

Phil. But is it not equally narrow-minded and unjust to require that there shall be no other metaphysics but this one cut out to meet the needs and comprehension of the people? that its teachings shall be the boundary of human researches and the standard of all thought, so that the metaphysics of the few, the emancipated, as you call them, must aim at confirming, strengthening, and interpreting the metaphysics of the people? That is, that the highest faculties of the human mind must remain unused and undeveloped, nay, be nipped in the bud, so that their activity may not thwart the popular metaphysics? And at bottom are not the claims that religion makes just the same? Is it right to have tolerance, nay, gentle forbearance, preached by what is intolerance and cruelty itself? Let me remind you of the heretical tribunals, inquisitions, religious wars and crusades, of Socrates' cup of poison, of Bruno's and Vanini's death in the flames. And is all this to-day something belonging to the past? What can stand more in the way of genuine philosophical effort, honest inquiry after truth, the noblest calling of the noblest of mankind, than this conventional system of metaphysics invested with a monopoly from the State, whose principles are inculcated so earnestly, deeply, and firmly into every head in earliest youth as to make them, unless the mind is of miraculous elasticity, become ineradicable? The result is that the basis of healthy reasoning is once and for all deranged--in other words, its feeble capacity for thinking for itself, and for unbiassed judgment in regard to everything to which it might be applied, is for ever paralysed and ruined.