

## THE PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

---

### THE EVOLUTIONARY METHOD AS APPLIED TO MORALITY.

#### I. ITS SCIENTIFIC NECESSITY.

I PROPOSE in the following papers to deal with the problem of the application of historical method, the group of ideas centering in the term Evolution, to the problem of Morality. A direct study of the development of moral customs or moral theories is not intended. There are questions of method which (in the present state of discussion) seem to be inevitable antecedents to the ultimately more interesting and more important treatment of the actual and concrete moral facts. Difficult as it is to draw any line in the discussion of such a comprehensive matter as evolution, I shall endeavor to steer clear of purely metaphysical problems, however significant they may be in themselves, and confine myself to those aspects of evolutionary theory which have a direct bearing upon the problem of method.

While I shall be compelled to begin with certain very general features of the idea of evolution, I shall attempt to observe the limit just laid down: not carrying the analysis any further than is needful to get surety and clearness in dealing with the method of interpreting morality. The more general discussion is rendered indispensable because we are met at the outset with a *caveat*. We are warned off before we begin. We are told that the nature of moral facts and of evolution is such as to make it impossible to get help from this source.

The argument runs as follows: Facts of morality are of a spiritual nature. The phenomena of conscience are data of