being adapted to the multiform productions of genius, I believe that a multiplicity and variety of psychoses are more suitable to the nature of genius. Consequently it appears to me that we must now place this famous and much discussed problem upon a more practical ground.

These considerations lead us to recognise a fact which has already been pointed out, namely: that geniuses are not all made after the same pattern and by a single cause, but are various and diverse and of many origins, and that the final solution of the problem can only be arrived at when we have examined individually the genius in his superior characteristics and in his deficiencies, and have put these facts into relation with his productions, in order to find out the causal dependence, if any exists. So long as we do not consider the phenomenon in its general characteristics, but as if there were only one cause which produces it, we shall not arrive at a final interpretation.

This investigation, perhaps, is the most difficult of all, because, while it is not difficult to know what the deficiencies of men of genius are, it is very difficult to discover a definite causal nexus between them and the products of their genius. Why was Rossini a musical genius and Michael Angelo a genius in sculpture and painting? Why was Galileo a genius in the physical and mechanical sciences and Darwin in biology? Who knows! And although according to Lombroso we may declare epileptoid psychosis to be a final cause, we may not in this way demonstrate the origin of so many varieties of genius. Even if we should accept the phagocyte theory or that of regressive evolution, we should still have always before us this fact which resists every comprehensive and general interpretation.

Nor may we accept the idea of some who, admitting the fact of degeneration in genius, think they find quantitative differences in it. It seems to me that while there are differences in men of genius, they are qualitative, not quantitative. We have no means of measuring them. Great men are geniuses, or they are not. If we

descend from the high level of the genius, we shall have either caricatures or malformations. Great men are not all and always geniuses, in spite of the fact that they may seem to touch the height of genius.

In conclusion it may be affirmed that one fact may now be considered as established, namely: that degeneration is a proximate cause of genius; that is, that genius is dependent upon a pathological fact, and the establishment of this fact constitutes no small merit in Lombroso. But the solution of the problem in regard to the origin of the varieties of genius and of its ultimate cause, if there is one, is reserved for the future.

VIII.

I ought not to bring this discussion to a close without saying a word about the effect of social influences on the man of genius; because there are those who think and write that the genius is a product of the environment in which he lives. I have had occasion to criticise this doctrine which practically abolishes the personality of the genius, or gives it a secondary place, but it seems necessary to return to it here.

First of all it will be well to distinguish between two facts in this influence, namely: the aid and the obstacles in his development which the genius finds in society; and the needs, the ideas, the sentiments diffused in the social environment, which may be comprehended and summed up in the man of genius, realised and then manifested in the highest manner, so that he may be a representative of his time and of the society in which he lives. Concerning the first fact, I may refer to the opinion of a man who has studied with every means of observing the conditions of superior men, namely, Galton, who believes that social obstacles constitute a system of natural selection in the depression of those whose intellectual qualities fall below a certain level, but which could never act so powerfully on the man of genius. Even if the obstacles to his success were very great, we should expect that the genius would overcome them. He writes, "If a man of genius is gifted with vast intellectual ability, with eagerness to work and power of working,

I cannot comprehend how such a man should be repressed. . . . I am speaking of the very first class men—prodigies—one in a million or one in ten millions.”¹ Notice closely what Galton means to say. Speaking of eminent men, men worthy to be considered geniuses, he writes: “I do not mean high social or official positions, nor such as is implied by being a mere lion of a London season; but I speak of the reputation of a leader of opinion, of an originator, of a man to whom the world deliberately acknowledges itself largely indebted.”² Hence all those who acquire power or reputation from social position and intrigue are excluded, and this is natural. To these eminent human beings, as Galton denominates men of genius, he attributes a very high personal value, by means of which they necessarily overcome every difficulty and rise. By his victory over obstacles may be recognised, according to Galton, the truly superior man. He adds that “if the hindrances of the rise of genius were removed from English society as completely as they have been removed from that of America, we (that is, the English) should not become materially richer in highly eminent men.”³ That is to say that genius must be sought in the personality, in the characteristics, of the man who is endowed with it, and not in society. This appears to me to be right.

But in regard to the second fact, there may be some reason in the contention of those who claim that genius is a sociological phenomenon. This is put forward, however, in an absurd and inexact manner. I should like to know how much influence was felt by Newton in his discovery of the law of universal gravitation; how much Humboldt was influenced in his profound studies, or Lagrange, or Galileo, or finally Copernicus, whose discoveries were foreign to the intellectual movement of his time, or directly opposed to it. These men worked apart from the social movement. Think of Alexander von Humboldt shut up in his observatory at Paris, scanning the heavens day and night while the famous days of '92 were passing. Copernicus wrote a book upon the movement of the earth, and prayed that he might not be roasted for contradicting

¹ *Hereditary Genius*. P. 35.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 33.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 36.

the Catholic Church, and that he might not fall into the hands of the Inquisition. And Galileo, brought before the Inquisition at Rome, was compelled to deny the truth. These were men who gave a new intellectual direction to the social world, and they did not receive it nor were they greatly influenced by it. Nor is it worth while to say that if Copernicus and Galileo had been born among the Indians of America they would never have discovered anything, for there is no sense in such a statement. If one were born in the midst of a people entirely illiterate, one of course would not be able to write.

There would be much to discuss in regard to the case of Charles Darwin, because the evolutionary hypothesis had already been presented by his uncle Erasmus Darwin and by Lamarck and by the brothers Saint-Hilaire and by others. But sociologically considered the doctrine was in opposition to the dominant ideas of the time, and was considered incredible. That is to say science has its heredity, and hence its affiliation, living apart from ideas dominant in the sociological moment until the time arrives in which it may impose itself and become universal. Science never receives an influx from the masses, but it is science on the contrary which reveals itself and struggles for existence by diffusing itself. And it is science which forms social opinions, thanks to the powerful impulses of men of genius like Darwin.

But it may be said that this is not the case with art. I will say, however, that not even in the case of art may it be affirmed that genius depends upon social influence. I would mention Wagner as an evident example in music. I do not know whether Wagnerian art will ever become general, but I do know that it arose against the common tendencies, and not from a sociological influx. I know also, that some have attempted to imitate it, not wholly but in part, and these imitators are those who felt the influx, not social however, but that of the man of genius, who is precisely one of those who has arisen in accordance with the idea of Galton. I am almost tempted to say that those who sum up and assimilate the ideas and sentiments common to the social collectivity, and make themselves representative men, either in letters or in the arts, are

not men of genius, in spite of the fact that they are eminent, and representative of culture in their age. Because they do not create anything; they do not solve the enigmas of science nor open new paths, intellectual or artistic. He who represents existing culture is a great centre of suggestion, that is to say, he sums it up in a lofty and superior manner, but he is not a genius.

I speak of social influence as I understand it. In the same epoch there may be intellectual, artistic, literary, or biological needs not satisfied, secular problems not solved. Now there comes one who satisfies the first, solves the second and impresses new characteristics upon science and art. This is the man of genius who feels and recognises the desires of society, but has not undergone social influence in the ordinary and common acceptance of the term. Finally let us remember when we are treating of superior men, men who have a conspicuous personality, that men generally assimilate what may be absorbed by their individual organism. Those who do not have this personality, and they are the majority, are subject without choice to every suggestion. Hence it happens that men of genius, who are eminent personalities, are subject less than all others to social influences, and those which are felt by them are homogeneous to their personal conditions. Such a person does not become a pessimist from the reading of a book, or because there is a pessimism in literature. Schopenhauer always taught that his melancholy was congenital. Nor does he become a mystic if he has not within himself a tendency to mysticism. If the great masses of men become mystics and pessimists through unconscious influence, it is because man is a gregarious animal and hence subject to suggestion, and to act under the influence of social ideas and sentiments. The man of genius lives outside of this gregarious union in which suggestion plays so great a part, and is therefore solitary, or in opposition to the social current. He is a great eccentric.

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