

THE
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SPENCER'S FORMULA OF EVOLUTION.

THE fabric of human knowledge is seemingly composed of many diverse and disparate strands. Yet, in the history of thought, we find that those whose range of ideas has traveled beyond the sphere of every-day necessities, have always, in some form or other, implicitly or explicitly, as an article of faith or a product of reason, upheld the conception of some unity behind this apparent diversity. The tendency has sometimes worked for evil, and attempts to formulate this unity have often impeded rather than assisted the advance of knowledge. Minds obsessed by false, incomplete or inadequate abstractions, are, often impervious to facts really or apparently inconsistent with their particular ideas. In spite of this, the conception commonly known as the unity of nature is one which would appear to possess much the same kind of validity that accrues to our fundamental ideas of space and time. Although it may be possible to conceive the existence of a world in which the diversity would be so complete as to defy analysis, yet we can only do so by postulating an infinite variation of particular phenomena, so that the same conditions would never recur in finite experience. Though we might argue that a being inhabiting such a sphere of existence would never acquire the idea of the unity of nature, yet by no series of arguments can we expel our own certainty of the reality of that conception. Differences and controversies arise only when we attempt to indicate in what manner it should be formulated.

We shall best be able to understand the principles of Spencer's attempt if we remember that, in his view, such a unification is