AN INQUIRY

INTO

THE CONSTITUTION, POWERS, AND PROCESSES

OF

THE HUMAN MIND,

WITH A VIEW TO THE DETERMINATION OF THE

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF RELIGIOUS, MORAL, AND POLITICAL SCIENCE.

BY

THE REV. W. R. PIRIE, D.D.,

PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY IN THE UNIVERSITY AND MARISCHAL COLLEGE OF ABERDEEN, MURTLE LECTURER, ETC.

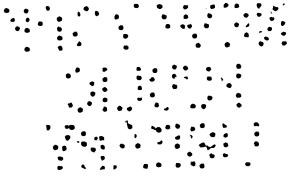
ABERDEEN:
A. BROWN & CO.
EDINBURGH: W. BLACKWOOD & SONS; OLIVER & BOYD.
LONDON: LONGMAN & CO.

1858.

[Right of Translation Reserved.]

Digitized by Google

JOHN AVERY, PRINTER,
7, ST. CATHERINE'S WYND, UNION STREET,
ABERDEEN.



Digitized by Google

DEDICATION

TO THE PRINCIPAL AND THE PROFESSORS OF THE MARISCHAL COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN.

GENTLEMEN,

Under the recent Act of Parliament anent the Universities of Scotland, the Marischal College and University will probably, at a very early date, be merged in the University of Aberdeen.

Permit me, then, while we yet all continue Colleagues, and the character of our venerable institution remains unaltered, to avail myself of the opportunity which the publication of this work affords, of warmly and publicly thanking you for the courtesy and consideration with which, during many years, you have honoured me, as well as for the gratification, and I trust instruction, which I

Digitized by Google

have derived from your society, and of assuring you of the continued respect and regard with which I ever am,

My dear Principal and Gentlemen,

Your faithful Friend and Colleague,

W. R. PIRIE.

MARISCHAL COLLEGE, *8th November*, 1858.

Digitized by Google

PREFACE.

It may be of some service for explaining the nature and scope of the following work, to state the circumstances in which it originated.

When the author was placed in a situation where he found it necessary to ascertain the origin of human opinions, he was perpetually forced back in his investigation, on a determination of the constitution and processes of the human mind. It was with regret and disappointment, therefore, that he could find nothing in the science of mental philosophy so precisely and satisfactorily developed as to enable him to realise his object. Under such circumstances, it became necessary at each step of his progress to attempt the analysis of mental processes for himself, and that in such a way as might present the argument in a readily intelligible form to his students, and at the same

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.—INTRODUCTORY.

Page.

Importance of the subject—Evils resulting from our ignorance of the principles of spiritual philosophy—Tendency to investigate the origin of our beliefs and impulses, magnifies those evils—Exemplification of those evils in religion, morals, politics, &c.—Improbability of the ignorance leading to such evils being irremediable—Examination of Mr. Jeffrey's articles in the *Edinburgh Review* on the subject—Examination of the argument on the subject, founded on the small progress which has been made in spiritual, in comparison with that made in physical, philosophy—The same cause which formerly checked the progress of physical, is still checking the progress of intellectual science—In superseding this cause, we have therefore every reason to expect success in the farther prosecution of the subject—Necessity of appreciating the past history of the science as introductory to our proposed investigation. . . 1

CHAPTER II.—SKETCH OF THE PROGRESS OF SPIRITUAL PHILOSOPHY.

SECTION I.—PROGRESS OF SPIRITUAL PHILOSOPHY FROM THE EARLIEST AGES, TO THE TIME OF BACON AND DES CARTES.

Tendency of the human mind when it begins to philosophise—Reference of all knowledge to itself—Illustrated by the Greek philosophy—Growth of materialism, and sketch of the theory of Epicurus—Absurdity of the system—Rise and progress of scepticism among the Greeks—Philosophy of the Romans—Mode in which the systems of Greek and Roman philosophy became modified by the introduction of Christianity, and sketch of the progress of philosophy during the middle ages—State of the philosophical world when Bacon (Lord Verulam) appeared—Sketch of the nature of his philosophy—Effect of it on spiritual science—Origin of sensationalism—Appearance of Des Cartes—Sketch of the nature of his philosophy—Its effect on spiritual science. 30

SECTION II.—PROGRESS OF SPIRITUAL PHILOSOPHY FROM THE AGE OF BACON AND DES CARTES TO THE TIME OF REID, WITH CONTINUATION OF SCOTTISH SCHOOL IN SCOTLAND.

Tendency of Baconian and Cartesian systems—Philosophy of Hobbes—Spinoza—Mallebranche—Locke, his fundamental principle and its

Digitized by Google

Page.

importance—His deficiencies and the tendency of his system—Hartley—Directed attention first to the association of ideas—Lockian school in France—Condillac—Nature of his system, and his misconception of Locke's principle—Gave rise to the school of gross materialism in France, as exhibited in Helvetius, St. Lambert, Condorcet, and the Encyclopædists—Leibnitz—His theory—Berkeley—His theory, and arguments on which it was founded—Hume—His argument and object—His merits—Reid—Cause of his success—Misconception of Hume's object—Identity of his principles with those of Hume—Principle of his philosophy—His reply to Hume's sceptical argument as to the relation of cause and effect—Stewart merely an illustrator of Reid—Brown—Circumstances under which he wrote, and result—His defects—His great merit—Sir William Hamilton—His views—Attack on Brown and its failure—His merits and defects—Conclusion. 70

SECTION III.—PROGRESS OF SPIRITUAL PHILOSOPHY ON THE CONTINENT, FROM THE TIME OF REID TO THE PRESENT AGE.

Philosophy of France—Changes from materialistic to Scottish school—This change followed by a species of eclecticism—German philosophy—Wolff—Kant—Origin of his philosophy—Its general character—Causes of its influence—Causes of the difficulty of comprehending it—The character given of it, confirmed by the authority of its disciples, &c.—Detailed examination of its parts—This leads to the same conclusions as to the causes of its influence, and of the difficulty of understanding it, as is indicated by its general character—Its effects—Disciples of Kant divide into two sections, Realists, and Idealists—Jacobi and his followers—Reinold, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel—Subsequent state of philosophy in Germany. . 116

SECTION IV.—STATE OF SPIRITUAL PHILOSOPHY DURING THE PRESENT AGE, AND ITS RELATION TO GENERAL LITERATURE, AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF SOCIETY.

French philosophy—Its materialistic character about the beginning of the century—French philosophers adopt the Scottish system—French Eclectical philosophy—Cousin—Re-introduction of materialism—Comte—His misconceptions and inconsistency—British philosophy—Mr. James Milne—Sir William Hamilton—Mr. Ferrier—Nature of his system—Its principles—Its value as a system of scepticism—As a system of absolute philosophy—Principle prominently put forth by him—The amount already accomplished in intellectual science—Analogy betwixt its present state and that of physical science anterior to the time of Bacon more fully developed—True and only practical object of intellectual philosophy, and how to be practically realised—State of the science thus viewed at the

Digitized by Google

Page.

present time, with a brief summary of modern systems—Cause of the comparative success of German philosophy, and the effect thereof on society—Impossibility of preventing or even retarding speculation on spiritual processes, and the principles of those varied sciences depending thereon—Disastrous effects which must therefore result from neglecting the study of the human mind—Only mode in which real success can possibly be attained. . . 182

CHAPTER III.—MODE OF INVESTIGATING THE NATURE AND PHENOMENA OF THE HUMAN MIND.

Remarks on the theory, that the human mind can only be known by observation, and in no measure by experiment—Misconception involved in this theory—Nature forces men to speculate on spiritual subjects, and this through all classes—Advantages of the study when properly prosecuted—General mistakes on the subject—Use to be derived from objections to the study—Necessity of precision and clearness—How these are to be attained—Primary assumption—How followed forth—Must begin the study from the simplest forms of thought—Impossibility of *a priori* classification under such a mode of prosecuting the subject—Necessity of avoiding preconceived theories—Mischievous results of these exemplified—Circumstances which at present favour the prosecution of the science according to this mode—Order of details. 227

CHAPTER IV.—NATURE OF THE HUMAN MIND.

Law of parsimony and its relation to the present subject—Dogma of those who maintain that existences of essentially different kinds cannot generate, nor act on, nor combine with, each other. This dogma rests on no sufficient foundation, and is contrary to experience—Absurdity and pernicious results of idealism—Position of Hume with respect to this matter—Cause of the horror with which Theists usually regard materialism—Only possible theory of materialism perfectly harmless—Distinction betwixt this theory and the more gross theory of materialism—Tendency of Theists, in opposing materialism, to annihilate the essence of mind altogether—Absurdity and impossibility of the ordinary and gross theory of materialism—Only philosophical opinion possible with respect to the nature of mind—Yet it is of no practical importance whether we proceed in analysing the processes of the mind under this or the only possible materialistic theory—Identification of mind and matter so as to constitute a complex whole—This a certain fact, though we cannot explain its rationale—Necessity of exposing specially, in mental science, dogmas resting on insufficient authority—Points relating to this subject which can only be determined, in so far as they are determinable, at a subsequent stage of our inquiries. . 247

Digitized by Google

Page.

CHAPTER V.—ON CONSCIOUSNESS.

We became acquainted with the human mind and its cognitions through consciousness—Different uses of the word—Consciousness is merely a mental capacity—Error of Dr. Reid's theory on the subject—Errors of Dr. Brown's theory—How the contradictions into which philosophers have fallen upon the subject can alone be explained and reconciled—Feeling of some kind essential to consciousness—This subject illustrated—Must beware of supposing such feeling and consciousness the same thing—Illustrated by Dr. Brown's errors—How far feeling in each case constitutes the subject of our consciousness, and singular result elicited by this inquiry—Summary of conclusions. 267

CHAPTER VI.—ON OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE HUMAN MIND AS A SEPARATE EXISTENCE, AND THE PHENOMENA EXPLAINED THEREBY.

We must know that the subject of our consciousness exists—Reid's theory refuted—An intuitive belief in our existence, apart from consciousness, a contradiction—Knowledge of properties apart from any knowledge of the existence of the subject in which they inhere, impossible—Real nature of consciousness—We are conscious of the existence of our minds at all times while awake, even though not objectively conscious—Universal belief upon the subject—We do not know the substance of mental essence, but only are conscious of its existence—This doctrine explains the nature of the will—Explains also the grounds of our belief in our personal identity—Locke's theory—Reid's—Brown's—Their respective misconceptions pointed out, and the impossibility of our accounting for our belief in personal identity under their theories proved—Sir W. Hamilton's note illustrating Reid's theory—Cause of the confusion and difficulties of philosophers on this subject—Universal belief of our consciousness of our own minds—The foundation of the universal belief in personal identity—Any other theory must end in scepticism—Origin of the extravagant form of scepticism implied in the Kantian philosophy—Our consciousness of existence implies a knowledge of non-existence—This doctrine crushes the extremes of Idealism and Materialism—Conclusion. 284

CHAPTER VII.—ON SENSATION.

Connection of body and mind most intimate—Amount of bodily action known by the mind—Nature of human physical instincts—Distinction betwixt them, and what are called instincts in animals—Sensations originating in causes external to our organic being—Mode in which we become acquainted with them—Delusion of Reid and his disciples upon this subject—Singular results of this

Digitized by Google

Page.

delusion—Modification of their theory by Sir W. Hamilton—Confusion betwixt relative knowledge and knowledge of existences related to our minds and organic being—Error as to the nature of qualities—Distinction betwixt primary and secondary qualities considered—Knowledge of substance explained—How much as to external existence we know from consciousness, and how much from experience—Nature of general ideas of sensation explained—Errors of Reid and his disciples—Knowledge of space and time acquired in sensation—Error of Kant—Importance of these views—Relation of dreaming, delirium, and insanity, to sensation. . . 329

CHAPTER VIII.—ON MEMORY.

Connection of the faculties and feelings of the human mind—Nature of memory as contra-distinguished from other states—Memory, a distinct faculty—Error of Dr. Brown thereanent—Theory of Dr. Reid as to memory examined—Mode in which we ascertain our notions of time, duration, personal identity—Of space and motion—How we come to recollect more easily, and retain the recollection more permanently, of some thoughts and events than of others—Mode in which we come to remember symbols—Artificial memory explained—How we come to recollect mere sounds, or other arbitrary and meaningless sensations—Explanation of certain singular and extraordinary phenomena of memory—Phenomena of memory in dreaming, day-dreaming, fever, delirium, and insanity—General remarks on memory—Conclusion. 429

CHAPTER IX.—ON ASSOCIATION OF IDEAS.

Our thoughts succeed each other in a regulated order—Theory of Hartley with respect to the cause of this—Of Leibnits—Views of later philosophers—Their misconception—Real nature of the process—Farther elucidation of the error of Hume and his successors—Illustration of the process—Effect of habit on the process—Action of mind in it—The process as exemplified in delirium and sleep—Its relation to abstraction and day-dreaming—Nature of our belief in dreams—Manifestation of the process in insanity—How the process operates with respect to symbolical forms—Summary of the argument. 471

CHAPTER X.—ON HABIT.

Philosophy of habit naturally follows that of association—Reid's definition of habit, and its deficiency—Nature of habit developed—Power of habit on the physical organisation—Relation of association to the process—Influence of habit on memory—Artificial memory depends mainly on habit—Power of habit in intensifying

Digitized by Google

Page.

the feelings and primary desires, and in originating secondary desires—Power of habit in constituting belief—Relation of habit to the belief which originates in feeling and authority or testimony —Growth of habit explained by principles of association—The power of habit a result of our mental constitution—Importance of attending to the influence of habit in the analysis of mental states. 516

CHAPTER XI.—ON REASON.

Difference betwixt consciousness and reason—Difficulties as to the nature and operations of reason in some measure attributable to the use of symbols—Means of superseding these—Growth of our knowledge in relation to this subject—Nature of general ideas, and meaning of words that express them, as illustrative of the nature of reason—Realists, Nominalists, Conceptualists—Analysis of the phenomenon—Explanation of the nature of mathematical axioms, and of the physical and moral axiom, "Every change "must have a cause," as illustrative of the nature of reason— Distinction of consciousness and reason more accurately drawn— Knowledge acquired by reason is the knowledge of relations under which we identify and discriminate existences according to their qualities or powers—Our belief in the proposition, "The same "thing under the same circumstances will always produce the "same result," explained—Our belief in the permanence of the universe explained—Extent of our belief in symbols as expressive of the objects they represent, explained. 539

CHAPTER XII.—ON REASONING.

Reason, in its application to ulterior processes—Kinds of reasoning. DEMONSTRATIVE REASONING—Its nature—Its bases—Misconception of Stewart on the subject. PROBABLE REASONING—Difference betwixt demonstrative and probable reasoning in regard to the certainty of their conclusions — Analysis of probable reasoning— Object of logic as therefrom deduced—Nature and use of syllogisms—Their inefficiency even for the only purpose to which they can be in any measure applied — Importance of understanding the true object of reasoning, and the nature of the rational faculty —Summary of the argument — Mode in which, under the view given, we appreciate the nature of extended substance—Determination of the principles which distinguish intelligent man from the lower animals, idiots, dotards, and madmen—Proof that the lower animals, &c., are not deprived of that faculty usually called reason. 591

Digitized by Google

Page.

CHAPTER XIII.—ON THE INFINITE—THE ETERNAL, AND THE ABSOLUTE.

Importance of those subjects—Causes which have specially led philosophers to attempt their expiscation by *a priori* speculations—They cannot be so expiscated—Origin of confusion betwixt *a priori* speculation and experimental knowledge—Application of the distinction to the Infinite, the Eternal, and the Absolute—Analysis of the Infinite—Of the Eternal—Of the Absolute—Amount of our knowledge of the Absolute—Conclusion. . . 613

CHAPTER XIV.—ON IMAGINATION—HUMOUR—WIT.

Usual sense of the word Imagination—More restricted sense—In this latter sense, imagination merely a form of reason—Humour analysed and reduced to the same category—Cause of laughter—Wit, an exhibition of incongruity limited to one particular—Puns are merely exhibitions of incongruity in expression and words. . 630

CHAPTER XV.—CONCLUSION.

Analysis must, in so far, be imperfect—Cause of this—Main object of the work—What it professes to have attempted—How far there is reason for hoping the particulars spoken of to have been realised—In so far a foundation laid on which the super-structure of religious, moral, and political science may be reared—Philosophy of the feelings and desires necessary to complete such foundation. . . 635

ERRATA.

Page.		
55	... ...	*Timgus* for *Timœus.*
206	... ...	*But* for *yet.*
303	... ...	*Incomparable* for *incompatible.*
334	... ...	*Intuition* for *volition*, (twice).
382	.. ..	*Offered* for *opposed.*

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY.

Importance of the subject—Evils resulting from our ignorance of the principles of spiritual philosophy—Tendency to investigate the origin of our beliefs and impulses, magnifies those evils—Exemplification of those evils in religion, morals, politics, &c.—Improbability of the ignorance leading to such evils being irremediable—Examination of Mr. Jeffrey's articles in the *Edinburgh Review* on the subject—Examination of the argument on the subject, founded on the small progress which has been made in spiritual, in comparison with that made in physical, philosophy—The same cause which formerly checked the progress of physical, is still checking the progress of intellectual, science—In superseding this cause, we have therefore every reason to expect success in the farther promotion of the subject—Necessity of appreciating the past history of the science as introductory to our proposed investigation.

It can scarcely be disputed, that a knowledge of the nature of our own minds, of their capacities and powers, of their states and processes, is, of all knowledge, the most desirable. It is indeed manifest, that by such knowledge alone can human beings be enabled to ascertain with accuracy their real motives, to determine with accuracy the legitimate objects of their desires, or to discover with accuracy the fundamental principles of religious, moral, and political truth. Accordingly it is certain, as matter of fact, that just in proportion to the precision that by a reflex operation we appreciate the nature of our minds are those objects respectively realised.

Digitized by Google

Every man knows something of his own mind and its processes, and in so far he knows something of the various particulars of which we have spoken; but for the most part such knowledge is imperfect, and consequently our ideas, as to our own motives, as to what ought to be the objects of our desires, and as to what are the principles of higher spiritual truth, as well as with reference to a vast number of particulars of a cognate character, must not only be vague and uncertain in most cases, but in many instances must even be destructive of our highest interests.

Nor, indeed, is this to be wondered at, when we consider how little in more recent times, at all events, has even been attempted towards a scientific developement of this subject—although, assuredly, there never was a period of the world's history, during which its essential importance seems more singularly enhanced by the position which physical philosophy has begun to assume. For a knowledge of physical philosophy is, now-a-days, no longer confined to men of science, but is more or less disseminated, through the diffusion of education, among all classes of society. Hence, enquiry becomes of necessity stimulated in every direction, since the mind, once energised into intelligent action by whatever instrumentality, will inevitably very soon push on to the investigation of principles, taking, of course, in each case, the course which is most accordant with indvidual tendencies. In this way, the mass

Digitized by Google

of men in modern times have been led to seek explanations of phenomena, more profound and essential than even the highest physical science could by possibility afford—and, finding none, or at all events none precise and satisfactory, we need not wonder that, in attempting under such circumstances to expiscate the nature and operation of such principles for themselves, a large proportion should have become bewildered amidst vague, mystical, and too often pernicious speculation.

But though this diffusion of education, and the stimulus thus given to thought, has, without doubt, been a main cause of that almost universal tendency to *incidental* metaphysics in recent times, and hence of that anxious and unsettled state of feeling with regard to subjects of the highest importance, which is now manifestly existing, and not only existing but extending throughout human society, yet it is not to be supposed, as we formerly indicated, that it was with modern physics, or indeed with physical philosophy in any age, that metaphysics, or, in other words, the philosophy of spiritual phenomena originated; on the contrary, spiritual phenomena have not only engaged the attention of the most powerful intellects in all ages, but in all ages those very portions of them which, from circumstances, we now find to have acquired a greatly enhanced importance, must, to a certain limited extent at all events, have forced themselves on the attention of every human being, and must,

Digitized by Google

Every man knows something of his own mind and its processes, and in so far he knows something of the various particulars of which we have spoken; but for the most part such knowledge is imperfect, and consequently our ideas, as to our own motives, as to what ought to be the objects of our desires, and as to what are the principles of higher spiritual truth, as well as with reference to a vast number of particulars of a cognate character, must not only be vague and uncertain in most cases, but in many instances must even be destructive of our highest interests.

Nor, indeed, is this to be wondered at, when we consider how little in more recent times, at all events, has even been attempted towards a scientific developement of this subject—although, assuredly, there never was a period of the world's history, during which its essential importance seems more singularly enhanced by the position which physical philosophy has begun to assume. For a knowledge of physical philosophy is, now-a-days, no longer confined to men of science, but is more or less disseminated, through the diffusion of education, among all classes of society. Hence, enquiry becomes of necessity stimulated in every direction, since the mind, once energised into intelligent action by whatever instrumentality, will inevitably very soon push on to the investigation of principles, taking, of course, in each case, the course which is most accordant with indvidual tendencies. In this way, the mass

Digitized by Google

of men in modern times have been led to seek explanations of phenomena, more profound and essential than even the highest physical science could by possibility afford—and, finding none, or at all events none precise and satisfactory, we need not wonder that, in attempting under such circumstances to expiscate the nature and operation of such principles for themselves, a large proportion should have become bewildered amidst vague, mystical, and too often pernicious speculation.

But though this diffusion of education, and the stimulus thus given to thought, has, without doubt, been a main cause of that almost universal tendency to *incidental* metaphysics in recent times, and hence of that anxious and unsettled state of feeling with regard to subjects of the highest importance, which is now manifestly existing, and not only existing but extending throughout human society, yet it is not to be supposed, as we formerly indicated, that it was with modern physics, or indeed with physical philosophy in any age, that metaphysics, or, in other words, the philosophy of spiritual phenomena originated; on the contrary, spiritual phenomena have not only engaged the attention of the most powerful intellects in all ages, but in all ages those very portions of them which, from circumstances, we now find to have acquired a greatly enhanced importance, must, to a certain limited extent at all events, have forced themselves on the attention of every human being, and must,

Digitized by Google

in so far, even have received a determination from every human being, in as far as such determination is, by the very constitution of our natures, essential for the practical business of life; in other words, it is clear that all human beings must, more or less, be intellectual philosophers, since all human beings must have some ground or another for their belief, and some principle or another for the regulation of their conduct, however little they may have reflected on the operations under which these have been acquired, or by however unconscious a process, comparatively speaking, such ground or principle may have come to influence them; for, though a man's beliefs may have been adopted purely under authority, and his acts been regulated entirely by impulse, yet he must have satisfied himself, even in that case, by however unconcious a process, that authority is a sufficient ground of belief, and the impulse of momentary feeling a warrantable principle of action. This is his philosophy, and though no doubt it may be a very bad, and a very false philosophy, yet it is not the less his upon that account, nor does it the less regulate his practical belief and conduct. The consequences of an unsound intellectual philosophy, however, are by no means the most mischievous at this, which must imply the lowest stage of mental developement—on the contrary, at every step under which our faculties become more expanded, must the results of a false philosophy become more practically disastrous, not

Digitized by Google

merely because we become more responsible for them, but because the errors in which they originate necessarily imply a greater or less degree of culpable negligence or wilful prejudice, which, by a natural operation under the influence of habit, must ultimately lead to an absolute perversion of the very constitution of the thinking principle itself. In either case, however, the evil is obviously serious, even in its most limited form, since, in so far, it must affect every action, and modify every relation of life. Ignorance of physical truth is therefore, comparatively, a very trifling matter. Such ignorance may indeed, more or less, affect our worldly interests or our physical health, but the results can only be temporary and incidental; whereas, a knowledge of spiritual truth, implying an appreciation of the principles under which we ought to regulate our lives, with a view to our happiness both in time and eternity, is essential at every moment, since every act which we do, every word which we speak, every thought which we think, every feeling which we encourage, must be either right or wrong, wise or foolish, determining through habit the condition of our minds for good or evil—and consequently, of course, must take their places respectively in either the one or the other of these categories, in proportion to the extent and measure that we know such spiritual truth, and are disposed practically to realise it.

Yet that mental philosophy, or, in other words,

Digitized by Google

the science of spiritual nature, however intensely interesting and eminently important, is, as we have said, in a state deplorably unsatisfactory, can hardly admit of question, inasmuch as, though we have an infinity of opinions, we hardly know, in any case, the precise processes through which we attained them, or the precise principles on which they depend. The very proof even for the being of a God, however certain our belief may be as matter of fact, is yet logically liable to serious difficulties, and these difficulties, as might be supposed, are still further enhanced with respect to the nature and evidence for the Divine attributes. The precise nature of the attributes, for example, of goodness, justice, holiness, and truth, is dubious and disputed, as evidently appears in the variety of religious differences which prevail; nor could it possibly be otherwise, seeing these are simple qualities, which therefore cannot be strictly defined, and which consequently, unless felt as qualities of our own minds, and thus determined by a reference to their effects as exhibited in our mental operations, it is evident never can be known at all, inasmuch as our own minds being the only spirits with which we are directly and immediately acquainted, it follows that there is no other possible source whence our knowledge of simple spiritual states could be derived. Thus, religion to the greater part of the human race becomes, in the first instance, at all events, very much an arbitrary sys-

Digitized by Google

tem. Ignorant of the precise nature of God, in so far even as by a proper exercise of our faculties, we may be competent to discover it, they can only have, of course, but a very imperfect idea of that which can alone constitute his worship, or be available for his service. Under such circumstances, it farther necessarily follows that, just in proportion to our ignorance of the precise nature of the Divine attributes, must we be the less capable of determining the philosophy of religious doctrine. In other words, in such proportion must we be the less capable of ascertaining the mutual relations of doctrines, their bearing upon the human mind, and the mode under which they tend to connect us with God. Accordingly, we find that, as matter of fact, our conception of doctrines is, in the majority of cases, as we have indicated, mainly an assumption of arbitrary dogmas. We are told, for example, arbitrarily, the doctrine of Christ's expiation, and arbitrarily we are called upon to believe it; but why it should have been revealed, and how it is connected with the state and operations of the human mind, and by what process it links us more closely with the Supreme Being, are points, in so far as I know, very imperfectly explained, and are points indeed which cannot be definitely explained, except through a more precise knowledge of spiritual truth than has hitherto been attained. Indeed, I am not aware of any work on spiritual philosophy or theological science, determining the

Digitized by Google

principles on which this most wonderful of spiritual phenomena can be precisely explained at all. The same remarks apply to almost all the doctrines of revealed religion, so that we are thus compelled, in respect to these, either to admit the defects of spiritual philosophy, or else to recognise the vulgar and almost impious assumption, that the more unintelligible our belief in the doctrines of revealed religion, the more meritorious our unreasoning obedience; for not only are they left unexplained by our systems of spiritual philosophy, but those systems of a more modern date, at all events, seem in many respects directly inconsistent with them, so as to generate an assurance that they cannot both be true. We need not wonder, therefore, that professed religion produces so little effect, or that infidelity and scepticism are so prevalent in an avowed, and still more, in a tacit, but not less practical form, seeing that the philosophy of spirit appertaining to each age must necessarily modify its whole literature, since all literature is a production of mind—and, consequently, in an age like the present, when literature of some kind or another is universally diffused, must pervade with its tendencies all society, and in so far regulate both the opinions and conduct of the human race. Nor are the miserable deficiencies of spiritual philosophy less distinctly marked with respect to political and social science, than they thus indisputably are with respect to religion. We have heard, and still hear much,

Digitized by Google

for example, of the rights of man, and volumes on volumes have been published for the purpose of maintaining and enforcing them. But who ever precisely defined them? or explained in what they consist? or on what principles our claim to them respectively rests? or how our claims are to be practically regulated? During the last century, the French revolutionists determined the rights of man to be whatever the majority chose to do. In the Southern States of the American Union the rights of white men and the rights of black men are considered as the direct antipodes of each other. Nor is the inconsistency so palpably extravagant as at first sight might be imagined, since the conclusions on each side are perfectly sound, as derived from opposite assumptions. It is, however, obviously impossible that they can both be true; but which of them it is that is false, it seems very difficult to ascertain, or at all events, no one has hitherto succeeded in logically ascertaining it, simply because the authority of the spiritual principles in each case assumed, has never been satisfactorily expiscated. Hence, every one, everywhere, seems just to maintain his rights to be what he would wish them to be, so that no form of government can thus be logically established on fixed and ascertained foundations; nor can it, under such circumstances, be possible to determine in how far, in any case, human beings are possessed of their rights, or in how far they are deprived of them. Why, then,

Digitized by Google

should we say that the subjects of a despot are deprived of their rights, however tyrannically he may exercise them? Who can distinctly tell what those rights are? or what may be the limits by which the exercise of that power, which circumstances have conferred on one man over another, is to be bounded? Nor are the principles of morality, as a mere logical matter, if we are candidly to admit the truth, much more definitely determined. So far otherwise, indeed, that we find the assumed principles of morality different in almost every different writer, so that one is a sort of bewildered in attempting to discover what it really is which constitutes the obligation admitted to be inherent in moral law. We have already seen, indeed, how uncertain seem to be the principles on which the rights of man have been rested. It is impossible, therefore, that there can be any perfectly precise assurance, strictly speaking, of the iniquity implied in their violation. Yet, if we cannot ascertain the limits by which the exercise of our power over our fellow-creatures is to be determined, it is evident that, logically, there must be an end of moral obligation altogether. But, even specially, and on points usually deemed the most precise and indisputable, the very same uncertainty exists as to our logical conclusions. We are told, for example, that moral truth is absolute and immutable, and that such is the case specially with the morality of Scripture. But if moral truth be immutable, how

Digitized by Google

came incest to have not only been permitted, but commanded among the children of Adam, and their immediate offspring? How should Polygamy and Concubinage have been permitted under the Jewish, while they are strictly forbidden under the Christian, dispensation? Any number of similarly perplexing questions might be suggested under any theory of moral obligation which has ever been proposed, shewing how little spiritual principles are accurately understood, even with respect to the most interesting and practical subjects. Hence, no doubt, the excuses with which, it is to be feared that, men but too frequently palliate their irregularities, and hence those systems of absolutely immoral dogmas with which, while professedly developing what they call religious principles, various sectaries, and specially the Jesuits among the followers of the Church of Rome, have dared to insult the world. But, further, how little are the rules of evidence, and the principles of rational deduction, understood and appreciated? What is reason? How comes it to be so often deceived? What is the difference in point of certainty betwixt demonstration and logical proof? Is our belief in human testimony intuitive, or the result of experience? How many doubts and difficulties again perplex us with reference to these and many other particulars of a similar character? With regard to minor matters, such as the principles of beauty and sublimity, much as they have been discussed, we in truth hardly know anything whatever

Digitized by Google

precisely. It is even disputed whether there be such phenomena as absolute beauty and sublimity at all. By some our sense of beauty and sublimity is attributed entirely to association. The evil, however, extends much wider, and reaches much deeper, than even all this would lead us to suppose. The very facts of our most ordinary beliefs are disputed, and a philosophy of absolute scepticism has recently over-run one of the neighbouring and most profoundly learned nations of the world, and is rapidly gaining ground even in our own. All sort of belief is negatived, all sort of existence disowned, and the phenomena of the universe reduced to a play of relations which supersedes even time, and annihilates space. Nor does it seem easy, in our present state of knowledge, to meet all this. As mere matter of reasoning on principles it seems nearly as probable as anything else. No doubt such speculations can never be practically believed, and are, indeed, practically, ridiculous. But, in the meantime, they are no less surely sapping our respect for truth, shaking our mutual confidence, degrading the condition of human life, as if it were a delusive mockery, and thus opening a way for all that is base, selfish, and unprincipled in human conduct. Better, therefore, had we almost any form of dogmatic belief, than this present prevalence of ill-digested, ill-understood, metaphysical scepticism, for it harmonises with the most pernicious, and yet the most powerful tendencies of our corrupted natures.

Digitized by Google

It may, however, still be, that matters are destined to remain thus. It may be, that those subjects of such unspeakable importance to our peace and prospects are, in so far as we are concerned, to continue for ever in a state of uncertainty and confusion. It may be, that we are to be for ever bound to a species of arbitrary faith, resting on just enough of proof to tantalise and torment us, but that we can never attain such a rational and scientific assurance of anything, as can suffice legitimately to satisfy an educated mind. It may be so, but we cannot believe it. Such a notion seems not only repugnant to our intelligent feelings, but inconsistent with the order and tendencies of natural laws. Wherever nature has constituted a relative, we must suppose, as will afterwards be more particularly explained, that she has constituted a co-relative also, and therefore, to assume the existence of primary and essential desires, of which the gratification is impossible in the nature of things, seems hardly to admit of being regarded otherwise, than as a libel on nature and on nature's God. Yet the argument on which this singular conclusion rests most certainly merits an anxious examination, from the unspeakable importance of the result which it would determine—and the more, that it has been proposed by a writer deservedly of the highest character, not merely for vigor of style and elegance of expression, but for the far higher qualities of logical acuteness and ingenious originality. It is found in the *Edin-*

Digitized by Google

burgh Review,[a] in an article on "Stewart's Life of Reid," which is now acknowledged to have been the production of its Editor. This article maintains that "metaphysical speculation (meaning thereby "spiritual philosophy) is of little or no importance "either for the increase of our power,"[b] or "the ex- "tension of our knowledge,"[c] and it concludes in these words—"after all, perhaps, the chief value of such "speculations will be found to consist in the exercise "which they afford to the faculties, and the delight "which is produced by the consciousness of intellec- "tual exertion."[d] Of the soundness of the reasoning which led him to this startling conclusion, Mr. Jeffrey appears to have retained an unceasing conviction, as we find him many years afterwards[e] adverting to this article with satisfaction, in respect to the effect which he imagined that it had produced, of giving a death-blow to all attempts at the re-construction, or rather at the farther prosecution, of the science.[e] He seems to have supposed that speculations as to the principles of spiritual truth were at an end. And true it is, that the article spoken of, in connection with some others of a similar character, confirming that dislike to the subject which strangely enough prevails among the countrymen of Locke, has, there is little doubt, tended, for many years, to prevent almost anything like an attempt at original speculation with respect

[a] No. 6. [b] p. 274. [c] p. 275. [d] p. 277.
[e] Cockburns' Life of Lord Jeffrey.

Digitized by Google

to the philosophy of the human mind, in so far as the literature of Britain is concerned; but the result has necessarily been an influx of foreign speculations into this country, not only seriously affecting religion, but modifying, even in some measure, all the current literature of the age, by the introduction of the very same sceptical extravagancies by which, more than a century ago, our forefathers were bewildered; for we shall subsequently endeavour to shew, and we do not think it will admit of dispute, that the philosophy which we are now, with so much pretension, in one form or another, importing from Germany, is merely a republication of the very same theories formerly so well known in this country as the philosophy of Berkely and Hume. Such has been the necessary result of repudiating all intellectual philosophy, together with that of Reid, instead of attempting to amend it. For the truth is, that we *cannot* bid away from us philosophical speculation. There is a natural impulse perpetually in operation, urging us to discover the principles of our opinions, and if we cannot discover those that are true, we will inevitably delude ourselves into the belief of those that are false. Such is the case, and ever has been the case, and ever will be the case with human beings to the end of time. Hence do men continually assume prejudices for principles, as being ignorant of the nature of that spiritual truth which can alone, by possibility, enable us precisely to discriminate the one from the

Digitized by Google

other. Yet, still it may be maintained that, however impossible it may be to avoid speculating on the principles of spiritual truth, such speculations are altogether in vain. No one can acquire, it may be said, the slightest knowledge of these principles beyond the demi-intuitive knowledge possessed by all; so that we have merely in this an additional proof of the inconsistencies and imperfection of the human mind, and a new and still more irresistible argument in favour of scepticism.

Now, to this we reply in the first instance, that, as matter of fact, it is not true. Accordingly, when Mr. Jeffrey says, "that all men must be practically familiar with all the functions and qualities of their minds, and with almost all the laws by which they appear to be governed,"[a] he must mean that the nature of evidence and the principles of reasoning were as well known to any mechanic, who was his client, as to himself, and that the state of his own mind, and the notions by which he is influenced, are as well known to the uneducated ruffian as to the most accurate thinker, and the most sedulous enquirer in to his own mental states and operations; for, unless he mean this, his argument is nothing to the purpose, since no one disputes that all the principles of the mind exist in the mind—it is only maintained that they are so complicated, and, from various causes, so latent in their operation there, as to be undiscoverable except by those who use scientific

[a] No. 6, p. 276.

Digitized by Google

means for their elucidation. But if he does mean this, then we say, as was stated, that it is not true, in point of fact, as demonstrated by continual experience. Nothing, indeed, can be conceived more different than the degrees of knowledge appertaining to different individuals with respect to the origin of human beliefs, the nature of the human faculties, and the motives which regulate human conduct. It is hardly conceivable how considerations so obvious should have failed to present themselves to a mind so acute and intelligent.

The very same conclusion results from an investigation of the argument by which Mr. Jeffrey attempts to defend his singular position, which, however ingenious, will, we think, be found altogether untenable as a matter of reasoning. It is as follows:—"Inductive philosophy, or that which "proceeds upon the careful observation of facts, may "be applied to two different classes of phenomena. "The first are those that can be made the sub- "ject of proper experiment when the substances "are actually in our power, and the judgment and "artifice of the enquirer can be effectually employed "to arrange and combine them in such a way as to "disclose their most hidden properties and relations. "The other class of phenomena are those that occur "in substances that are placed altogether beyond "our reach, the order and succession of which we "are generally unable to control, and as to which we "can do little more than collect and record the laws

Digitized by Google

"by which they appear to be governed. These "substances are not the subject of *experiment*, but of "*observation*; and the knowledge we may obtain, by "carefully watching their variations, is of a kind that "does not directly increase the power which we might "otherwise have had over them."[a] How Mr. Jeffrey could imagine that experiment "discloses the *most* "*hidden* properties and relations of substances" it is exceedingly difficult to conceive, since the "most "hidden properties and relations of substances" are absolutely unknown, and even many properties and relations of a much less recondite kind are, we have reason to believe, as yet undiscovered by us. Nor does it seem less extraordinary that he should have excluded from classes of phenomena those which, as in the action of steam, are discoverable solely by what he calls observation, and which are yet perfectly "with- "in our reach" and "under our control," and the knowledge of which greatly tends to the increase of our power, as is strikingly proved with reference to the very case alluded to, if it be true, as it assuredly may be true, that Watt took his idea of the steam-engine from the motion of the cover of a kettle of boiling water. But it is not worth while to dwell on these minor misconceptions, though they seem to shew that the author had hurriedly, and without due thought, been giving expression merely to an ingenious conjecture in the most plausible form that at the moment suggested itself;

[a] No. 6, p. 273.

Digitized by Google

and, therefore, waving all such considerations, we proceed with the extracts necessary for fully appreciating his main argument. He subsequently proceeds, then, in the following terms:—"But though "our power can in no case be distinctly increased by "the most vigilant and correct observation, our "knowledge may often be very greatly extended by "it. In the science of mind, however, we are in- "clined to suspect that this is not the case. From "the very nature of the subject it seems necessarily "to follow, that all men must be practically familiar "with all the functions and qualities of their minds, "and with almost all the laws by which they appear "to be governed;"[a] and afterwards sums up his conclusion in these words: "for these reasons we cannot "help thinking that the labours of the metaphy- "sician, instead of being assimulated to those of the "chemist or experimental philosopher, might, with "less impropriety, be compared to those of the "grammarian, who arranges into technical order the "words of a language which is spoken familiarly by "all his readers; or of the artist who exhibits to "them a correct map of a district, with every part "of which they were previously acquainted."[b] According to this view, therefore, it would appear that the reviewer conceived grammar and maps neither calculated to "increase the power nor extend the "knowledge" of any one who would contrive coarsely to express his meaning in the language, or might be

[a] No. 6, p. 275. [b] No. 6, p. 276.

Digitized by Google

capable of practically finding his way through the region to which such grammar and maps respectively applied. In other words, it would follow, from the argument, that the native of a country is in no measure benefited by knowing its grammar, nor a person who has travelled over it, by studying the relation of its parts in its scientific geography! We hold, as nearly as possible, the opposite opinion, nor have we the slightest doubt that every one who attends to the nature of the proposition in the form under which we have stated it, will agree with us. Nay, in some respects indeed, there could not have been better analogies than those which Mr. Jeffrey has thus employed for illustrating the importance of spiritual science; for, as we admit that all the natives of a country must have some knowledge of its language—though such knowledge amongst the uneducated be exceedingly imperfect, and altogether insufficient, under any ordinary circumstances, for the development of its powers, or its application to any save the simplest and rudest ideas—so, in the same way we admit that all human beings know something of the human mind, and of its faculties, and of its operations; but we maintain that their knowledge is exceedingly imperfect, and altogether, consequently, insufficient for enabling them, under any ordinary circumstances, to develope its powers, or apply its capabilities to any save the most ordinary purposes of human life. Again, as we admit that an ignorant smuggler may have so

Digitized by Google

accurate a knowledge of any given district, as to be able to find his way through all its varied localities—though such knowledge be exceedingly imperfect, inasmuch as he can know nothing of the country beyond it, nor of its geographical bearings on the other districts of the region in which it exists, nor in respect to the world at large, and is, therefore, altogether insufficient for realising the main purposes of geography, or, indeed, of serving any purpose except that of enabling him to traverse its comparatively narrow bounds—so we admit, as was said already, that all human beings possess some narrow and imperfect knowledge of their own minds; but we maintain that such knowledge, in the case of an uneducated man, is, under any ordinary circumstances, only sufficient for guiding him with respect to the grosser details of every-day life, and consequently utterly insufficient for enabling him to appreciate those more important principles and relations which determine our more recondite feelings, and connect us with our fellow-creatures and our God. But whilst these analogies in so far illustrate the importance of spiritual science, and seem even to prove its necessity for those who desire to elevate themselves in the scale of being, we utterly deny that they extend further in their application; or that, as the reviewer regards them, they can be held as analogies at all, since spiritual philosophy hardly makes any pretence at "arrang-" ing into technical order" any portion of the pheno-

Digitized by Google

mena which she investigates. In fact, these phenomena are exceedingly few in number, and with the exception, perhaps, of the desires which seem to imply some degree of resemblance to one another, are so perfectly dissimilar that they will not admit of any, even the smallest, degree of "arrangement "into technical order." Every attempt at such a thing has entirely failed, and ever must fail. What similitude, indeed, can be conceived betwixt perception and reason? or betwixt memory and desire? The very assumption of it for a moment seems to be absurd, and the slightest consideration of the subject, away from any theory, satisfies us at once that, be the science of spiritual philosophy assimilated to what it may, it cannot be to the sciences of mere "arrangement." The very same conclusion would, there can therefore be no doubt, follow from the other analogy, could we distinctly understand what is meant by "mapping" the mind. But the term seems evidently unsuitable and inapplicable in the way in which it is here employed, for though we might "set down every "thing without omission and without distortion that "we actually know upon the subject," yet this would only be to "set down" certain *effects* that result from the operations of the mind, and the description might not contain one particular appertaining to the mind itself. To map the mind, therefore, in any intelligible sense, would be to name its various powers and feelings, and to discriminate the precise

Digitized by Google

relations which they bear to one another, and to other beings in all their fulness—and this would, we admit, be really spiritual philosophy; but so far are these particulars from being known to everybody that they are very imperfectly known to any body; since were they perfectly known, it is evident that the nature and limits of all spiritual truth so far as knowable—whether religious, moral, political, or incidental—would not only be precisely known, but would be felt as precisely known, and all farther speculation with respect to it would be at an end.

These remarks bring us to the essence of the argument, which is to the effect that spiritual philosophy appertains to the lowest form of the sciences of observation, as discovering nothing which any one either does not know, or has not a perfect opportunity of knowing without trouble—and, consequently, as merely directing our attention more particularly to points of interest which may, perhaps, have been too little appreciated. Now that every one has an opportunity of knowing the facts of this science, in so far as they can be known, is indisputable, even more strictly than they have the same opportunity with respect to physical science, if the proper means be used. It is only denied that every human being *must* know them, or *can* know them without trouble. But the argument and the reply will be more fully and clearly understood by attending to the circum-

Digitized by Google

stances under which it was originally stated—for Professor Stewart, who appears to have been partially puzzled by the play of Jeffrey's analogies, at all events met him irresistibly in his doctrine, that observation, though it may extend our knowledge, cannot increase our power, by appealing to the science of anatomy on which every part of medical science is mainly dependent. To this the reviewer answers—"Now, ingenious and elegant as "this parallel must be admitted to be, we cannot "help regarding it as utterly fallacious, for this sim- "ple reason, that the business of anatomy is to lay "open, with the knife, the secrets of that internal "structure, which would never otherwise be appa- "rent to the keenest eye, while the metaphysical en- "quirer can disclose nothing of which all his pupils "are not previously aware. There is no opaque "skin, in short, on the mind to conceal its interior "mechanism."[a] Now this is distinct and precise, and demands a distinct and categorical answer. Nor do we even object to the gentle and gentlemanly irony with which the paper concludes in these words: "the sciences of the anatomist would "evidently be more akin to those of the metaphy- "sician, if, instead of actually disclosing what was "not previously known, or suspected to exist, he had "only drawn the attention of an incurious genera- "tion to the fact that they had each ten fingers and "ten toes, or that most of them had thirty-two teeth,

[a] *Edinburgh Review*, No. 33, p. 177.

Digitized by Google

"distinguishable into masticators and incisors;"[a] for, if the argument be bad, the ridicule goes for nothing, and if it be good, the ridicule will render its validity the more definite and irresistible. We meet it, therefore, directly, and maintain, as matter of fact, experimentally-known to every human being whoever directed his attention to the subject, that there is "an opaque skin on the mind which con-"ceals its interior mechanism," and that skin is prejudice and passion, and the strong tendency of the mind to mere sensitive observation which, complicated together, form an integument, not merely so opaque but so nearly impenetrable, that only the nicest instrument can dissect it. Moreover, the mass of human beings, by want of habit, lose the use of this instrument altogether, and consequently never can know anything whatever of the state of their own minds, except in so far as some of the particulars which interweave themselves with the integument in which they are wrapped for the most part, may be observable by shreds on its boundaries, though that very interweaving which thus affords us some glimpses of our internal structure and its operations still farther enhance the difficulty of their absolute separation. It is from these causes that so many come to conclusions for which they can assign no definite reason; and hence it is only by realising the operation of these causes, that we can fully appreciate the point of Lord

[a] *Edinburgh Review* No. 33, p. 177.

Digitized by Google

Ellenborough's celebrated and sound advice to a colonial governor, that he should never "give the "reasons of his judgments, since, though his judg- "ments might probably be right, his reasons would "inevitably be wrong."[a] In the same causes also originate the tendency of men to excuse their errors by false and distorted views of facts, and by them farther is explained the extraordinary phenomenon that, while all men believe in many doctrines of religion, policy, morals, &c., few can tell precisely the principles on which their belief is founded.

With respect to the challenge, which the reviewer proposes, of "indicating the departments in which "discoveries are to be made," we imagine that it implies no difficulty. Discoveries are to be made, as we have already said, in religion, morality, politics, and, in one word, on every subject which involves spiritual truth. Some, nay many, have already been made incidentally, and we may surely, on good grounds, suppose that, if *indisputable* principles can be reached, there are many equally, or more important, that may be made still; and this brings us to another form of the objection to the study of spiritual philosophy, under which it is argued that, even supposing the mental states and their operations to be in so far capable of examination by the mind itself as thereby to exhibit to us a certain amount of truth, which, indeed, as a mere matter of practical fact, it seems

[a] Campbell's Lives of the Chief Justices.

Digitized by Google

impossible to dispute,—still, that this can only be effected to so limited an extent, and under such empirical processes, as though it might give one man a certain superiority over another, yet could never enable us to attain any approach to such a scientific development as would materially increase our power, or extend our knowledge. This conclusion is held, at all events, to be partially proved by the very small progress which intellectual has made in comparison with physical science, during the rapid advances of modern civilization, and some notion to this effect, there can be little doubt, prevails widely in the literary world. It is not doubted that something may be done in the way of promoting spiritual science, nor that a considerable amount of incidental knowledge may be acquired upon the subject—and, accordingly, there is hardly a work, however important, or a paper, however trivial, upon any subject into which, under some form, speculations on spiritual philosophy are not directly or indirectly introduced, and its principles, such as they are supposed to be, appealed to ; yet, strange as it may appear, such is the effect of the contempt which many of our literati have attempted to throw on anything like a scientific prosecution of the subject, and such the despair generated by a comparison of its position, and progress with the position, and progress of physical science, that few are willing to risk the loss of time and money in its legitimate cultivation. In truth, how-

Digitized by Google

ever, the argument, from the rapid progress of physical science, is far from warranting any such conclusion as has thus been more or less unconsciously, perhaps, rested upon it. The philosophy of mind must necessarily follow the philosophy of matter, inasmuch as our minds are naturally, in the first place, directed rather to that which is without, than to that which is within, as is manifest in the case of infants and ignorant persons—and it is only as we advance in physical knowledge that the desire to determine our mental processes in its accurate appreciation gradually developes itself—for, in truth, it is mainly in this way that we become aware of the difficulties that our mental processes involve, our perception of such difficulties becoming more and more intense, by how much the more the complication of physical relations, and their dependence upon unknown causes, unfold themselves to us. Hence, in the prosecution of physical philosophy, an empirical knowledge of our states of mind and of mental operations is forced upon us, just as, by the pressure of our bodily necessities, a large amount of empirical knowledge, with respect to physical philosophy, must be forced upon us, ere, in either case, we can attempt even to lay the foundations of any approach to scientific investigation—and, under this view, the analogy of the progress of physical and intellectual science respectively, is a most striking one. In both the grand object has been, in the first instance, to

Digitized by Google

become acquainted with the substantial essence of existence. It was this that the ancients sought after. It was this that all Christian philosophers followed forth during the long series of the middle ages. Indeed, the alchymists, who were the physical philosophers of those times, had scarcely anything else in view. Yet, is it not to be supposed, that, during the middle ages, no physical facts were discovered, although the ultimate object which philosophers had in view was chimerical? On the contrary, sometimes incidentally, sometimes in the formal prosecution of that which was then called science, most important physical facts were eliminated, and that too under the most strict processes of experiment, for there never was an age, and never could have been an age, in which men did not investigate science by experiment; and, accordingly, we find the most sound principles on this subject detailed and recommended from the earliest times, but then it was always under the false idea, that this was merely a *subsidiary* process that might aid in the grand ultimate object of the *a priori* determination of essences. It is, therefore, the real merit attributable to Bacon, not that, in any proper sense, he was the originator of the inductive method of philosophising, but that he more fully developed an impression which had been gradually extending itself up to his time, that this object of discovering essences was absurd and unattainable, and consequently inducing philoso-

Digitized by Google

phers to lay aside, finally and altogether, the system of philosophising by hypothesis, or, in other words, of seeking in the human mind that which was attainable by physical experiment and observation alone. In exactly the same way the object of intellectual philosophy was long avowedly the discovery, *a priori*, of the essences of mental states, a discovery which was unattainable; although, occasionally there is no doubt that, whether incidentally, or in the formal prosecution of that unattainable object, discoveries were made empirically in many branches of spiritual science, which have greatly tended to ameliorate the condition of the human race. Yet, just as formerly in physical science, philosophers have always unconsciously been seduced back again to seek after the more alluring, because the more magnificent and fundamental discovery of essences, in some form or other, which, if they could be discovered, would no doubt at once enable us to explain the whole phenomena of the spiritual world. Nor, in truth, has this tendency been ever more strikingly exhibited, in so far as the human mind is concerned, than during the present age, when a determination of the nature of spirit, simply and solely by an induction of facts, is spoken of with contempt, and the attention of the mass of the philosophical world is directed to the discovery of the absolute, the infinite, and the eternal, not through the determination of observed and admitted spiritual phenomena, but by abstract

Digitized by Google

speculation, on what are supposed to be *a priori* cognitions—although, in reality, these supposed *a priori* cognitions, in so far as they are anything at all, are merely intellectual conclusions, not *a priori*, but unconsciously attained, *a posteriori*, by elementary and consequently very subtle processes of the human mind. They are supposed to be *a priori*, because their origin is in a great measure unknown, from which originates a notion, more or less unconsciously entertained, that they are, somehow, of the very essence of mind, and consequently that they admit of results being deduced from them determinative of its primary and essential character, whereas, they are mere results of mental operations, explicable by a more careful analysis, and thus resolvable into the action of mental powers and feelings upon experimentally-known facts, just as any other phenomena. That such an analysis may some time enable us to know more of spiritual nature absolutely, and thus to determine more definitely those awful problems in respect to the absolute, the infinite, and the eternal, to which the attention of human beings is naturally so anxiously directed, is perfectly true; but we have not reached the amount of knowledge, as yet at all events, which will enable us to realise such results—and it seems pretty clear that, unless we adopt different principles of enquiry, we are not very likely ever to realise them. All that has hitherto, indeed, been attained by such a mode of

Digitized by Google

philosophising in modern times, is just what was attained by Plato and Aristotle, by the use of the same system. We have got confused amidst a mass of vague and unintelligible terms, which, instead of giving us great and important truths to believe, are calculated to lead to the conclusion, in so far as they lead to any conclusion, that there is nothing in which we can believe at all. Our belief, under the assumption of its resting on such foundations, must necessarily be entirely arbitrary, having neither proof in itself, nor out of itself, so that the moment we leave the arbitrary, we, as matter of necessity, fall into the sceptical.

That something may be accomplished, however, for the advancement of intellectual or spiritual science, seems to be absolutely certain, from the explanations already given of many doctrines of religion, philosophy, morals, education, &c., which, though no doubt incidental in a great measure, and empirical, as must in the first instance be the case with every science, are yet in no degree the less indisputable and important; and, if we now truly adopt, in regard to this science, that which has been called the Baconian method of philosophising, by rejecting all *a priori* cognitions, and taking the truth as exhibited in facts and phenomena—a method which has never really been attempted by any one save Locke alone—there seems no reason why we should not rise as high even in spiritual, as we have done in physical

Digitized by Google

science, by the explanation of these principles in all the higher spiritual sciences, which are hitherto imperfectly or not at all understood, so as to leave us necessarily in a state of what may be called logical scepticism, and, by accomplishing which, we should extend our knowledge with respect to the most interesting of all subjects, and increase our power with respect to the most important of all objects, in acquiring additional means for attaining a command over ourselves. At the same time, while it seems indisputable that something may be done for the advancement of spiritual science, anything farther can only be regarded as more or less probable, since it is evidently impossible to determine positively how much may be done till the thing is tried, as in the case of all other sciences. It is, however, at all events, clear, that we can only then be truly said to be making progress in spiritual science when we are discovering facts previously unknown with respect to the nature of our motives and the principles of our beliefs, and when these discoveries are of no doubtful character, but are felt to be as true to our consciousness as the established principles of physical science to our rational convictions. But were we, however, to be made to feel that important principles, hitherto uncertain, began to exhibit themselves under a definite and indisputable form—that relations previously admitted as mere matter of intuition, were assuming a logical and recognised connection—

Digitized by Google

that truths credited, though not understood, and consequently liable perpetually to the scoffs of scepticism, were becoming developed as primary conclusions of our intelligent natures, or strict inferences under legitimate reasoning—then surely, if such results could be attained, should we be entitled to claim for spiritual science all the importance which its most devoted adherents could desire—and we cannot help being impressed with the assurance that a commencement of all this is, even under present circumstances, attainable. Still, it may indeed be argued that, even supposing all this to be attainable even to the fullest extent, yet very few, comparatively speaking, would be capable of the nice analysis which it implies; and this is true, but every one is capable of appreciating the result who is capable of understanding ordinary language, and this is all with which the mass is acquainted in reference to the processes of philosophical analysis, or reasoning in any science. All know that the tides will ebb and flow at particular times, and eclipses occur at the calculated periods, but not one in thousands know anything whatever of the calculations under which they are foretold; while, in the case of mental philosophy, there is the additional advantage, that all know so much of their own minds as to be capable, even in some measure, of realising those states and processes with regard to them which may admit of being described and illustrated.

Digitized by Google

It is, however, to be kept in view, as a matter of experimental fact, realised in almost every instance of human belief, that so entirely are our mental states shrouded by the passion, prejudice, and tendency to mere external and sensitive observation—of which we have formerly spoken—as absolutely to conceal from our consciousness, in many cases, a great proportion of their more subtle, though most effective operations; while the same causes, acting as operative principles, and combined with our natural distaste to reflex mental investigation, which we sometimes fear, too, by a sort of anticipation, may end in results inconsistent with our worldly interest or our personal gratifications, frequently lead to our resting satisfied with an imperfect analysis and indefinite conclusions. In this, mainly, we have the origin of *a priori* cognitions, and of many of these loose moral and political theories which would leave man an anomaly in the universe. Hence, it is only by the most accurate and continued observation that we can acquire the capability of appreciating almost any of our mental states and processes in their completeness—portions of the phenomena, as frequently in chemical processes, disappearing in a latent form during the operation, and thus exposing our conclusions necessarily to the risk of more or less serious error—a risk manifestly enhanced, just in proportion to the extent that our mental operations become habitual, and consequently effected, without any effort what-

Digitized by Google

ever, which might impress them more deeply on the recollection. Under such circumstances, and acting under the influence of motives previously adverted to, we need not wonder that philosophers, instead of patiently persevering till the causes of phenomena had, in each case, clearly developed themselves, should have been satisfied with supplementing a deficient analysis, by the use of vague terms, or a reference to unknown principles, as was formerly done in physical science—for example, in the forms of Aristotle, and the vortices of Des Cartes. But a use of vague terms, or a reference to unknown principles, can never add anything to human knowledge—they merely prove that those who employ them in mental science, at all events, have no clear ideas themselves on the subjects to which such terms and principles are intended to apply—since mental facts and phenomena, accurately analysed, and clearly understood, must, from the very nature of the case, admit of the fullest and most definite expression; for, though it be true that simple states and ideas can neither be defined nor described, yet they can be so accurately and clearly indicated by a reference to their precise results as to leave no possible doubt with respect to their nature, their origin, and their relations.

Hence, in the use of distinct and definite terms, and in appealing only to principles which every one can understand who knows the meaning of ordinary language, we have, at all events, the assurance of

Digitized by Google

advancing safely and surely, in so far as we do advance; and, if in the use of such means we actually succeed in analysing states of mind, or, by any other process, succeed in determining grounds of human belief, or principles of human conduct hitherto not at all or imperfectly appreciated, there can be no doubt that we are making progress, whatever be the extent of it. Those particulars, therefore, we shall endeavour strictly to keep in view through every part of our investigations, at the same time earnestly urging on all others, who may participate in our convictions, to persevere in the same course, since we are persuaded—and we trust also to be able, by exhibiting, to some extent, the actual realization of our expectations, to convince others—that much may be explained with reference to spiritual truth, in regard both to our beliefs and our impulses, which, as yet, appears absolutely inexplicable—every step that is made in advance opening a wider and wider field of investigation, and that it is even more true of spiritual, than of physical philosophy, that no bounds can be conceived to the extent of its range.

That we may distinctly understand, however, what is to be done, and appreciate the difficulties to be obviated, it is proposed, in the first place, generally to sketch the progress of spiritual philosophy from the earliest ages down to the present time. We shall thus be enabled precisely to determine the errors into which philosophers have fallen,

Digitized by Google

whether with respect to the science itself, or their modes of prosecuting it—a knowledge, it is manifest, essential for enabling us to obviate such errors in the one case, and to avoid them in the other. It will, however, of course, be understood that we have no intention whatever of giving anything like a history of philosophical opinions, even of the most meagre kind, nor an exposition of even any one philosophical system. Our sole object will be to indicate such misconceptions of principles as may have hitherto retarded the progress of spiritual philosophy, or may seem likely to retard them in future times, and to explain, as far as possible, the causes in which those misconceptions have originated.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER II.

SKETCH OF THE PROGRESS OF SPIRITUAL PHILOSOPHY.

SECTION I.

PROGRESS OF SPIRITUAL PHILOSOPHY FROM THE EARLIEST AGES, TO THE TIME OF BACON AND DES CARTES.

Tendency of the human mind when it begins to philosophise—Reference of all knowledge to itself—Illustrated by the Greek philosophy—Nature of the primary Greek philosophy—Growth of materialism and sketch of the theory of Epicurus—Absurdity of the system—Rise and progress of scepticism among the Greeks—Philosophy of the Romans—Manner in which the system of Greek and Roman philosophy became modified by the propagation of Christianity, and sketch of the progress of philosophy during the middle ages—State of the philosophical world when Bacon (Lord Verulam) appeared—Sketch of the nature of his philosophy—Effect of it on spiritual science—Origin of sensationalism—Appearance of Des Cartes—Sketch of the nature of his philosophy—Its effect on spiritual science.

When the human mind begins to philosophise it seems to be its natural tendency to imagine that all real knowledge is to be found in itself, and consequently that all which we can, with propriety, be said to know, must be held as somehow generated through its own spontaneous forth-giving. Nor is it difficult to discover the process under which we

Digitized by Google

are led to this conclusion—for the gradual progress of our knowledge, as the result of a more or less continuous operation, being unperceived by us, when we ultimately come to speculate as to the source from which it is derived, we find, in the first instance, at all events, that the origin of the mass of our ideas is utterly unknown to us, and inexplicable. No doubt some of them might be referred to external perception, though, even with respect to these, we quickly come to appreciate the difficulty of conceiving how external existence could possibly become an object of our conciousness; but, setting this aside in the meantime, the great proportion of them are at once felt as altogether independent of sensation, and these, too, by far the more important, as being not only most certain in their determination, but as possessing a universality of application which stamps them with a character of higher and more essential truth.

Accordingly, in the earliest ages, and specially among the Greek philosophers, whose speculations are the earliest as to which we possess any definite information, the determination of the nature of essences, or essential natures, as discoverable by scientific investigation of the *a priori* cognitions of the human mind, was put forth as the avowed end of philosophy. Even their physical, therefore, became in this way a species of metaphysical philosophy, for they rarely attempted to discover physical facts by physical experiments, at least, during the earlier

Digitized by Google

history of the science, and never as if this had been the main mode and purpose of philosophy, but they prosecuted physical science through metaphysical speculations on the essential nature of existence and the constitution of its primary elements. The truth, discoverable by this species of investigation, which they deemed alone certain, and alone valuable, and which undoubtedly carries with it, even in its very enunciation, an appearance of surpassing grandeur, as comprehending every species of knowledge in itself, they evidently believed to lie concealed in the human mind, and to be attainable consequently by those only who, abstracting their thoughts from all ideas of sensation, and controlling their desires and passions by a process of continuous effort and abstinence, in so far at least as to exclude the present, and to give scope to the energies of a lofty reason, sought to ascertain it by intently gazing within, till the vague generalities, common to all mankind, should be directly appreciated with the precision and clearness of philosophical realities.

The difficulty, however, here was to determine how the mind had got possession of such a knowledge of this external existence as that it could reflect upon it? From whence it came? and how we could become acquainted with that which is without by meditations on that which is within? Now, to explain this, the ancients, much more logically than most of the moderns who have fallen into a similar error, as-

Digitized by Google

sumed that models of every species of truth exist in the mind—not as arbitrary dogmas or propositions, but as essential modes resulting from the very nature of things—in the divine mind more perfectly, in the human mind less perfectly, though in both substantially the same—and that all external truth, so far as it really implied truth, exhibited merely representations, shadows, or images of those models, more or less vague and inaccurate, according to circumstances, and which, consequently, from their very vagueness and inaccuracy, might easily be confused with one another, and could realise no precision in themselves, from whence necessarily followed the uncertainty of all belief, connected with or dependent upon them. From this it is evident that the ancients really believed the mind to be a microcosm, or little world, containing exemplars of all things in itself, which exemplars of course had been all in a more perfect form comprehended in the divine mind, anterior to the actual constitution of any thing, in respect that the divine mind was, of its own essential nature, forced to create all things in conformity with them. In this hypothesis—modified, of course, in each case, as to its incidents—will be found the germ of all the more celebrated systems of ancient philosophy. These models or exemplars were the numbers of Pythagoras, the ideas of Plato, and the forms of Aristotle. According to them all these numbers, ideas, and forms were entities, real essences, in

Digitized by Google

other words, comprehending all truth, and this truth was discoverable, as they believed, by concentrated contemplation of the mind and its operations. Nor would it be difficult to shew, as will indeed appear from our subsequent enquiries, that without some such theory, identifying genera and species with essences, the assumption of innate ideas, intuitive principles, *a priori* cognitions, or, in a word, knowledge anteceding experience, by whatever name it may be called, is untenable and absurd.

Aristotle seems to have been the first, among professed philosophers, who indicated, with any degree of precision, at all events, the importance to physical science of an experimental investigation of the facts which nature exhibits to us in her operations. In some detached passages, indeed, he seems thoroughly to realise that process of inductive philosophy which has usually been attributed exclusively to recent times; but, both in his inductive theory, and in his experiments, Aristotle intended only to find food, if we may so express ourselves, for his metaphysical speculations. He never seems to have imagined, mighty as was his mind, that by such instrumentality it was possible to arrive at the depths of true philosophy. Those he endeavours to fathom by the very same means as the philosophers who had preceded him—nor is there any writer of antiquity, we will venture to affirm, more abstruse, or rather, we should say, more

Digitized by Google

unintelligible, than Aristotle, in his search after the first principles of things.

Up to the point of which we have now spoken, however, the philosophy of the ancients was mainly physical, or at least related to points, in so far, external to the mind itself, and hence, however false it may have been, we can at all events, to a certain extent, more or less understand and appreciate their theory. They sought entities in the mind, and no doubt they were not altogether disappointed. They found something, and naturally enough supposed that it was what they wanted, because they confused general ideas with entities as being ignorant of the source in which general ideas originate. In so far, therefore, there is much that we can understand in the writings of the ancient philosophers—much ingenuity even displayed, which we can appreciate and admire; but, when attempting to penetrate beyond this external philosophy, they endeavour to determine the essential nature of the inner mind itself, in which they assume these models or exemplars to exist, I must confess that, to me, their speculations become absolutely incomprehensible. It is, indeed, easy to construe their sentences, and it is easy to conjecture meanings of particular passages; but, what their views may have been as a whole, I have been utterly unable to discover, nor have I ever found translator or commentator from whom I could derive the slightest amount of satisfactory information. Of course I am

Digitized by Google

not only open, but anxious, to receive information upon the subject, always assuming that the historians of the ancient philosophies rest their explanations on legitimate translations of their originals, instead of finding, as some of them do, the whole of modern philosophy wrapped up in single technical terms, to which lexicographers have never been able to attach any definite sense at all; but, however presumptuous it may appear, yet, as men can only fairly judge from their means of knowledge, and according to their capabilities, until this be done, I shall continue to regard the strictly mental philosophy of the Greeks as belonging to the same class with a more modern philosophy—of which we shall by and by speak—directed to the same object, wherein both founder and disciples would seem to have deceived themselves in the use of words which have no definite meaning.

Such, in so far as we can pretend to judge, was generally stated the character of the most celebrated systems of philosophy among the Greeks, in their physics and metaphysics. The modes under which the founders wrought out each system respectively, depended of course upon the special tendencies and circumstances of the several individuals. It is enough for us to know that, where their philosophy began, there it also ended. Much was, indeed, written, and many ingenious speculations were proposed, but in seeking an *a priori* knowledge of essences, which is now theoretically,

Digitized by Google

at all events, admitted to be unattainable, we need not wonder that no progress was made, nor that the vague language and abstruse disquisitions, in which these philosophers indulged, were, if possible, still less available for ascertaining the essence of mind, than for determining what they regarded as the essential and eternal schemata of matter.

There can be little doubt, however, that, even among the disciples of this ideal school itself, a sense of the practical barrenness, and mystical incomprehensibility of the theory had all along been practically felt. Hence, probably, originated the hope of discovering the essence of existence in a quarter the very opposite from that which had been previously assigned for it—and we say the opposite, because there can be no question whatever, that the representational school of the Greek philosophers must have logically recognised the ideal theory; for assuming, as a principle, that external existence was merely an exhibition of representations, shadows, or images, of which the models or entities exist in the mind, it is evidently impossible that they could have imagined such entities to exist in spirit, as material substances, according to the then, or, indeed, any conceivable acceptation of the terms. They must, there can be no doubt, have been regarded as spiritual entities of some kind or other—the external representations, as they are called, being, in reality, nothing

Digitized by Google

save mere films, or projected copies of them, and, as such, constituting the phantasmagoria which we imagine to be an external world. With these philosophers, therefore,[a] all essence being spiritual, every kind of sensation was, of course, regarded with utter contempt as, in reality, a delusion—the facts which it might appear to establish being held as altogether unworthy of the name of science. This philosophy, however, as was said, having been found practically useless, and, in many particulars, even theoretically incomprehensible, as consisting merely in the use of unintelligible, or imperfectly intelligible, terms, Epicurus adopted a theory, which for some time had been gaining ground, that involved an opposite assumption, in so far as it superseded spirit altogether, by attributing what were held as spiritual phenomena to the action of material substances; or, in other words, he considered that which was usually called mind, or spirit, to be merely a phenomenon resulting from the reciprocal action of material collocations. This system—which was an attempt at developing, under a somewhat more scientific aspect, the speculations previously propounded by Democritus and others—is just the modern theory, differently expressed, under which the constitution of the human mind, and the scheme of the universe,

[a] We are quite aware that these philosophers asserted the existence of matter in some sense, but we speak of the logical result of their principles, which alone materially affected the progress of philosophy, and not of their incidental and inconsistent dogmata, which were subsequently overlooked.

Digitized by Google

have, with great pomp, as if it were some recent and important discovery, been attributed to the action of material forces. Accordingly, setting aside the specialities of his system, we find it liable to the fatal objection, common to every form of such theory, that it does not explain the phenomena, or rather that, without any attempt at explaining, it supersedes them. For thought and feeling, *so far as we can discover*, are neither qualities of material existence, nor can they be results of any combinations of its qualities. Whereas, this theory, in direct opposition to the indisputable fact, assumes that matter, either directly or in its combinations, has these qualities, or can, at all events, generate them, and that we have the means of ascertaining it; for, if we have not the means of ascertaining it—and, if on the contrary, mind and matter in all their distinctive qualities seem to us, in spite of our most careful and repeated experiments, the very antipodes of each other—then the assumption, whatever it may be in the nature of things, is to us false, and consequently, it is impossible that we can rest upon it any form of conclusion. Accordingly, under that theory, it is, as might have been expected, found practically impossible to advance one step in our knowledge of the human mind, or to explain in the slightest degree, for practical purposes, any one particular of its operations. No doubt such a conjecture, as that implied in the theory, naturally enough suggests itself from that intimate

Digitized by Google

mutual action of soul and body upon one another, which we can hardly attribute to separate essences, as well as from the similitude which the human system, in various respects, exhibits to a physical machine; but yet, as the phenomena are absolutely different in kind from one another, and no approximation even has yet been made to an identification of their essences or their qualities, the attempt to explain the one by the other, and especially to identify spirit with matter, of course, again led merely to the substitution of words for ideas, so as still farther to complicate the subject by speculations, if possible, even more frivolous and unsatisfactory than those from which the assumption primarily was intended to relieve us. The essential absurdity of this theory, therefore, consists in its attributing thought and feeling to hardness, softness, gravity, motion, and those various qualities or proporties of matter of which we are conscious as material—an assumption which, to us, is evidently a contradiction in terms. Did it maintain merely, let it be observed, that thought and feeling result from hidden properties of matter which we have no means of discovering, but which, could we discover them, would be found essentially of the nature of those of which we are conscious as spiritual, that would be a perfectly different thing, and the theory would be quite harmless, and, so far as we know, perfectly possible, and only liable to the objection that it implies a pure conjecture as to

Digitized by Google

a subject of which we know nothing whatever. But, when it is substantively maintained that qualities which we know, produce effects which appear altogether inconsistent with their essential natures—that wheels, for example generate thought, and levers generate goodness—for in something of this kind must every form of materialism end—the theory becomes to us absurd and impossible, nor can we regard it as anything save a practical mockery of common sense, originating either in obstinate prejudice, or in a morbid love of philosophical paradox.

Amidst so many doubts and difficulties, and extravagancies besetting the assumptions of both theories, therefore, we cannot wonder that there arose among the Greeks, also, a sceptical theory which denied that there could be certainty, or, as some held, even probability upon any subject. In truth, scepticism follows, logically, from both those theories of idealism and materialism, and that so obviously, that the argument will admit of no reply—since it is clear that, if some of our faculties deceive us, we can repose no confidence, logically, at all events, upon the others, which depend for their validity precisely on the same proof—while the apparent delusiveness of our perceptions, and infirmity of our reasoning powers, would seem still farther to strengthen the conclusion thus primarily attained. The assumptions of scepticism, however, being in themselves absurd and impossible,

Digitized by Google

practically considered—since it is impossible that we can disbelieve the information of our faculties, and specially of our senses, whether it be true or false—it is evidently unnecessary for our present purpose to enter on a consideration of the precise forms which, in earlier ages, it exhibited—and the more, that the very same principles which it then implied will come to be incidentally investigated at a subsequent stage of our enquiries, as more recently proposed in much clearer terms, and under a much more accurate appreciation of their bearing.

The Romans originated nothing with respect to intellectual or spiritual philosophy. Whatever views they entertained on the subject were avowedly borrowed from the Greeks. The varied forms of the Greek philosophy, accordingly, continued to subsist among them without any change, except in so far as that the tendency among the Romans was decided towards a fuller development of scepticism on the one hand, or of materialism on the other. This tendency, however, in either direction, was early checked by the introduction of Christianity, of which one of the first observable results was the progressive annihilation of both scepticism and materialism in the shape, at all events, of avowed systems. No doubt, these theories may still have been cherished as the private belief of individuals, under some form or another—but, being both diametrically opposed to the theory of Christianity, as it acquired an over-bearing influence,

Digitized by Google

they, in any avowed form, gradually disappeared. Christianity farther introduced another important modification of philosophy, by superseding, in a great measure, at all events, the assumption of absolute realities, or entities, existing as models of all truth in the mind. Nor could it have been otherwise, for not only was this theory inconsistent with the general character of the Christian scheme, but it specially contradicted the fundamental assumption of Christianity, as claiming to be a revelation which developed truth, that the human mind neither knew *a priori*, nor, of itself, could have possibly discovered. It could not, therefore, be admitted by Christians that such truth, in an absolute form, had previously existed in the human mind, only requiring sufficient contemplation to develope it. These were new notions altogether. Men, therefore, could have had no internal ideas from which they might have been derived, and hence it followed that the mind is capable of appreciating ideas which could not, under any form, have existed in itself, and with the nature and principles of which, had the mind been left to itself, it would have remained for ever unacquainted. Thus, into the place of the former theory of numbers, forms, ideas, or species, existing as realities, or entities in the mind, which was at least conceivable—assuming all things to be mere modifications of spirit—philosophers were led to substitute the much less logical theory which assumes truth to

Digitized by Google

exist *a priori* in the mind—not in the form of realities or entities, but of a certain number of thoughts or propositions which lie wrapped up and concealed there—in order to form foundations or bases of our reasoning in future spiritual operations as they are successively called forth whether by contemplation or intellectual effort, though, how these latent and innate thoughts and propositions differed from those subsequently acquired by experience or reasoning, they not only neglected to explain, but they evaded the no less perplexing difficulty as to how it was possible for propositions to exist generally, when the mind had no knowledge of any entities or realities which might give to such general propositions a substantive foundation; in other words, they did not explain as to how there could be general propositions about nothing at all.[a] Be this, however, as it may, we have here, and at this stage in the history of philosophy, the origin of that theory which supposes general notions created, or spontaneously generated, in the mind, and of which, as appearing in modern philosophy under the various names of innate ideas, intuitive principles, and *a priori* cognitions, we shall have much to say in the sequel. With these modifications the ancient philosophy, under some of its forms, continued steadily, during

[a] But, whilst they rejected the theory of entities in the mind, they retained that of images or ideas, which they now assumed as coming, not from within but without, *i. e.*, not from entities in the mind, but as *quasi*-spiritual images from the object.

Digitized by Google

the middle ages, to hold its place in the schools, and it was only at a later date that another change, also indirectly originating with the Christian scheme, gradually began to develope itself. Reasoning from the assurance, which every one seems to feel, that existences of all kinds have, somehow or other, some principle of unity identifying them as parts of a common whole, philosophers had, from the earliest times from which any trace of philosophy has been transmitted to us, beyond all doubt, as we have already seen, leant to the assumption, that all things are developments of a common *spiritual* essence, the nature of which was accordingly supposed to be discoverable by intense *spiritual* meditation—there being no other means conceivable by which the nature of spiritual essence could be discovered. When, however, Christianity indicated some essential distinction betwixt spirit and matter, or, at all events, when the mass of Christians believed so, philosophers ceased to ascribe them, as formerly, to the same essence, identifying them merely by a reference to a common origin—matter being thus regarded as involving a different essence from mind, but referable to mind as a creation of it. Still, however, it was believed, as before, that material essence might be discovered and appreciated by mental contemplation, in so far as the human mind was supposed to retain so much of its divine original, as to be able to reach the process under which the divine mind had realised the

Digitized by Google

creation of matter, and there is evidently a formal attempt at effecting some such process, under the old form of the theory, so far back as the *Timæus* of Plato. It was, however, in the age of which we are speaking, universally recognised that matter and mind involve different essences—and we say recognised, because we are by no means prepared to maintain that the distinction of essences was denied, or even disbelieved, by all those whom we have designated as idealists among the ancients, but only that, under the theory of real entities, existing as models in the mind, any distinction of essences was logically inadmissible. Accordingly, under the assumption that matter had its own distinct essence, the philosophers of the middle ages, following forth the example which had been partially exhibited long before, applied themselves, as it might have been expected, with still greater assiduity, to seek a more precise determination of their *a priori* assumptions, and a more definite guide for their subsequent enquiries, by practical experiments on material substances, under the impression that the more elementary their knowledge of matter, and the more approximating to its absolute form, the more simple would be the intellectual process necessary for its apprehension. This, indeed, was the only object for which they then deemed experiments available, although by the use of them they succeeded so well—not, indeed, in their mistaken object of realising a

Digitized by Google

knowledge of essence, but in attaining physical discoveries altogether unexpected, as in the case of Roger Bacon and many others, that an idea began gradually to suggest, and strengthen, and expand itself, to the effect that philosophy, by experiment, which had hitherto been regarded as merely a mode of ascertaining, with greater precision, the reality of *a priori* assumptions, and of guiding more definitely subsequent hypotheses, was in reality the best, if not the only, means of primarily discovering truth—and consequently, that the theory of innate ideas, either as involving the essence of matter, or as implying propositions in some inconceivable way, absolutely existing *a priori* in the mind, was probably founded on a delusion.

Such was the state of the philosophical world when the celebrated Francis Bacon (Lord Verulam) appeared, who, putting into a definite form the more or less vague opinions which, as we have seen, had previously begun extensively to prevail, gave to scientific enquiry its true direction in so far as physical philosophy was concerned, and thus opened up that path of discovery which has subsequently led to such splendid results. The only discovery made by himself, however, if indeed discovery it can be called, consisted simply in repudiating the theory of *a priori* cognitions, and consequently establishing the impossibility of ever discovering truth by mere contemplation or the use of reasoning—a theory which, setting apart

Digitized by Google

all other considerations, was necessarily implied in the use of syllogisms for the purpose of discovering truth, as was the universal practice in those times—the fact being, that syllogisms, as must be evident to every one that knows what a syllogism is, assume a general knowledge of the very point which it is intended specially to prove. They involve, therefore, of necessity, the supposition that a general knowledge of facts exists in the mind *a priori*, and hence, when employed as they were, during the times anterior to Bacon, for the purpose of discovering truth, they evidently implied the assumption that such truth, in some general form, as evolved in the major terms of syllogisms, existed *a priori* as innate entities or propositions in the human mind. Now that the formal repudiation of syllogistic reasoning for such a purpose, as well as of the existence of such innate entities or propositions in the mind, on which it depended, in so far, at all events, as physical philosophy was concerned, was really the only essential benefit which Bacon conferred upon philosophy, is indisputable on a consideration of the facts; for it is not pretended that he made any scientific discovery himself worthy of mention, and we need not now say that assuredly he was not the first who suggested the use of experiment in philosophy. This must, indeed, have been known since the creation of human beings, inasmuch as it is forced upon our attention by the very constitution

Digitized by Google

of things; nay, there might be cited any number of formal philosophical experiments, as propounded by the ancients, and specially as we have seen, philosophical experiments were regarded, during the middle ages, as of the highest importance *in aid* of philosophy. The merit of Bacon, therefore, consisted in absolutely excluding all reference to hypothesis, or *a priori* conclusions, in the first instance, at all events, for the elucidation of physical science, and in enforcing our dependence upon experiment and observation *alone*. We press this the more anxiously, not merely as bearing, it will be found, directly upon our own subject, but because the common notion that Bacon discovered what has been called the inductive system, or, in other words, the system which we are told concludes generally from a number of particulars, is not only an entire error, however vaguely he may have sometimes expressed himself, but what is of much greater importance in such a matter, the principle itself, which, under the name of the inductive philosophy, is sometimes put forth with so much pomp, if considered as implying either the possibility of discovering universal truth from a generalization of particulars, or as denying the possibility of discovering such truth except by a comparison and generalization of particulars, must be denounced as equally unfounded and pernicious. Were it, indeed, true, then it would necessarily follow that we never could discover a universal truth unless we

Digitized by Google

had known and generalized *every particular fact* comprehended under it. This, however, is so far from being the case that, on the contrary, *one* fact will ascertain and determine a universal principle just as well as all the facts which could be comprehended under that principle, provided we be certain *that it is a fact*. The necessity of many experiments and much observation in any case, or, in other words, of making ourselves acquainted with many of the particular facts embraced under any principle, is not because a knowledge of many such facts is necessary for enabling us to generalize—since one fact would be perfectly sufficient for that purpose—but it is to assure us that we have actually got to the real fact, or real cause, and are not attributing the effect to merely incidental circumstances. It is on this account that, in experiments, we endeavour successively to abstract all incidental qualities in each case, until we reach the essential quality or qualities which *alone* are productive of the effect. Hence the value of an *experimentum crucis* where we have the means of excluding all merely incidental particulars, and where, consequently, there is no need of any farther experiment, or, in other words, of any additional facts, in order either to generalize or determine a legitimate conclusion. We generalize, indeed, from the one fact, in such a case, with a greater certainty than we can usually do from a large number, because, as we trust is now evident, the generalization does not, in the slightest

Digitized by Google

degree, depend upon the number of facts which we have observed, but on the certainty with which any one of them is known—for we generalize, not, as is usually supposed by accumulating facts, but under the rational conviction that identical phenomena must always be identical and referable to identical causes—a conviction, consequently, which must be equally irresistible, wherever a cause of any effect has been actually ascertained, whether in one case or in ten thousand. The use of experiment, therefore, is not to enable us to generalize—and the same thing is true of continuous and repeated observation—but, by removing all incidents in the subjects submitted to examination, to enable us to discover, in each case, the real and essential cause of the phenomenon. Hence, the true benefit which Bacon conferred upon philosophy was not the discovery of that which has been loosely called the "inductive "system"—which, as we have seen in the sense of philosophising by experiment, he did not discover—but the exclusion of all *a priori* assumptions or hypotheses primarily in every form. He admitted no effective or trust-worthy means of philosophising, except observation alone, and of course we must be understood to include what is usually called experiment under the word of observation, for experiment is merely artificially-arranged observation. It is not, however, to be supposed that, in excluding all *a priori* assumption or hypothesis as effective on trust-worthy means of philosophising,

Digitized by Google

Bacon intended to condemn the use of analogical reasoning as an aid in the investigation of physical truth, but quite the reverse. Analogies, indeed, give us analogical causes, and may suggest therefore the causes of the co-relative phenomena which we investigate, just as identical phenomena, when traced to their sources, assure us of identical causes,—only, in the former case, the analogies, however well ascertained, still leaving a certain degree of doubt upon the subject, direct us to determine such doubt by farther experiment. Analogies, therefore, imply a species of observation equivalent to a form of experiment. To avail ourselves of the probabilities which they indicate, therefore, in the shape of hypothetical assumption, with a view to a more determinate course of experiment, is an entirely different thing from *a priori* speculation, under the supposition that a mere appeal to mental ideas can of itself elucidate or illustrate the causes of physical facts. Bacon only denied the existence of any knowledge of physical substance *a priori* in the mind, repudiated all modes of philosophising, directly or indirectly founded on the assumption of such knowledge, and affirmed, consequently, observation to the absolute and utter exclusion of syllogistic reasoning, to be the alone *organon* or instrument of discovery in physical science. This was his real merit. It was his definite realization of this fundamental truth which justly entitles him to be regarded as the father of modern science.

Digitized by Google

In thus far it will be observed that Bacon only applied his *organon* to physical science; it will now, however, be easily understood how the principle involved in his philosophy, did also immediately produce a most material effect on the philosophy of mind—and that, in the first instance, at all events, to its serious detriment, for excluding, as we have seen it did, the assumption of any knowledge, either of physical science or of physical qualities, as existing *a priori* in the mind, it instantly raised a question as to the mode by which, under such circumstances, it was possible for the mind to become acquainted with matter at all. In other words, it was formerly supposed that films, or images, coming from external bodies, and as *quasi*-spiritual, entering the mind by the senses, thereby called into action the general knowledge of their corresponding physical natures, which, under the form of innate ideas, lay latent there; but, as all such arbitrary knowledge of matter was now excluded, it seemed exceedingly difficult to imagine how the mind could realise, *absolutely*, a totally different essence, with which, as having nothing in common, it would not, so far as we can conceive, at any one point, if we may so speak, be brought into contact. Under the former theory—though of course, as in regard to all mere theories, expression was given to it in a great variety of forms—the exhibition of matter was rather the occasion than the cause of our appreciation of it; but now it seemed neither the one nor the other, since there

Digitized by Google

appeared to be no means under which matter could be exhibited to mind at all; and the subject was farther complicated, by the intervention of the body betwixt external matter and mind, which implies still another process, ere matter could reach the cognisance of mind—both processes being inexplicable and inconceivable. The most probable *ex facie* solution of this difficulty threw philosophers back on a theory little heard of since the introduction of Christianity, to the effect that the soul and body were not two essences, but merely modes of one essence, the soul being itself material, or, at all events, the result of material collocations, and hence became acquainted with matter, not through any relationship of its *quasi*-spiritual images to certain intuitions, or *a priori* cognitions responding to them, but mechanically by the direct action of one species of matter on another, in the ordinary operation of cause and effect. Thus, of course, all our knowledge was necessarily referred to sensation as its only possible source, and, accordingly, hence the origin of that which, in more modern times, has been called the sensational philosophy.

Before proceeding, however, with our consideration of the forms which this sensational philosophy assumed, we must observe, as necessary to be kept in view for a full appreciation of the historical progress of the science, that, about the same time with Bacon, appeared Des Cartes, an eminent French philosopher, whose speculations took an entirely

Digitized by Google

opposite direction, and founded an entirely different school. Bacon had confined his attention, as we have seen, mainly to physical science, and consequently, though he had intended, as we have reason to believe, to expound also the principles under which intellectual philosophy should be studied, yet, from circumstances, he did actually leave this branch of his subject undetermined. His system, therefore, only indirectly affected spiritual science, in so far as it ignored the hypothesis of innate ideas, and of *quasi*-spiritual films, or images, or external ideas, coming from external matter to the mind. Des Cartes, on the other hand, though also a physical philosopher, conjoined and interwove with his physical philosophy a system of metaphysical science which, from the celebrity of its author, directly modified the speculations of the vast mass of philosophers during a long series of years. Its primary conception originated in the idea that all knowledge, deserving the name of science, must rest on a basis of mathematical certainty—all the parts, thereafter, in succession, flowing demonstratively therefrom. Accordingly, in conformity with this principle, having determined his basis, he proceeded thereon to rear a series of conclusions, resulting, as he believed, from a succession of mathematical demonstrations. This basis was, "I think, therefore, I am," or stated generally, "that which thinks is, but I think, therefore, I am,"—a proposition which, whether a

Digitized by Google

mathematical axiom or not, was evidently neither more nor less than an appeal to our consciousness, as probative of our existence, and as implying its proof in itself. This fundamental fact being established, he proceeds to seek in the "I" for other principles which may determine the character of our ulterior knowledge. "Cum autem mens, quæ "se ipsam novit, et de aliis omnibus rebus, adhuc "dubitat, undiquaque circumspicit, ut cognitionem "suam ulterius extendat; primo quidem invenit "apud se multarum rerum ideas, quas quamdiu "tantum contemplatur, nihilque ipsis simile extra "se esse affirmat nec negat, falli non potest. "Invenit etiam communes quasdam notiones et ex "his varias demonstrationes componit, ad quas "quamdiu attendit, omnino sibi persuadet esse "veras. Sic exempli causa, numerorum et figur- "arum ideas in se habet, habetque inter communes "notiones, *quod si æqualibus æqualia addas, quæ "inde exsurgent erunt æqualia*, et similes."[a] Of these innate ideas he thinks that the clearest and most precise is that of the Supreme Being as realised in his attributes, and this he goes on to prove in the following terms :—"Sic quia Dei, sive "entis summi ideam habemus in nobis, jure possu- "mus examinare, a quanam causa illam habeamus; "tantamque in ea immensitatem inveniemus, ut "plane ex eo simus certi, non posse illam nobis "fuisse inditam, nisi a re, in qua sit revera omnium

[a] Principiorum philosophiæ pars prima—sect. 13.

Digitized by Google

"perfectionum complementum hoc est, nisi a Deo "realiter existente. Est enim lumine naturali notis- "simum, non modo a nihilo nihil fieri; nec id quod "est perfectius, ab eo quod est minus perfectum, "ut a causa efficiente et totali produci; sed neque "etiam in nobis ideam sive imaginem ullius rei "esse posse, cujus non alicubi, sive in nobis ipsis, "sive extra nos, archetypus aliquis omnes ejus "perfectiones reipsa continens existat. Et quia "summas illas perfectiones, quarum ideam habe- "nus, nullo modo in nobis reperimus, ex hoc ipso "recte concludimus eas in aliquo a nobis diverso, "nenpe in Deo, esse; vel certo aliquando fuisse; "ex quo evidentissime sequitur, ipsas adhuc esse."[a] And again, "Quamvis's enim illas (sc: Dei perfec- "tiones) non comprehendamus, quia scilicet est (sc: "idea) de natura infiniti, ut a nobis, qui sumus "finiti, non comprehendatur, nihilominus tamen "ipsas clarius et distinctius quam ullas res corporeas "intelligere possumus, quia cogitationem nostram "magis implent, suntque simpliciores, nec limita- "tionibus ullis obscurantur."[b] Accordingly, on the conclusion thus ascertained, he, as it were, re-constructs his science in resting our further belief, and specially our belief of external existence, on the authority of God, now known and appreciated in His attributes, who could not, we are consequently assured, in any case, either directly or indirectly, deceive us:—"Atque hinc sequitur, lumen na-

[a] Principiorum philosophiæ; pars prima—sect. 18. [b] Do—sect. 19.

Digitized by Google

"turæ, sive cognoscendi facultatem a Deo nobis "datam, nullum unquam objectum posse attingere "quod non sit verum, quatenus a bipsa attingitur, "hoc est, quatenus clare et distincte percipitur. "Merito enim deceptor esset dicendus, si perversam "illam ac falsam pro vero sumentem nobis dedis- "set."[a] Thus it is clear that Des Cartes conceived us to have no satisfactory assurance of the existence of external matter from our senses, but assumed that this belief depended entirely on our *a priori* assurance of the attributes of God, who could not have deceived us in the impression that he has stamped on our mind of its truth. And, this, indeed is distinctly avowed by him in these words. "Facile, inquam, intelligo imagina- "tionem ita perfici posse, siquidem corpus existat; "et quia nullus alius modus æque conveniens "occurrit ad illam explicandam, probabiliter inde "conjicio corpus existere; sed probabiliter tantum, "et quamvis accurate omnia investigem, nondum "tamen video ex ea naturæ corporeæ idea distincta, "quam in imaginatione mea invenio, ullum sumi "posse argumentum quod necessario concludat, "aliquod corpus existere."[b] This seems the more extraordinary, inasmuch as the same conciousness which he receives as the alone valid foundation of all belief, would seem, in a measure, at all events surely, to sanction our belief in matter; but Des

[a] Principiorum philosophiæ; pars prima—sect 30.
[b] R. Des Cartes meditatio sexta.

Digitized by Google

Cartes was evidently perplexed by the difficulty which philosophers had previously either overlooked or evaded, of discovering how semi-spiritual images or ideas could be generated by material substances, and, consequently, how it was possible for matter to be brought into contact with mind at all. Thus he says "atque lumen, et colores, et "odores, et sapores, et sonos; nec sane absque "ratione ob ideas istarum omnium qualitatum "quæ cogitationi meœ se offerebant, et quas solas "proprie et immediate sentiebam, putabam me "sentire res quasdam a mea cogitatione plane "diversas, nempe corpora a quibus ideæ istæ pro-"cederent."[a] And again, "Et certe ex eo quod "valde diversos sentiam colores, sonos, odores, "sapores calorem, duritiem, et similia, recte con-"cludo, aliquas esse in corporibus, a quibus variæ "istæ sensuum perceptiones adveniant, varietates "iis respondentes, etiamsi FORTE iis non simi-"les,"[b] and specially in his answer to Gassendi's fourth objection where he says "Respondeo nullam "speciem corpoream in mente recipi, sed puram "intellectionem tam rei corporeæ quam incorporeæ "fieri absque ulla specie corporea; ad imagina-"tionem vero, quæ non nisi de rebus corporeis esse "potest, opus esse quidem specie quæ sit verum "corpus, et ad quem mens se applicet, sed non "quæ in mente recipiatur."[c] Hence it is manifest,

[a] R. Des Cartes meditatio sexta. [b] Do.

[c] Appendix continens objectiones, &c., usually bound up with works.

Digitized by Google

that Des Cartes' ground of belief in the existence of external matter was purely inferential, as depending on the validity of his argument for the being and attributes of a God—a peculiarity which it is necessary to keep in view, in order to understand the singular diversity of the opinions of his followers; some pushing to an extreme the assumptions of innate ideas, especially with reference to the divine nature, some retaining the theory of *quasi*-spiritual images, and some altogether denying the existence of an external world, in the character of absolute idealists.

Such is the nature of the Cartesian system in so far as it bears upon the subject which we are now discussing. We have dwelt on its fundamental principles somewhat in detail, because, though nearly allied to the ideal theory, as previously professed, yet the particular views of Des Cartes did, as matter of fact, altogether supersede that theory under any of its older forms, and, in some of their phases, will be found to involve the germs of almost all the systems of spiritual philosophy which have been promulgated down to the present time.

Digitized by Google

SECTION II.

PROGRESS OF SPIRITUAL PHILOSOPHY, FROM THE AGE OF BACON AND DES CARTES, TO THE TIME OF REID, WITH CONTINUATION OF SCOTTISH SCHOOL IN SCOTLAND.

Tendency of Baconian and Cartesian systems—Philosophy of Hobbes, Spinoza, Mallebranche, Locke—His fundamental principle and its importance—His deficiencies, and the tendency of his system—Hartley directed attention first to the association of ideas—Lockian school in France—Condillac—Nature of his system, and misconception of Locke's principle—Gave rise to the school of gross materialism in France, as exhibited in Helvetius, Saint Lambert, Condorcet, and the Encyclopædists—Leibnitz—His theory—Berkeley—His theory and arguments on which it was founded—Hume—His argument and object—His merits—Reid—Cause of his success—Misconception of Hume's object—Identity of his principles with those of Hume—Principle of his philosophy—His reply to Hume's sceptical argument as to the relation of cause and effect—Stewart, merely an illustrator of Reid—Brown—Circumstances under which he wrote and result—His defects—His great merit—Sir Wm. Hamilton—His views—Attack on Brown, and its failure—His merits and defects—conclusion.

We have already indicated that the systems of Bacon and Des Cartes—the one indirectly, and the other directly—originated two opposite schools of philosophy: the sensational and the idealistic respectively—of which the former tended to materialism, and the latter to dogmatism, or scepticism, according to the characters and circumstances of different thinkers. At the same time, it is not to be supposed that the philosophers of modern times acknowleged any one as a master in the sense that

Digitized by Google

the Platonists, Peripatetics, and Epicureans regarded Plato, Aristotle, or Epicurus. On the contrary, every one promulgated some theory of his own, and consequently, when we say that the systems of Bacon and Des Cartes originated two schools of philosophy, we merely mean that the fundamental principles of their respective systems had a modifying influence on the speculations of subsequent philosophers, and hence it is that we have deemed it necessary to explain somewhat more precisely than in other cases, what these principles actually implied, in order that the modifications, which others subsequently introduced, or attempted to introduce thereon, may be rendered the more readily obvious.

Hobbes was the first sensational philosopher of any name, and he pushed, as we shall find has generally been the case, his sensationalism to materialism. He assumed that all our knowledge is acquired through the senses, thereby, of course, logically implying that we can have no knowledge of mind itself, nor of its operations—and that memory and imagination are merely the primary affections of the nervous system, as mechanically acted upon in sensation, more or less imperfectly retained. It is, however, the radical defect of his philosophy, as, indeed, must be the case with all such systems, that it explains nothing, indicates nothing, and so does not even stimulate the mind to ingenious speculations. Hobbes himself felt this

Digitized by Google

so strongly that, in order to have the appearance, at least, of effecting something, he supplements his system by a theory, which purports in some incomprehensible way, to explain mental operations by the use of language. Hence he argues, that mathematical axioms, and specially all propositions involving ideas which it would seem most difficult to derive in any form from sensation, are evolved through the definitions of the terms that express them, forgetting that words are invented to express something or another, and consequently, that unless there were antecedent ideas, there never could have been words at all. A sound which expresses no meaning is not, in the ordinary sense of the term a word, and it is obvious can, from the very nature of the case, admit of no definition, because there is nothing to define, nor any conceivable form of evolution, because there is nothing to evolve. It is manifest, therefore, that if there had been no ideas, there could have been no words, and that to suppose ideas framed out of words, instead of words invented to express ideas, is just to reverse the mental process, and in doing so to assume a process which is not only not true, but which is evidently impossible. As might have been expected, therefore, the speculations of Hobbes scarcely affected spiritual philosophy as a science, and, notwithstanding the zeal of his disciples—of whom there are even yet some to be found—they are now, generally speaking, almost forgotten.

Digitized by Google

Spinoza was a Cartesian, in so far, at all events, as he fell into the primary Cartesian error of supposing that spiritual truth can be demonstrated mathematically. His system, consequently, was ontological, as founding what he supposes to be a higher science on certain *a priori* axioms, which, instead of being really axioms, do, on the contrary, involve propositions, in some instances, unfounded, and in others altogether beyond the power of the human understanding to determine.

Mallebranche was still more thoroughly a Cartesian than Spinoza, in so far as he assumed that men have a clear intuitive knowledge of the nature of the Supreme Being. In this knowledge, going somewhat beyond his master, he believed all sort of secondary knowledge to be absolutely realised, and consequently, of course, made our belief in external existence to depend exclusively on our innate conviction of the veracity of God, as confirmed and supplemented by revelation. Thus far his system, however questionable in its philosophy, was, at least, intelligible in its purport; but it must be admitted that this cannot be said of its details, as he proceeds to its ulterior development. On the contrary, his notions become vague, indefinite, and contradictory. The system of Mallebranche, however, being, like that of Spinoza, ontological rather than psychological, it is unnecessary here to enter farther on a consideration of its merits, as of no real importance, at all events, in its details, to the philo-

Digitized by Google

sophy of mind. We have, indeed, alluded briefly to the speculations of Hobbes, Spinoza, and Mallebranche, not as practically affecting the development of spiritual philosophy, but as indicating the struggles which were even then making to realise some foundation or another on which belief might find a resting place of a solid and satisfactory character. They failed, simply from neglecting the great Baconian principle, which must be true of all human science, whether mental or physical, that to man nothing *a priori* can be known, and consequently that, whatever he ascertains concerning matter of absolute fact, must be the result of experience, realised under the operation of those faculties of observation which nature has given him.

This universal error into which all spiritual philosophers had more or less fallen, of arguing from supposed *a priori* knowledge, or from mere conjection, a worse error of the same kind, was first detected and enunciated by Locke, who, in precisely the same sense as the expression is applied to Bacon with respect to physical, may be called the father of spiritual science, since he first, among spiritual philosophers, denounced all appeals to *a priori* knowledge, and shewed that the extravagancies, into which metaphysicians had been betrayed in their speculations, originated in assuming such supposed *a priori* knowledge under the name of innate ideas, which, being utterly indefinite, and, therefore, applicable to any shadowy feeling which

Digitized by Google

might exist in the mind—necessarily instigated them to attempt the determination of particulars altogether beyond the reach of the human faculties to ascertain. It is indeed, no doubt, true, that Locke did not perfect his proof of this principle. He hardly attempts to argue it on general grounds, contenting himself with reducing many ideas, then believed to be innate, to conclusions deducible from ordinary reason, and with proving others certainly not to be innate, to whatever source they might be referred. Hence, from a natural fear, probably, that these last, as left unexplained, might affect the validity of his grand principle, which, with an unerring sagacity, he felt to be true, Locke allowed himself to speak of them—and amongst them mathematical axioms were included—as of no sort of importance, calling them "mere verbal propositions" and the like, which, as evidently the result of prejudice, tended materially to weaken his own authority, as well as to distract attention from the fundamental truth which he had given forth. Yet this was by no means the sole cause of the neglect of that great principle developed by Locke, which was exhibited by philosophers in after years. The fact is, that he was far a-head of his age in such speculations. The world was, in a great measure, prepared for the Baconian philosophy, but it was not by any means prepared, even in the time of Locke, to apply the principle of that philosophy to the spiritual world. Hence, we find his refutation of the theory of innate

Digitized by Google

ideas, which was infinitely the most important portion of his "Essay on the Human Understanding," spoken of, even down to a late period, as if it were of very little importance, and, even those who professed to adopt it, evidently had no conception of its range. The truth is, that it demolishes every system of modern philosophy.

In the subsequent portion of his philosophy, *i. e.*, in rearing a structure on the foundation which he had laid, Locke is much less successful—nor, under the circumstances already mentioned, can we wonder that such was the case. No doubt the essay contains a large amount of interesting speculation, and no one can rise from its perusal, considering the time in which he lived, without a strong sense of the sound judgment of the writer and his singular power of lucid and precise expression; but yet we feel a sort of disappointment at the limited amount of real information which we have received, and it is only after repeated perusal that we can be satisfied of our not having, through carelessness, lost sight of those profound conclusions, which so much apparent subtlety of analysis had led us unconsciously to expect. The fact is, that Locke was, in some measure, seduced by his Hobbesian tendencies, so that, though his logical mind unquestionably repudiated Hobbes' materialism, as inconsistent with his denunciation of all *a priori* assumptions, yet his admiration of that writer clearly led him to substitute, in a great measure, definitions of words

Digitized by Google

for analysis of states of mind—and, though definitions of words be undoubtedly of considerable importance, or rather of very great importance, in the investigation of spiritual states, yet it is evident that this is only as an aid and an introduction to the other, and that mere definitions of words, however accurate and however ingenious, can never give us absolute information, either as to the states of mind or its processes. For this purpose we must, in each case, determine precisely what the state or the process is, and so describe them, as that every one from his own experience may be prepared to admit that the description is true, and that he has realised it.

But, while with all our admiration of Locke, we are thus prepared candidly to admit his defects, we must, at the same time, decidedly protest against his being charged with errors for which he is in no shape responsible. Specially does it seem singular that, in ascribing all our knowledge to sensation and reflection, he should have been charged with undue limitation of its sources, as if there were some other source from whence it could be derived, than from that which is without and that which is within; for to say, as has been said, that he intended "reflection" only to apply to ideas acquired by sensation, is directly to contradict his own express words, since he states in terms that seem to admit of no misconception, "by reflection, then, in "the following part of this discourse, I would be

Digitized by Google

"understood to mean, that notice which the mind "takes of its own operations, and the manner of "them."[a] But, while it seems perfectly indisputable that Locke, in principle, considered the states and processes of the mind as suitable objects of reflection, it is, no doubt, equally true, that he practically leans to that philosophy which attributes our knowledge mainly to the information derived from the senses, as subsequently modified and generalised, and analysed by reason. From whence it seems highly probable, that Locke regarded the relationship of matter and mind as realised in a direct and more or less mechanical action, although disinclined to state any precise form of a theory, as from the very nature of the case implying too close an approach to materialism. At all events, after carefully considering all that has been said upon the subject by Reid, Brown, and Sir W. Hamilton, I cannot discover the slightest ground for supposing that Locke believed ideas to be films or images coming from bodies and representing them in the mind. This would, indeed, have been utterly inconsistent with his principle, repudiating all innate ideas, and still more, of course, ideas that are purely conjectural. In truth, I am strongly impressed with the conviction that Dr. Brown was right in supposing that, till the time of Berkeley, the theory of images coming from bodies to the mind had been substantively abandoned by more modern philosophers, or

[a] Essay on Human Understanding; B ii., chap 1., sect. 4.

Digitized by Google

rather, it is very doubtful whether such an opinion was ever formally adopted as a theory by any considerable number of them. The language, indeed, of the ancients had been retained—who, as we have seen, had an entirely different notionasto the nature of ideas—and the consequence, no doubt, was the introduction of great confusion on the subject But all we can say of Locke at the farthest is, that he nowhere formally repudiates the theory, nor does he give us any precise information as to the opinion which he himself entertained with respect to the mode in which external existence is realised by the mind. That he speaks of the senses as inlets for ideas, is true; but, as Brown has justly remarked, this was probably a mere metaphor, since I am not aware of a single passage in Locke's writings when the use of the term idea may not, in perfect consistency, be understood, according to its common sense and now universally recognised interpretation.

What may have been Locke's opinions, however, with respect to the mode under which mind becomes cognizant of matter, is of little consequence, inasmuch, as if it were only from their very uncertainty, it is evident that they could not have affected philosophical science; it is his tendency to sensationalism, though, as we have seen, a very subordinate particular in his system, which attracted the attention chiefly of succeeding philosophers, and, in a certain sense, founded a new school of philosophy. It was thus in following forth Locke's tendency to

Digitized by Google

sensationalism, and neglecting the fundamental principle of his philosophy, that Hartley was led to attempt an explanation of the mode in which matter became cognizant of mind, by a theory of nervous vibrations. On this theory, however, it is unecessary to dwell, as it was like all other materialistic theories, merely an *a priori* conjecture of no practical utility, and, in so far as his particular form of it is concerned, has fallen into oblivion. But we speak of Hartley as the first of modern philosophers who directed his attention to the mode in which ideas follow each other in the human mind, or, in other words, the mode in which ideas are associated together, and, though his explanation of this phenomenon was unsatisfactory, yet so unspeakably important was its determination felt to be, in connection with the development of the constitution of the human mind, that in having suggested it as a subject of thought, he has actually acquired something like the celebrity of a discoverer.

It was, however, in France that by far the most eminent of the professed Lockian school appeared. We need hardly say that we allude to Condillac, whose philosophy was unqualified materialism. It is, therefore, liable to the very same fatal objections as all other systems of a similar character; yet there are portions of Condillac's works which exhibit most beautiful exemplifications of spiritual analysis, but they are merely incidental, when he gives somewhat of free scope to the forth-goings of

Digitized by Google

a mind singularly acute in observation and precise in thought. These could not, however, sustain a system which in its mass was founded on conjecture, and therefore evidently could lead to no useful result. There can, however, be no doubt that his writings gave a great impulse to the materialistic school in France, and served long indeed as a magazine from whence materialists in after years drew supplies of argument and illustration, which it seems exceedingly doubtful whether they were competent to have provided for themselves. Hence the progressive growth of a system, which, in the hands of Helvetius, Saint Lambert, Condorcet, and the Encyclopædists, ultimately assumed the form of dogmatic atheism. At the same time, it is not to be supposed, that because materialism may lead to such results, therefore it must do so; on the contrary, a certain form of materialism, as will afterwards appear, does not seem inconsistent even with a belief in Christianity. The materialism of these French philosophers, however, was of a totally different character. It implied a gross confusion of spiritual phenomena, with what we know to be physical substance and the results of mere mechanical action, thus involving an assumption not merely conjectural, but, in the very nature of things, impossible and absurd. It is hardly necessary to say, that from such a quarter no aid has been afforded to spiritual science, in determining the faculties, or explaining the processes of the human mind.

Digitized by Google

In Germany, the Lockian philosophy was, on the other hand, not only not adopted, but zealously opposed by Leibnitz, certainly one of the most extraordinary men of his own or of any other age, inasmuch as he gained and in so far deservedly gained celebrity, not merely in one, but in almost every science. Yet we may safely say, without detracting unfairly from his high position, that had he confined his attention to a more limited range of subjects, his fame would, in all probability, have been greatly enhanced in the eyes of posterity. The fact seems to be, however, that Leibnitz, conscious of his own transcendent powers, could hardly endure the sense of literary inferiority in any respect, and hence, apparently, in a great measure, his opposition to Locke, in which assuredly much more originality, than either calm reason or sound principle, is evinced. Nothing, indeed, can be conceived more thoroughly contrasted than Locke and Leibnitz in the character of their metaphysical writings—the matter-of-fact analyses of the Englishman being the very antipodes of the hypothetical ingenuity of the German. Yet it is no small proof of the grasp of Leibnitz's mind, that he instantly fixed upon the grand principle of the Lockian philosophy, which the mass even of Locke's own followers had in a great measure overlooked, and set himself mainly to depreciate that particular on which he foresaw that his opponent's permanent fame would ultimately depend. Accordingly,

Digitized by Google

finding that he could not venture on defending the theory of innate ideas as it was then understood, Leibnitz resolved to institute what he believed to be a new theory. Admitting that there were no ideas *a priori* of the operation of mind, he yet assumed that the mind, when it came to operate, generated such ideas by its own energies, altogether apart from experience—in other words, that the mind has an innate power of generating *a priori* ideas in the very act of its self-exercise. In this theory we have the origin of that vague feeling, rather than opinion, which still continues to subsist upon this point, and which is obviously indicated in that theory of intuitive principles, which constitutes the distinguishing characteristic of the Scottish school. It is not pretended that innate ideas exist in the mind absolutely and *a priori* of mental operations, but it seems to be supposed that they are worked out somehow by the mental faculties themselves, so as gradually to become clearer and clearer in proportion to their progressive development. As, however, under this theory, there were still no means provided for the recognition of external existence, and, under such a theory, no means seemed to be conceivable which would not have approximated too closely to the sensationalism of his adversary, Leibnitz adopted the bold resolution of denying that we do absolutely recognise external existence at all, explaining our imagined recognition of it, by supposing that our manufac-

Digitized by Google

ture of mental ideas proceeds *pari-passu* with the development to each person of external realities. This is what he calls the "pre-established "harmony." The Supreme Being, according to his account, has so constituted the universe that internal conceptions in all respects harmonise with external phenomena, although they neither have any necessary connection with each other, nor does the one in any way act upon the other. The one responds merely to the other, so that as the optic nerve moves, the soul though utterly unconnected with that nerve, yet has an idea that it sees, and if the object seen be the sun, for example, the sun is actually there, but the notion of the soul that it sees such object is a pure delusion, the mere result of the pre-established harmony. It seems to have been regarded as of no importance by Leibnitz, that all this was mere conjecture; that it was not only mere conjecture, but, in direct opposition to our most irresistible convictions; that it was not only in direct opposition to our most irresistible convictions, but that it involved entire and absolute scepticism, sweeping away in its very terms, all ground for our belief in an external world, and, therefore, necessarily subverting all logical confidence in the evidence of our faculties. For the sake of his theory—and it is surely a most important lesson to all who take upon themselves the responsibility of attempting to guide the opinions of others—for the sake of his theory, this

Digitized by Google

great and good man allowed himself to become the instrument of bewildering his fellow-creatures by ingenious extravagancies which shake all faith in the present, and subvert all hope in the future. This philosophy, systematised after a fashion according to the heavy formalism of Wolfius, not only continued for a very long time to exercise an almost unlimited sway over the German mind, but, as we shall subsequently endeavour to shew, actually contains in it the germ of all the speculations of Kant and his more or less nominal successors, down to the present day.

But, however much Leibnitz may have been influenced by extrinsic causes to propose so strange a theory, we have not the slightest reason to suppose that Bishop Berkeley, whose philosophy we next proceed to consider, had any motive in his speculations save a sincere desire for the promotion of truth. His theory, indeed, originated in that horror with which he regarded those materialistic and irreligious doctrines which, in his day, had become most widely prevalent, and to which, in conformity with the existing views of philosophy, he could discover no sufficient antidote. In those circumstances, and assuming that, except through mechanical action, there was no possible way of explaining the cognition of external existences, unless under the theory of ideas coming from them to the mind as their representatives, which he, at all events, seems to have supposed the universal mode of accounting

Digitized by Google

for the phenomenon—and, having satisfied himself that both these theories were groundless, he naturally enough came to the conclusion that we have no satisfactory proof for the existence of an external world at all, and consequently that our belief in it, as being unfounded, must necessarily be prejudicial to truth.

His argument, therefore, was to this effect—we know nothing of external existence absolutely, we only know certain feelings of which we are conscious. If, for example, a man feels heat, whether pleasureably or painfully, he has no means of discovering whence the feeling originates. He feels something, but what it is, or whence it is, he cannot tell. The supposition, therefore, that his feeling originates in a material cause without him, is a mere conjecture, and a conjecture which, logically, has no foundation whatever. As, therefore, a man's idea of heat is merely another name for his feeling of heat, the conclusion that his idea is caused by an external existence seems false and unwarrantable. The argument is evidently perfectly sound, supposing the hypothesis correct that our ascription of the heat which we feel to an external cause originates in mere conjecture. Nor does it appear any sufficient answer to say that we believe it intuitively—for, in the first place, this is manifestly not true, since there are many feelings which we do not know whether to attribute to an external cause, or to some operation within us—a position

Digitized by Google

which is strikingly illustrated in almost every dream; and, secondly, even if it were true, it would not serve the purpose, since an intuitive belief in anything external could not admit of proof. This argument, moreover, Berkeley farther confirmed in the following way:—Our ideas of external objects, are said to be representations of those objects conveyed into the mind through motions or vibrations of the nerves. Now, setting aside the difficulty of discovering how this could be possible, it is evident that, under the very terms of the theory, all that we really know or can know, in such a case, is not external existence itself, but the images flowing from it. The link which is supposed to connect the images with the external objects is altogether wanting. We only know the images therefore, and the supposition that they come from external existences is again an unfounded one, and utterly untenable. Assuming that we know external existence only through the medium of images, this argument also seems to be perfectly irresistible. But, the external world being thus superseded, the difficulty still remained of accounting for those ideas and images, which, on all sides are admitted to exist, come from whence they may, and for this the Bishop has a theory ready. He says, that as ideas can only exist in a mind, and as in our minds there certainly are ideas, inasmuch as we are conscious of them, and yet they do not originate with our minds,

Digitized by Google

seeing they imply an immense variety of considerations which our minds could never have evolved, as being utterly away from their nature and faculties; and all our convictions indicate, consequently, that they are from without, so as to give us the evidence of consciousness upon the subject—therefore, it necessarily follows that they must have been derived from some other mind without, which transfused them into our minds, which mind can only be the Supreme Being. Under this theory we at once get quit of materialism, while objections to the fundamentals of religious truth disappear, and, the doctrine of the existence and attributes of a Deity being thoroughly established, doubts and difficulties are at an end for ever.[a]

Unfortunately this brilliant prospect was found to be of short duration, for the celebrated David Hume, adopting Bishop Berkeley's premises, without assenting to his conclusion, soon logically demonstrated, that his principles admitted of a far more extensive application than the Bishop himself had ever conceived. For, as Berkeley had argued, and argued conclusively, that if we are conscious only of ideas, unless a logical link could be established betwixt such ideas and the external world which they are supposed to represent, there could be no logical ground for believing in an external world at all; so Hume argued, and also argued

[a] Three dialogues between Hylas and Philoneus, in which Bishop Berkeley's views are clearly explained.

Digitized by Google

conclusively, that if we are not conscious of the existence of mind, as was then and is now universally believed, but only of ideas that represent mind, unless a logical link can be established betwixt such ideas, and the mind or internal world which they represent, there could be no logical ground for believing in a mind or internal world at all—so that, ideas being all that by this reasoning was left, it followed that any assumption of the existence either of mind or matter was utterly illogical and fallacious. Nay, he farther continued, that if we were deceived as to our belief in external matter, it could be of little consequence, even had there been no such irresistible argument for negativing logically the existence of mind, since, if we are deceived in one particular, of which our faculties give us the strongest assurance, it must be evident that no logical confidence could be reposed in them with respect to any other. Thus, instead of the firm and satisfactory foundation of logical truth, which Berkeley imagined himself to have established, we had that foundation entirely swept away, and a system of absolute scepticism substituted. At the same time, we are not to suppose that Mr. Hume, like Bishop Berkeley, believed his own conclusions. He was a sceptic, and his object in urging such arguments was, not to elicit absolute truth, but to prove that the reason of man was not to be depended upon—and for this purpose, and this only, does he endeavour to shew that, logically,

Digitized by Google

we have no ground to believe either in matter or mind.[a]

Accordingly, not content with thus assailing our belief in all realities on general grounds, he farther examined various of our strongest beliefs in detail, and proved generally, with an irresistible power of logic, that on the principles then recognised, the same uncertainty with regard to each of them might be predicated. Specially, he denied any necessary connection betwixt cause and effect, or, at all events, our capability of discovering it. He maintained that power was therefore merely a name for some imaginary or mystical influence which a false theory had led philosophers to interpose betwixt cause and effect, but which there is no reason to believe actually to exist at all. His own theory was, that our belief in the connection betwixt cause and effect depends entirely on custom, or in other words, results from association. Now this was evidently a deadly stab at all belief from that of the being of a God downwards, and was the more dangerous from the extreme plausibility of the argument; for there certainly is no link discoverable betwixt cause and effect, nor have we the slightest reason for supposing that such a link, in any absolute form, actually exists, and consequently, on the supposition that the necessary connection betwixt cause and effect can only be accounted for on

[a] Hume's Essays—12. On the academical or sceptical philosophy; 2. Origin of idealism.

Digitized by Google

the assumption of such a bondof union, we must be content, it would appear, either to adopt Mr. Hume's sceptical explanation, or to leave the matter absolutely unexplained.[a]

On the whole, therefore, Mr. Hume has rather been a destructive of philosophy than a philosopher, and yet we are bound to say, that no one has done so much in giving an impulse to the science, and even in giving energy to the human mind, since he has called forth Reid and Kant, and multitudes of others as his adversaries, and has, as it were, compelled men not only to original but to logical thinking. In fact, since his time, discussions on spiritual subjects generally have assumed a new and more satisfactory character; and the cause of this lies in his having first, during modern times, at all events, exhibited clearly the extent and character of our ignorance, as well as the uncertainty and inconsistency of the principles of belief which had previously been entertained, so as that it has been rendered comparatively difficult to confide longer in theory, except it be either of the most plausible and popular character, or else assume the form of absolute mysticism. The edifice of philosophy, at all events, Hume demonstrated to require reconstruction, and we need hardly say, after the sketch now given of the progress it had hitherto made, that few materials were to be found,

[a] Hume's Essays—4. Sceptical doubts concerning the operations of the understanding; 5. Sceptical solution of these doubts; 7. Of the idea of necessary connection.

Digitized by Google

except in the analysis that Locke had partially instituted.

It was a season of doubt and darkness, therefore, in the philosophical world when Reid appeared, and hence the reputation which his writings, purporting to refute Hume, almost immediately acquired. Yet, in truth, Reid achieved but very little in the field of practical philosophy. I am well aware of the charges to which I may subject myself in hazarding this assertion, nor would I have hazarded it, nor would I have conceived myself in any measure justified in so doing, did I believe that there was the smallest doubt upon the subject, or, were I not prepared to substantiate my conclusion by proofs so plain and irresistible, as ultimately, at all events, to command the assent of those who interest themselves in the subject. Nor, should the conclusion be admitted, do I claim any peculiar merit in having realised it. Such a conviction, indeed, has been for years gaining ground. The French philosophers have already substantively thrown off their allegiance to Reid; and Brown and Ferrier, the only writers of any importance that have recently, in this country, appeared on spiritual science, have both distinctly indicated their opinions as to the unsatisfactory nature of his principles. This shews the growth of the conviction, for we must utterly repudiate these unworthy charges of vanity and rivalry brought against these philosophers, as not only resting on no foundation whatever, but

Digitized by Google

as calculated to interfere materially with that free expression of thought which men are entitled to give forth on every subject, but which is specially important, and which, instead of check, merits the warmest encouragement with reference to a science so little prosecuted and imperfectly understood, as that of spiritual philosophy. For myself, I was educated to admire Reid, and, in so far, I do still venerate his memory, and hence, had his philosophy afforded me any available explanation of the points which forced themselves on my attention, in the position in which I happen to be placed, not only would this work never have been written, but the imagination would never even have suggested itself to me of writing it. I repeat, then, that Reid actually achieved but very little in the field even of that practical philosophy which has usually been supposed to be peculiarly his own. He very clearly shewed, no doubt, that, somehow or other, Hume's conclusions, in certain cases, were unfounded, but he failed to detect the precise particulars in which his errors lay, and consequently, of course, in logically refuting his scepticism. The fact is, that though endued with clear sense and a sound judgment, which dissatisfied him with extravagant conclusions, yet Reid was neither an acute philosopher, nor, still less, perhaps, a sound theologian. In answering Hume, therefore, instead of going forward, he, as we shall by-and-by more particularly shew, fell back on the old reserve of

Digitized by Google

innate ideas—for, though in words he admited that Locke superseded them, it is no less certain that he substantially re-adopted them under the new name of "principles of common sense." Only by their instrumentality, indeed, was he enabled to rid himself of the theory of ideas being merely representations of external things in the mind, which he himself declares to be the essence of his philosophy. "The "merit of what you are pleased to call my philoso- "phy," he says "lies chiefly in having called in ques- "tion the common theory of ideas or images of things "in the mind being the only objects of thought," and subsequently adds, "I think there is hardly "anything that can be called mine in the philoso- "phy of the mind which does not follow with ease "from the detection of this prejudice,"[a] and, in the detection of this prejudice, he thinks that he has refuted Hume, whereas, Hume's scepticism is even more triumphant under Reid's own assumption of intuitive principles than under the theory of representational ideas.

Indeed, nothing can show more clearly the confusion in Reid's mind, as to the real question, than his so strongly urging the practical denial which every man's common sense gives to the scepticism of his great opponent, since Hume never, for a moment, disputed the practical impossibility of doubting the existence of an external world, or the information of our senses, so that the worthy pro-

[a] Stewart's Life of Reid.

Digitized by Google

fessor's "ponderous levity," to use the words of a late eminent statesman, in ridiculing the conclusions of Hume, as if he had applied them to practical life, was altogether misplaced. Hume never denied, nor pretended to deny, our common-sense belief in an external world, nor in anything else, but our logical belief only. It was the reason of man which he attacked, and not his instincts. It was his object to shew that reason is fallacious, that it proves nothing, or rather that it proves anything, and that, if confided in, it must necessarily involve us in perpetual contradictions. That its value, consequently, was altogether over-rated, and that human beings were, in reality, merely a higher species of those very animals around us, which we regard with such contempt, as if of a different and inferior order from ourselves. Instead, therefore, of denying or disputing the existence of instincts, innate ideas, *a priori* cognitions, intuitive principles, or by whatever name they may be called, it was Hume's very object to maintain them, *and limit our belief to them*, as enough to guide us in the affairs of ordinary life, but altogether insufficient to carry us a step beyond it, as being perpetually liable to be confused with our own wishes and caprices. Nay, with his usual common sense, for few men have been more richly endowed with it, he admitted fully that reason, even such as it is, was a perfectly satisfactory guide, while regulated by experience, with respect to the ordinary affairs

Digitized by Google

of the world, and that in reference to these, in so far at all events, its judgments were of paramount authority. "Nor need we fear," he says, "that "this philosophy, while it endeavours to LIMIT our "energies to common life, should ever undermine "the reasonings of common life, and carry its "doubts so far as to destroy all action, AS WELL AS "ALL SPECULATION. NATURE WILL ALWAYS MAINTAIN "HER RIGHTS, and prevail, in the end, over any "abstract reasoning whatever. Though we should "conclude, for instance, as in the foregoing section, "that in all reasonings from experience, there is a "step taken by the mind which is not supported "by any argument, or process of the understand-"ing, there is no danger that these reasonings, on "which almost all knowledge depends, will ever be "affected by such a discovery. If the mind be not "engaged by argument to make this step, IT MUST "BE INDUCED BY SOME OTHER PRINCIPLE OF EQUAL "WEIGHT AND AUTHORITY, and that principle will "preserve its influence, as long as human nature "remains the same."[a] Hence, Reid's appeal to intuitive conviction, it will be manifest, instead of subverting actually conceded Hume's conclusion, since it not only admitted, but maintained, that our beliefs in all that is most important for time or eternity had no foundation whatever in reason, but depending upon certain *a priori* propositions, which, if they really exist, might supersede reason alto-

[a] Enquiry concerning human understanding—Section 5, part 1.

Digitized by Google

gether, and which in some cases, at all events, would seem to be inconsistent with what we usually regard as reason. Let any one examine the above-cited passage from Hume, and compare it with the result of Reid's philosophy, and I will venture to say that it will be found absolutely impossible to discover the smallest difference betwixt their respective theories. The cause of the success of Reid's philosophy, therefore, was mainly owing to its entire identification with the character and intellectual development of his age, in connection with the anxious desire on the part of the great mass of society to procure some antidote against a system so pernicious as Hume's, expressed as it was with such precision in its details, and argued with such logical power and acuteness in its principles.

But, however this may be, there can, at all events, be no question, that this appeal to innate or intuitive principles, without any attempt at explaining their nature, their origin, or their mode of operation, constitutes the great characteristic of that which has been called, "The Scottish School." Wherever a difficulty occurs, without even an attempt at anything like a nicer analysis, the knot is at once cut, the phenomenon is declared to be a principle of common sense, and hence it becomes utterly impossible to determine, except by a sort of guess, what is a rational belief, and what is an *a priori* intuition. The whole system is thus found to be a product of merely arbitrary and unaccountable

Digitized by Google

principles. We are constituted mere creatures of instinct, endued with powers of speech, which, enabling us to amass a larger amount of experience, give our reason an apparent advantage over that of the other animals around us, but left utterly incapable of determining, in any one case, the logical grounds of our belief, or of ascertaining, indeed, whether there be any such. The philosophy of the human mind, consequently, ceases in reality to be any philosophy at all, inasmuch as its main facts admit neither of explanation nor analysis; and so thoroughly does Reid himself verify this conclusion, not merely under a general examination of his system, but specially in its details, that he gives as a first principle, or, in other words, a conviction *a priori* of reason and experience, our belief "that "there is life and intelligence in our fellow-men "with whom we converse," and to prove that it is so, he proceeds, "now, I would ask how a child of "a year old comes by this conviction? Not by "reasoning surely, for children do not reason at "that age, nor is it by external senses, for life and "intelligence are not objects of external senses."[a] And, certainly, if by reasoning be meant a formal statement of arguments, with which Reid evidently confused it, then it is quite true that infants of a year old "do not reason." The question is not, however, whether such infants can formally state an argument, but whether any process of reasoning

[a] Intellectual powers—Essay 6, ch. 4, sec. 8.

Digitized by Google

can go on in the infant's mind, under the operation of its natural powers? Does a child learn by experience, in other words, reasoning from what it has felt, to what it would feel in identical circumstances? and we say that there can be no dispute upon the point, to which any one would listen, that has in the very slightest degree attended to the development of an infant's mind. We say, that not only can a child of a year old reason, and often with great acuteness, but that a child exhibits its reasoning powers in the very earliest stages of existence, as—for example ,in the perfect knowledge which it seems to acquire of the means through which its wants are supplied, so soon as it has once been fed from a mother's breast. It is true, too, that "life and intelligence are not objects of the "external senses," but words, and signs, and acts, are objects of the external senses, and it is from these that the infant *rationally* infers the existence of "life and intelligence" in those fellow-creatures with whom it is brought into contact. If, indeed, we knew intuitively, or *a priori*, the existence of "life and intelligence" in our fellow-creatures, apart from experience, it would be difficult to conceive what we do know from experience, and what is the use of our eyes, our ears, or our understandings at all.

But the same conclusion is, perhaps, even more strongly verified, if that be possible, from the following passage, where he assumes, as a first

Digitized by Google

principle, "that certain features of the countenance, "sounds of the voice, and gestures of the body, "indicate certain thoughts and dispositions of the "mind."[a] From this it would follow that the operations of other men's minds, their feelings, and the relation of these to the expression of their countenances, are intuitively known to infants, altogether apart from experience—that, in fact, they are innate ideas of which we can give no explanation, except that they are there, and that, with or without reason, we must practically believe them. We need hardly say what an enormous amount of knowledge this supposes to be innate, or rather how little it would leave for us to ascertain by any other process. If, indeed, this be a first principle, we need assuredly give ourselves little trouble about any investigation into the operations of the human mind, since there could remain little or nothing that was worth investigating. Nor is it available to argue, as has sometimes been hinted at, and as indeed Reid himself would seem to indicate, that there is some distinction that may be drawn betwixt innate and intuitive truths, as if innate truths only were *a priori*, while those that are intuitive come to be known when we attain to the use of reason, since, in the cases of which we have spoken, it is manifest this does not apply—and, moreover, as Locke has proved, this assumption gives up the whole question, since, if reason be

[a] Intellectual powers—Essay 6, ch. 5, sec. 9.

Digitized by Google

necessary for their apprehension, it follows that they can be neither innate nor intuitive beliefs, but rational or logical conclusions. In fact it is perfectly clear that, if there be any distinction at all betwixt innate and intuitve truths, it consists in this, that the assumption of intuitive truths is even more objectionable than the other, since an intuitive truth, as in the case of infants knowing the thoughts and dispositions of others from the expression of their features, must imply not merely one idea, but a vast amount of *a priori* knowledge, in order to render the process conceivable.

We may now easily understand how Dr. Reid would deal with that most important of all the special sceptical arguments which Hume has proposed with regard to the relation betwixt cause and effect. In the first instance we are told, of course, that the belief is intuitive, and that, consequently, no farther explanation can be given upon the subject. Yet, in an after stage of his philosophy, as if dissatisfied with this mode of superseding a question, in its consequences so unspeakably important to human happiness, we find him adopting the theory under which our idea of active power generally is referred to that sense of power which we ourselves feel, as developed in the act of volition, from whence he draws the conclusion, that there can be no such thing as power in matter, and that power, therefore, in every instance where it is exhibited, must be attributed to the action of an intelligent

Digitized by Google

agent. Hence, accordingly, he assumes that all the events and changes in the material world, as well as every feeling produced by the action of matter on animated beings, must be regarded either as a direct operation of the Supreme Being, or of "subordi-"nate intelligent agents deputed by him."[a] It is strange that Dr. Reid did not perceive the effect of this theory, widely, by the way, adopted by Divines, to be the re-constitution of that very scepticism, specially with respect to an external world, which it had been the business of his life to overthrow. For, as Dr. Brown has demonstrated, (perhaps not very consistently in so far as he himself is concerned,) if we do not believe in the powers of matter, we cannot believe in matter at all, inasmuch as it is through its powers alone that we do or can know anything about it—and farther, if we believe, as one of our most irresistible convictions, that external or material substances act upon us and upon one another, and if this turn out, after all, to be a delusion, which the Supreme Being, or some subordinate agent delegated by him, imposes upon us, then it is evident that we have no good ground for any kind of belief whatever—nay, the very truth of God is logically called in question by such a theory. Whether doubts originating in a sort of unconscious realisation of these and other similar consequences had subsequently crossed his mind, or whether he became partly aware of the incon-

[a] Active powers—Essay 1, ch. 5.

Digitized by Google

sistency implied in his adoption of any theory at all upon the subject, we cannot say; but certain it is, that towards the close of the very essay in which his adhesion to it is contained, we find a strong indication of uncertainty and perplexity as to his absolute convictions exhibited in a passage which, for another reason, claims particular attention. It is as follows:—"The conception of an efficient "cause may VERY PROBABLY be derived from the "experience we have had in very early life of our "own power to produce certain effects. But the "belief, that no event can happen without an effi- "cient cause, cannot be derived from experience. "We may learn from experience what *is*, or what "*was*, but no experience can teach us what *neces-* "*sarily must be*."[a] On this point Sir W. Hamilton, in his edition of Reid's works, refers to a note of his own, wherein he says—"It is creditable to "Reid, that he perceived that the quality of *neces-* "*sity* is the criterion which distinguishes *native* from "*adventitious* notions or judgments. He did not, "however, always make the proper use of it. Leib- "nitz has the honour of first explicitly announcing "this criterion, and Kant of first fully applying it "to the phenomena. In none has Kant been more "successful than in this under consideration."[b] We have here a clear exhibition of a difficulty which has perplexed all philosophers, and in later times

[a] Active powers—Essay 1, ch. 5.

[b] Hamilton's edition of Reid. Intellectual powers—Essay 2, ch. 19.—*Note.*

Digitized by Google

confounded all philosophy—Whence do we get the idea of what are called necessary truths? In an attempt at explaining this, originated the assumption that they are innate, intuitive, or *a priori*, and now the operation has in so far been reversed, and necessity is taken as the criterion of the knowledge of what really is innate, intuitive, or *a priori*. The criterion will hardly serve the purpose, however, since the assumption would carry us a vast deal farther than its patrons seem to be aware. For the fact is, that every truth is necessary, assuming the existence of the elements of which it is predicated. "Trees are woody," is a necessary truth. "The "sun gives light," is a necessary truth. "Fire "burns," is a necessary truth. For if trees were not woody, they would not be what we mean by the word trees. If the sun did not give light, it would not be what we mean by the sun. If fire did not burn, it would not be what we mean by fire. According to this theory, therefore, it indisputably follows that every general truth which we believe must be innate or intuitive, since they are all necessary truths. In the same way, "no event can "happen without a cause," is true, if there be an event—the only difference being, that in this case, the proposition, instead of implying a mere naked fact, involves the exhibition of a *relation* betwixt two things, the negative of which would constitute a contradiction, simply because every proposition involving a relation *assumes* the existence of the

Digitized by Google

related elements. How this comes to pass, and what is the real explanation of the nature of what are usually called necessary truths, can be only determined by an analysis appertaining to a subsequent portion of our subject. It is sufficient here to observe, that Reid had not the slightest idea of adopting necessity as the criterion for "distinguishing native from adventitious notions or judgments," as Sir W. Hamilton supposes, since these truths which he regards as "native," or at least many of them, are not relations at all, but mere facts, and therefore do not imply, in any degree, the character of contradiction in their negatives which Kant, and Sir William after him, erroneously suppose to be the test of necessity.

However much good, therefore, was done by Reid in his generation—soothing, as his philosophy undoubtedly did, the anxieties of many worthy people—we need not wonder that a school, founded on such a basis, should have tended little to the real progress of philosophy as a science. Accordingly, the writings of Stewart are little more than the opinions of Reid, put into more elegant language. It could in no measure, therefore, forward the object which we specially have in view, to dwell on his dissertations here, however admirable they may be, as beautiful exhibitions of the most perfect realisations of the Scottish shool, since the few original speculations in which Stewart ventures to indulge will come to be considered subsequently,

Digitized by Google

in the course of our argument—and none of them have, in any measure, given even a tone to any part of philosophy, nor, indeed, so far as I know, have they been almost noticed by any writer since his age, except incidentally.

Stewart, however, was almost the contemporary of Reid. In his age Reid's theory was regarded with the deepest veneration, as our only defence from scepticism of the most dangerous and most pernicious kind. To hint, consequently, any doubt of his principles was by many, nay by the mass of religious men, regarded as something very like the exhibition of a tendency towards infidelity. Yet, assuming Reid's principles, nothing could possibly be done of any importance for the progress of spiritual science, since "the principles of common "sense," adopted as *a priori* intuitions, and embracing directly or indirectly all or almost all the knowledge which human beings possess, evidently precluded every attempt at farther analysis. The writings of Stewart, therefore, were precisely what might have been expected. They illustrated the theory of Reid, and they did no more. But, before the time of Dr. Thomas Brown, the philosophy of Reid had lost, in a measure at all events, its prestige. It had actually stereotyped philosophy, of which, indeed, Stewart's writings constituted a proof, for he was a man undoubtedly of great ability, and possessed a singular power of lucid thought and expression, and yet he could never get beyond the spot

Digitized by Google

from whence he started, or rather from whence Reid had started. His whole capabilities were consumed in illustrating a theory which appeared to admit of no farther progress. Hence, as this system was the only one known, or, at all events, the only one supposed to be possible, the idea was most naturally suggested to persons paying comparatively little attention to the subject, that the science was practically a delusion, and that though the study of it might do very well to pass pleasantly a vacant hour, or might even, to a certain extent, be useful in exercising the mind on subtle verbal speculations, yet that it could never do any substantial good, either in the way of extending knowledge or increasing power. Hence, those articles in the *Edinburgh Review*, to which we directed attention in the introductory chapter, and those articles merely embodied a wide-spread opinion, which no doubt was the great secret of their apparent effect. It was at this time that Dr. Thomas Brown was applying himself to the study of spiritual philosophy, and we can surely see, in the circumstances, amply sufficient cause for his doubts as to the value of the Scottish philosophy, without imputing unworthy notions to one of the most excellent men that ever lived, and who had assuredly abilities sufficient to warrant him in trusting to his own merits, apart from any unworthy rivalry with any man, however eminent and deservedly eminent might be his character. Yet

Digitized by Google

strange it is that Brown, though abundantly willing, yet never could get quit of the principles of the Scottish school. They had been so engrained in his mind, and, during his youth too, were so universally assumed to be incontrovertible, that it never appears to have occurred to him to chal lenge them. On the contrary, indeed, Brown is just as thoroughly wedded to the "Intuitive" theory as ever Reid was, and applies it with almost as much looseness in the explanation of phenomena. Hence, he assailed only the incidents and outworks of Reid's philosophy, and sometimes assuredly with very imperfect success. His "inquiry into the relation of cause and effect" is one of the most curious and interesting examples that can be found of metaphysical acuteness and brilliant illustration, nullified by a deficient logic. In fact, here was exemplified his weakness. His logical powers were by no means proportionate to his metaphysical subtilty and poetical imagination. It is from this cause that many of Brown's speculations, of some of which we shall have to speak subsequently, though most ingenious and interesting, yet do not satisfy an inquirer, as turning out either to be of little importance in themselvess, or as resting on some imperfectly intelligible glimmering of an idea, to which he gives a sort of substance by exhibiting it only through his rich illustrations. It is thus that the apparent simplicity with which the most profound subjects are treated, and the glowing lan-

Digitized by Google

guage in which mental processes are described, captivate the reader, while, notwithstanding, when each discussion comes to a close, he either finds (as in the use of muscular power) that the conclusion, supposing it true, is of little consequence, or else that there is an extreme difficulty (as in the case of his inquiry into the relation of cause and effect) in determining precisely what the conclusion actually is. In one particular, however, and it is of no small importance, I should be inclined to give to Brown's lectures unqualified praise—it is in their tendency to stimulate inquiry as to subjects connected with spiritual science. It is impossible that the enthusiasm which his language everywhere breathes could fail, in some measure, at all events, to transfuse itself into the minds of his readers.

Sir W. Hamilton found the prestige in favour of the Scottish school considerably revived, in consequence of its theory having been adopted by the French philosophers, who eagerly availed themselves of the assumption of intuitive principles, as a refuge from that degrading and practically pernicious system of gross materialism, in which the speculations of the Encyclopædists had involved their countrymen. Accordingly, he avowed himself the professed advocate of that theory which, amidst much indifference, had yet many zealous disciples in Scotland; he edited Reid's works, and criticised Dr. Brown's exceptions to Reid with a severity which might warrant his enemies, though

Digitized by Google

probably with just as little truth, in retaliating the imputation of motives which he has deemed himself entitled to insinuate against that very distinguished individual, and which, assuredly, there was nothing in Brown's exceptions to call for, since, although it may be perfectly true that Brown had mis-understood the views of certain of the middle-age philosophers, or others comparatively little known—and of this Sir W. Hamilton's great learning undoubtedly constituted him a most competent judge—yet it is perfectly certain that he did not substantively misrepresent Reid's theory of perception, which, on the contrary, Sir W. Hamilton has only defended by the assumption of distinctions which it is demonstrable that Reid never thought of, and still less realised. For Brown supposes, as we think every one must suppose, who has no preconceived opinion to maintain, nor any opponent to refute, that when Dr. Reid calls it "a first princi-"ple of contingent truth, that those things do "really exist which we distinctly perceive by our "senses,"[a] he means that we "assume the existence "of an external world beyond the sphere of con-"sciousness, exclusively on the ground of our irre-"sistible belief in its unknown reality."[b] But Sir W. Hamilton says this is not the case, for it would have made Reid a "hypothetical" instead of a "natural realist." According to Sir William,

[a] Intellectual powers—Essay 6, ch. 5, sec. 5.

[b] Hamilton's philosophy of perception.

Digitized by Google

therefore, Reid meant, by a "first principle of con-
"tingent truth," a sort of sixth sense, by which we are made conscious of external matter *qua external.* Now, it is indeed nothing to the purpose to say that this is not true, however certain that may be, but we maintain that it was not Reid's theory; for though he may, no doubt, tell us that "we perceive "external objects immediately, and, therefore, that "we have the same reason to believe their existence "as philosophers have to believe the existence of "ideas, while they hold them to be the immediate "objects of perception,"[a] yet, in the use of the word "immediate," Reid does not mean that we have a *present* consciousness that the sensation felt originates in an external object, but that we believe in the existence of such external cause immediately from intuition, "without its being "deduced from any antecedent truth." It is in this sense that he invariably uses the term "immediate" technically, of which Sir W. Hamilton does not seem to have been aware. Thus, he says, "it is by memory "that we have an *immediate* knowledge of things "past,"[b] by which expression Sir William unaccountably supposes him to mean a "*present* know-"ledge of things *past.*" The very absurdity of such a notion one would have thought might have induced him to examine the subject more accurately. Reid merely means, that "by memory we have an

[a] Hamilton's philosophy of perception.
[b] Intellectual powers—Essay 3, ch. 1.

Digitized by Google

"intuitive knowledge of things past, without its "being deduced from any antecedent truth." Accordingly, he repeats in the very next chapter "the knowledge which I have of things past, by "my memory, seems to me as unaccountable, as "an *immediate* knowledge would be of things to "come."[a] Surely we cannot suppose him to mean "a present consciousness of that which is future." In truth, he explains his use of the term formally, on more occasions than one, thus—when he says "Mr. Locke placed it in a perception of the agree- "ment or disagreement of our ideas, which percep- "tion *is immediate in* INTUITIVE KNOWLEDGE, *and* "*by the intervention of other ideas* IN REASONING,"[b] and again, "if the word axiom be put to signify "every truth which *is known immediately, without* "*being deduced from any antecedent truth*,"[c] and again, "what is the meaning of this? It is, that I "have a distinct conception and firm belief of this "past event—not by reasoning, not by testimony, "but IMMEDIATELY FROM MY CONSTITUTION; and I give "the name of memory to that part of my constitu- "tion by which I have this kind of conviction of "past events;"[d] and once more—"That this con- "viction and belief (*i. e.*, of perception) are *imme-* "*diate*, and not the effect of reasoning."[e]

In truth, Reid had no definite notion at all as to the mode in which we become acquainted with ex-

[a] Intellectual powers—Essay 3, ch. 2. [b] Do. [c] Do. [d] Do.
[e] Intellectual powers—Essay 4, ch. 5.

Digitized by Google

ternal existence, as is evident from the whole tenor of his works, and especially from such passages as these: "If the power of perceiving external objects "in certain circumstances be a part of the ORIGINAL "CONSTITUTION OF THE HUMAN MIND, all attempts "to account for it will be in vain;"[a] and again, "If the intelligence we have of external objects were "to be got by reasoning only, the greatest part of men "would be destitute of it, for the greatest part of "men hardly ever learn to reason, and in infancy and "childhood no man can reason;"[b] and once more, "But, being now to speak of perception itself, *which* "IS SOLELY AN ACT OF THE MIND, we must appeal to "another authority."[c] The reason of this is obvious. He had no clear notion of what he meant by a "principle of common sense," or, in other words, "an intuition." He had no conception that he was falling back upon the old theory of innate ideas. We need not wonder, therefore, that he fell into confusion, nor that his views appear sometimes contradictory, as, indeed, even Sir W. Hamilton admits.[d] Hence, the distinction which he drew betwixt sensation and perception, making them two different things, while yet he regarded our knowledge from perception as intuitive, did, in whatever sense the word intuition be understood, so completely annihilate, as we shall afterwards more particularly shew, the logical links connecting an external world with the mind, that, except by the assumption of some

[a] Intellectual powers—Essay 2, ch. 5. [b] Do. [c] Essay 2, ch. 5.
[d] Philosophy of perception.

Digitized by Google

a priori operation, it is absolutely impossible to restore it. That Brown, therefore, was substantively right in regarding Dr. Reid, as what Sir W. Hamilton calls a "hypothetical realist," *i. e.*, as holding our belief in an external world to depend exclusively on a mental conviction *a priori*, seems certain. The fact is, that Sir W. Hamilton was really himself the originator of that natural realism which he ascribes to Reid, and in the very act of so ascribing it. His zeal in refuting Brown actually led him to advance a step, and a very important step, in spiritual philosophy, in maintaining that we are conscious of external existence. Yet this, let it be observed, in no measure explains the process of our belief in it. Indeed, the form of his supposition that we are conscious of external existence involves the manifest difficulty, or rather absurdity, that it supposes consciousness not merely to make known to us our own feelings, but to infer from those feelings to the determination of something beyond them. Were this true, it would seem impossible to conceive how consciousness and reason could be distinguished.

Yet, the discovery of Sir W. Hamilton, that external existence is really known through consciousness, and not intuition, is itself a proof of no ordinary sagacity and metaphysical acuteness, and when we consider, at the same time, the many other interesting hints as to spiritual science which he has given us, in connection with the vast store of

Digitized by Google

learning which he had amassed, we cannot but regret that he has left only writings of so fragmentary a character, and still more, that he should have allowed his mind in later years to get so confused by the mists of German metaphysics, in the use of their interminable divisions and indefinite language, as to render a large proportion even of these of comparatively little value.

Such was the position of the Scottish philosophy in its native land, at a recent period—a philosophy, however, which subsequently, as we have already indicated, became nearly as famous abroad as it had been at home.

Digitized by Google

SECTION III.

PROGRESS OF SPIRITUAL PHILOSOPHY ON THE CONTINENT, FROM THE TIME OF REID TO THE PRESENT AGE.

Philosophy of France—Changes from materialistic to Scottish school—Followed by a species of eclecticism—German philosophy—Wolf—Kant—Origin of his philosophy—Principles of his philosophy—Its general character—Causes of its influence—Causes of the difficulty of comprehending it—The character given of it confirmed by the authority of its disciples, &c.—Detailed examination of its parts—This leads to the same conclusions as to the causes of its influence, and of the difficulty of understanding it, as is indicated by its general character—Its effects—Disciples of Kant divide into two sections, Realists and Idealists—Jacobi and his followers—Reinold, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel—Subsequent state of philosophy in Germany.

The philosophy of France, from the time of Condillac, exhibited, as was formerly mentioned, a progressive growth of coarser and ranker materialism for a considerable number of years. Thinking, Feeling, Reasoning, were all regarded as the results of the operation of physical machinery. Facts came to be repudiated, except in so far as they suited the cravings and prejudices of a brutal licentiousness, for the character of the times had partially, at all events, been engendered by this philosophy, and, by a natural reaction, gave to the philosophy the sanction and influence derivable from its practical realisation. Nothing, consequently,

Digitized by Google

was at length deemed of importance, except what ministered to bodily and selfish enjoyment. The things of this world were regarded as all in all, because in this world it was believed that the machine of humanity began and ended. Purity, truth, friendship, patriotism, were names to delude those who were so ignorant as not to know, that flesh and blood and bones manufacture the phenomena usually ascribed to the soul. In a society imbued with such opinions, and realising them, we need not wonder at the horrors of the revolution. It ended in marriage being abolished, religion declared a mockery, and the supreme authority of the state enacting that there was no God. Of its practical results we need say nothing. As the energies of the nation became however exhausted, under the influence of theories so extravagant and practices so atrocious, and men were forced, by the operation of their moral principles incessantly though silently operating, to a conviction of their falsehood, the most eminent of the French philosophers, of a new generation, by a natural, or I had almost said, a necessary transition, began to attach themselves to the philosophy of the Scottish school, which opened the most obvious means of escape from that grovelling system which had wrought evils so disastrous to their land, and many of them soon became of that school amongst the most devoted and illustrious disciples. Yet, from the very nature of its principles, whether in France or in

Digitized by Google

Scotland, the disciples of the Scottish school, however devoted and however illustrious, could make no progress in spiritual science, and hence a sense of this, as was probably also the case with Sir. W. Hamilton, led them to attempt a species of union betwixt it and the German school, which had at least one good effect, in diminishing the exaggerated admiration with which the disciples of these schools regarded their respective modes of philosophising, so as to admit once more something like freedom in the discussion and determination of the doctrines of spiritual science. For any other purpose this French eclecticism has been little availing. Much ingenuity, no doubt, has been displayed, but I really know nothing that has even been suggested, calculated to increase human knowledge, or serve any purpose of utility whatever. How this should be the case will probably be more thoroughly understood, when we have finished our remarks on the philosophy of Germany.

In Germany, from the time of Leibnitz, little was done, or had even been attempted, during a series of years. His philosophy moulded into a system of somewhat pedantic formalism, by Christian Wolf, continued in undisputed possession of the schools, till superseded by the speculations of Immanuel Kant, which appeared soon after the publication of Reid's "Inquiry into the Human "Mind," and which, like Reid's works, originated in a desire to meet the sceptical philosophy of

Digitized by Google

Hume. Reid supposed himself to have done this, by assuming certain principles which, from the constitution of our natures, we must believe, however such belief may originate, and he specially assumed this with reference to all cases where our belief appears to be necessary—asserting that, although experience may teach us "what is, or has been, it "cannot tell us what is to be, and still less what "must be." All such beliefs Reid held to be principles of common sense, but he never informs us, nor pretends to inform us, how they are got, or from whence they are derived. No doubt, he might readily have explained our knowledge of external existences, by referring it to a form of consciousness, as Sir W. Hamilton erroneously supposes him to have done, but, as we have found, he did not do so, nor pretend to do so, probably because this would only have relieved him from a very small portion of the difficulty, inasmuch as he would still have had all his other "principles of common sense" to account for, "both necessary and contingent," which could not have been referred to consciousness, and the origin of which he had it not in his power, like Sir W. Hamilton, to leave unexplained, because he was giving forth a system, and if he had attempted to explain one, he must have felt—if the theory ever suggested itself to him—that his position would be still less tenable, in avowing the inexplicability of the others. It was much more consistent, therefore, in Reid to leave them all in

Digitized by Google

the same indeterminate form. But yet that Reid, so far, must have known that these principles, and all principles, originated either from without or from within—that, if not derived from experience, they must be referable to the action of the mind itself in some way, it is impossible to doubt, since there could be no other source of them conceived; but, having no clear nor definite notion of the process, he felt, as we can easily understand, the risk which such an explanation involved, of just falling back again upon some theory of ideas which would open a door for the entrance of that very scepticism which his whole efforts had been intended to exclude. He left their origin, consequently, in absolute uncertainty, resting upon the practical fact of our irresistible belief, and meeting scepticism by the assumed possibility merely of the phenomenon being caused in some way consistent with our rational intelligence, though we may not be able to explain it. The German philosopher, however, evidently saw no such risks, or was indifferent to them. Imbued with that striking peculiarity of his countrymen, which leads them to grasp at a partial solution of any difficulty, if it only have the appearance of ingenuity, whatever may be the absurdities to which, in its other applications, it may lead them, as was very much the case with the Greeks of old, Kant at once cuts the knot by bold assertion, and, to those who would desire something more, he addresses himself in terms of most mystical magnifi-

Digitized by Google

cence, with which, if they are not satisfied, they must just apply themselves to some other philosophy. He despises contradictions, and dares absurdities, reconciling the one, and rectifying the other by the magic use of some unintelligible term. We need hardly say that it is in vain to expect from such a system any real addition to our knowledge of spirit, and yet that system has produced effects so singular as to render it absolutely necessary that we should endeavour to explain somewhat in detail what it actually is—not, as has been indicated, for its own sake, nor by reason of its direct results, since Kant has, strictly speaking, no disciples. In England and in France it would scarcely, perhaps, be expected, but, even in Germany, we doubt if any man of eminence has ever avowed himself a Kantian in the true sense of the term. Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, &c., have, indeed, in so far adopted his principles under the theoretical aspect which they exhibit, but they have developed them to their legitimate consequences in absolute scepticism. Even Jacobi and others, who admit an external world, as having adopted the practical alternative of the Kantian philosophy, rest their faith on grounds altogether different from those assumed by Kant. But yet it is no less true that this system has originated various schools of philosophy in Germany, has greatly modified the speculations of metaphysicians in France, and, in the peculiarities of its style, and vagueness of its principles, has begun to

Digitized by Google

give a colouring to the general literature, not merely of Britain, but of the world. Such an explanation is the more necessary, too, because in this country the philosophy of Kant, if philosophy it can be called, is scarcely at all known, except as a wonderfully profound speculation, which, could people only comprehend it, would no doubt effect a mighty change on the principles and opinions of mankind. Whereas, the fact is, strange as it may appear, that in its incomprehensibility consists mainly its power of fascination. Expressed in vague, though apparently learned and metaphysical terms, it is naturally supposed to convey some deeply profound meaning, which long and anxious study could alone enable any one to appreciate. In very truth, however, as will subsequently, we think, be made manifest without any possibility of doubt, Kant having but very indefinite ideas himself as to the sense which he intended to convey, whenever a clear notion was wanting, sought some high-sounding word to supply its place, and thus a vocabulary was invented, exactly adapted to the use of those who desire to give some form of expression to those ill-defined feelings which are so often mistaken for philosophical conceptions, and which many confound with deep thinking and profound speculation. It is easy to understand how engaging such a system must have proved in its style, at all events, to the mass of Theological, Political, and Metaphysical theorists.

Digitized by Google

Nor is it difficult to trace the process under which this singularly delusive species of philosophy developed itself. Kant aroused, as he tells us, from his dogmatic lethargy by Hume's sceptical argument with respect to cause and effect, and perceiving what was indeed sufficiently obvious, that if the explanation of our belief in the connection betwixt cause and effect could not be found in the nature of the object, it must be derivable from the nature of the subject—or, in other words, that if it was not from without, it must be from within; and having satisfied himself farther, that there are many other beliefs reducible to the same category, instantly came to the conclusion, that all NECESSARY propositions must, somehow or other, be known *a priori*. This he took for a great discovery, although it seems difficult to conceive upon what grounds he either assumed it, or it should have in any measure been admitted, inasmuch as the existence of necessary truths being *a priori*, has been held by *every philosopher who has adopted the theory of a priori truths at all*, while the assumption of necessity as a test of *a priori* truth, was formally propounded by Leibnitz, and, in so far, was as formally recognised by Reid; and we say in so far, because Reid has not limited his "intuitive "principles" by this category, no doubt from foreseeing the consequences which would result therefrom, though he has most distinctly affirmed that all necessary truths are "primary principles;" and,

Digitized by Google

indeed, it is obvious that this must have been assumed by every one, as we have said, who recognised such truths at all, since there could be no truths by possibility better entitled to claim the character of intuitive, or *a priori*, than those which we believe by a very necessity of our natures. Generally, we may here say that the same thing is predicable of all Kant's pretended discoveries. Even his great result, to the effect that we cannot discern the nature of the absolute, or, in plain terms, that we cannot know "absolute essence," is not only no discovery, but has been, we believe, admitted by every human being, with the exception of the ancient Greek philosophers, and a portion of his own speculative disciples. His very principle, indeed, of investigating the nature of mind abstractly, and away from its operations, implies an impossibility, and, therefore, could not lead, we do not say to any discovery, but to any conclusion at all, and, accordingly, he never does come to any conclusion, except under a practical violation of it.

In truth, this very first step in Kant's system, of limiting *a priori* cognitions to "necessary and "universal truths," which he regards as "indepen- "dent of all experience,"[a] not only violates his principle, since, "independently of experience," he never could have known anything about them at all, but is also the origin of the introduction into it of all manner of inconsistency and confusion. For the

[a] Introduction to Kritik der Reiner Vernunft—Sections 1st and 2nd.

Digitized by Google

fact is, that every general truth is universal in the only sense in which the term universal can apply to phenomena. "Fire burns dry wood," is a universal truth, *i.e., it is true in every instance* in which "fire" and "dry wood" are brought into contact. "Animals have life," is a universal truth, since that which has not life *cannot* be an animal. The idea of a general truth, indeed, admitting of an exception, is obviously absurd, for, under such an assumption, it would be partly false, and, therefore, could not be a truth, general or particular. When, accordingly, Kant gives us for an example of what he calls an empirical truth and, therefore, a truth liable to exceptions, "that all bodies are "heavy," we should have been greatly obliged to him had he informed us of the exceptional cases, or, if he had given us such cases, we should have then naturally enough, one would think, demurred to the truth of the proposition. It is, indeed, perfectly evident, that the whole question depended upon the sense attached by him to the term "body," which must be either "ponderable," in which case there could be no exception, or "imponderable," in which case the proposition, in any form, would not be true. Kant understood it IN BOTH SENSES. It was clearly his business, therefore, to have given us the means of precisely distinguishing "a strict and absolute" from "an assumed and comparative "universality," which, being out of his power, it necessarily followed, that so far as this particular

Digitized by Google

is concerned, we are just as far from having any test of *a priori* cognitions as before. In the very same way as every general truth is universal, in so far as we can understand the terms, so must, as we have already partly seen, every general truth be necessary, supposing the relations and circumstances realised in which it is exhibited. In other words, the relations and circumstances in which a truth is exhibited may be contingent, but, these being assumed, it is impossible that the truth itself, as expressed in general terms, could be contingent, else identical causes might produce different effects. Thus, to take our former examples, "fires burn," is a necessary truth, for, although it is contingent whether there be fires at any given time, or in any given place, yet, if they be, they must burn, else they would not be what we mean by the word "fire," and consequently could not be included in the proposition. "Animals have life," is a necessary truth, under the very same argument, since, otherwise they would not be what we intend to express by the word "animal." "Straight lines "cannot enclose a space," is, in the same way, a necessary truth, else they would not be what we mean by "straight lines." The element of necessity can no more be predicated in any one of these cases than in the others. If its necessity, therefore, was to be taken as a test of *a priori* truth, it was incumbent on Kant to define precisely what kind of necessity he meant, and to shew how the differ-

Digitized by Google

ent kinds of necessity are to be distinguished. In saying that necessary truths, known *a priori*, are such as "contain the idea of necessity in their very "conception,"[a] he merely shews that he was unable to draw any such distinction, for the question to be determined is, whether there be any such truth? So that, to the very parties to be convinced, the test would be obviously nugatory. The truths, indeed, which we can with any propriety call necessary, are no more necessary in regard to the truth of the propositions than other truths, being, as will now be readily understood, merely enunciations of the relation which subsists between or among various elements, which our intelligence apprehends as having a permanent existence—the necessity *specially* predicable of them consequently being applicable solely to the PERMANENCE OF THE ELEMENTS, as in the instances of space and time, and in no degree to the relationship of the parts of the propositions, which must be necessarily true in every instance of a general truth, whatsoever. It is impossible, therefore, to conceive anything, not merely more loose and illogical, but more clearly demonstrating Kant's utter ignorance of the subject on which he was dogmatizing, than the terms under which he has proposed such a test, as inevitably suggesting an inquiry into the nature of the necessity assumed by him as essential to the

[a] "Findet sich also erstlich ein satz, der Zugleich mit seiner Nothwen- "digkeit gedaeht wird, so ist er ein Urtheil *a priori*"—Introd., sec. 2.

Digitized by Google

conception of such propositions. For, to say that there is a necessity—the nature of which cannot be explained nor illustrated—is not "critical philoso- "phy," nor, indeed, any kind of philosophy, but "pure" dogmatism, which might be allowed to pass, in an avowed dogmatist like Reid, but, in "the critic of pure reason," seems intensely contradictory. Indeed, his singular ignorance of the whole subject, and specially of the purpose of Hume, and the tendency of his argument, are most strikingly, and almost ludicrously, displayed in his own illustration. "If we direct our attention to "the most ordinary operations of the understand- "ing," he says "the proposition—every change "must have a cause—will amply serve our pur- "pose. In this case, indeed, the conception of a "cause so plainly involves the conception of a "necessity, of connection with an effect, and of a "strict universality of the law, that the very notion "of a cause would entirely disappear, were we to "derive it, like Hume, from a frequent association "of what follows, with what precedes, and the "habit thence originating of connecting phenome- "na"[a] —having no conception, apparently, that this

[a] "Will man ein solches aus dem gemeinsten verstandes-gebrauche, so "kann der satz, das alle Veränderung eine Ursache haben musse, dazu "dienen; ja in dem letzteren enthält selbst der Begriff einer Ursache so "offenbar den Begriff einer Nothwendigkeit der Verknüpfung mit einer "Wirkung und einer strengen allgemeinheit der Regel, dass er gänzlich "verloren gehen würde, wenn man ihn, wie HUME that, von einer öfteren "Beigesellung dessen, was geschieht, mit dem, was vorhergeht, und einer "daraus entspringenden Gewohnheit (mithin blos subjectiven Nothwen- "digkeit) Vorstellungen zu verknüpfen, ableiten wollte." Kritik &ca Einlei-

Digitized by Google

was exactly what Hume had said, and said a great deal better. For Hume, as is manifest from the very terms he employs, attached no importance whatever to his own pretended explanation of this phenomenon, there being, on the contrary, some probability in the supposition, that he intended it as a sneer at our utter ignorance of the philosophy of a relation on which all our faith depends. To answer him, consequently, by admitting that all he said was perfectly true, but that it could not well be conceded, inasmuch as we have naturally a strong conviction to the contrary, while, under Hume's explanation, "the very notion of a cause "would disappear," which was exactly what he wanted, does look very like an extreme of simplicity, such as we should hardly expect from one that had undertaken to observe and analyse the operations of the human mind. The only mode of answering Hume satisfactorily would have been by explaining the nature of that necessity under which we believe cause and effect to be combined together, or in other words, by indicating the *nexus* which links them, and of which Hume denies that we have any logical proof. Whereas, Kant's answer, instead of critically determining the nature of the necessity, and logically proving the existence of

tung —Sec. 2. To avoid any charge of unfairness, I have quoted in the text, on all occasions, from Meiklejohn's translation, in Bohn's Philosophical Library —Mr. Meiklejohn being an ardent admirer of Kant—but I have in each case compared the translation with the original, and found it sufficiently correct. I could find no one better.

Digitized by Google

the *nexus*, is substantially Reid's answer, that the phenomenon cannot be explained, but that we must believe it as a matter of common sense. In Reid this was justifiable under the principle of his system, in the "critic of pure reason" it was inconsistent and self-destructive, as substantially conceding his incompetency in any measure to realise the only particular which could render his philosophy available for its professed purpose.

His confusion in this case, as in his whole system, evidently originated in supposing that there can be any knowledge, or kind of knowledge, apart altogether from experience, or with which, as he says, "no empirical element is mixed."[a] This principle is not merely the foundation of scepticism, but thus broadly enunciated evidently leads to absurdity, since if utterly unmixed, such knowledge must be known in itself, which even Kant does not venture to maintain, and hence his self-contradictions begin with the very beginning of his system, and go on multiplying—in this particular alone being consistent—to the very end. To work out an intelligible philosophy, indeed, under such a supposition, is as impossible as to conceive "a change without a cause." Reid, accordingly, with his sober good sense, evidently saw the result, and kept clear of the error,

[a] "Wir werden also im Verfolg unter Erkenntnissen *a priori* nicht "Solche verstehen, die von dieser oder jener, sondern die schlechterdings "von aller Erfahrung unabhängig stattfinden." And immediately afterwards, "Von den Erkenntnissen *a priori* heissen aber dijenigen rein, denen "gar nichts Empirisches beigemischt ist." Kritik, &c., Einleitung—Sec. 1.

Digitized by Google

although the superficial plausibility of such a theory could not have escaped him, nor any one who had given an ordinary degree of attention to the subject. So far is it, indeed, from owing its origin to Kant, as his admirers have asserted, that it was assumed, as we have seen, in some form or another, by almost every philosopher from the very earliest ages downwards. The only peculiarity of Kant's philosophy is his asserting, in terms of so sweeping and broad a kind, the very thing which men of a truly subtle and logical mind necessarily avoided, from a sort of irresistible perception of the consequences—so that one cannot help being astonished as to how he could have possibly persisted in trying to rear a system on a principle which the very form of its expression seems to determine as implying the impossibility of one single step of ulterior *intelligible* development. The result has been, as we think it can be demonstrated, that he has attempted to rear a system without any foundation on which to rest it. Hence, he has been driven to attempt an explanation of the nature of a species of knowledge which HAS NO EXISTENCE. He has had to give names to phenomena which are PURELY IMAGINARY, and he has had to give body to a scheme which is verbal logic, and NOTHING ELSE. The mode in which experience can be brought into contact with the *a priori* knowledge, which ceases to be *a priori*, when any "empirical element is mixed up with it," implies a difficulty which per-

Digitized by Google

fects the perplexity of the whole, since we shall presently find, that there is no avenue left by which the lessons of experience can enter into our minds, and consequently, that while "all our knowledge" is said by him "to begin from experience,"* there is no means provided, or possible, through which such experience can be acquired. In order to rear up a system, under such circumstances, it was absolutely necessary, not only to repudiate conclusions which all mankind had previously recognised, but to imagine states of mind which no one had ever felt, and conceptions which no one had ever conceived, and processes of which no one had been ever conscious—and to express these, of course, it was farther obviously necessary to invent a new terminology which it is impossible to understand, because its names have no prototypes in reality to which they are applicable—and, as if this were not sufficient, apparently that such confusion might be worse confounded, in not a few instances, terms previously used to express perfectly different and real notions have been adopted into this terminology, so that a reader must supersede the association by which such terms and their notions had long been united in his mind, in order to connect them with new and purely arbitrary assumptions which, as we shall presently see, having no real existence in the nature of things, it is impossible that even the writer himself could have definitely appre-

* Critique &c., Introduction—Section 1st.

Digitized by Google

hended. The vagueness of the views thus originated has, of course, farther led him to adopt the most inconsistent conclusions. So much, indeed, is this the case that, with a great pretence at formal logic, there is, in fact, scarcely a proposition in any one place which is not contradicted in some other place—the whole being suitably wound up by the astounding conclusion, that while reason can have reference to nothing objective whatever, *i.e.*, nothing out of the mind itself, it is yet to be held practically as a sufficient authority, and is, in fact, the only available authority for our belief in a world, an immortality, and a God!

Such appear to me to be the causes of the difficulty expressed by all, except a very few of his more ardent disciples, of understanding the "Critique "of pure reason;" and I avow my convictions upon the subject in the most distinct terms, because, notwithstanding the magnificence of its pretensions, "and I make bold to say that there is "not a single metaphysical problem that does not "find its solution, or at least, the key to its solu- "tion here;"[a] and, notwithstanding, or rather in consequence of the favour with which it has in some quarters been received, it does seem full time to speak out distinctly, and without any affectation of delicacy, as to the character of a system which has laid the foundation of a widely-spread philosophical scepticism in Germany, and of a verbally profound,

[a] Critique, &c., Preface to First Edition.

Digitized by Google

yet substantially shallow Rationalism and Pantheism, not only in Germany, but throughout the civilised world. It is, at least, full time to call upon all who profess any respect for this, as it appears to me philosophical quackery, to tell us precisely what they mean, and, if the difficulty of understanding the Kantian philosophy consist, as they pretend, in its awkward terminology to explain that terminology themselves, by translating it into intelligible terms. In the meantime, I rejoice, that in the conclusion at which I have arrived, however entirely I may be convinced of its truth, I am not resting solely on my own assurance—for the same conclusion is not merely indicated, but avowed by many, of whom some, at all events, cannot be regarded as uncandid witnesses, however they may account to themselves for their predilection in favour of a system which they characterise in such terms. It is said by a countryman of his own, of some celebrity in general literature, that "many "doctrines of Kant's philosophy are perhaps clearly "understood by none—and each of his disciples, "believing that another understands them better "than himself, is either contented with an obscure "conception of them, or perhaps sometimes assents, "from a persuasion that others understand what "he unfortunately wants capacity to comprehend."* "If" says "Chalybäus, Kant had not in this

* Georg Christoph Lichtenberg—Vermischte schriften. See *Edinburgh Review*, No. vi., p. 352.

Digitized by Google

"strange manner immediately taken away what he "had just assumed—thus contradicting himself at "every turn;"[a] and Cousin not only tells us "that "his opinion is opposed to the common sense of all "mankind"[b]—that "nihilism should be the final "word of the Critique of pure reason"[c]—the avowed object of which, be it observed, was to refute the scepticism of Hume; but he actually tears to pieces, and ridicules every notion, more particularly Kant's own, and only endeavours to excuse the extravagance of his metaphysics, which were "to "solve all problems," however difficult, by the merit which he attaches to his attack on "the em- "pirical theory of Locke"—a merit, which it will be easy to perceive, that we at least value at a very low rate, and to the excellence of his ethical theory, which, be it good or bad, (for with this, at present, we have nothing to do,) is in direct opposition to the only principle in the "Critique," so far as I am aware, which the Author has not positively and absolutely contradicted in that work itself.[d] This contradiction he reserved for his works on ethics and religion. If anything farther were needed to authorise our conclusion, or at all events to entitle it to a careful examination, it would be the singular fact, that none of Kant's translators,

[a] Historical development of speculative philosophy, &c., from the German of Dr. H. M. Chalybäus, translated by the Rev. Alfred Edersheim, Section 3rd, p. 76.

[b] Leçons sur la Philosophie de Kant—Leçon 8. [c] Do.

[d] See also Klopstock's opinion of Kant, as given in Life of Wordsworth, vol. 1, p. 130.

Digitized by Google

commentators, or imitators have, so far as I can discover, risked any explanation of his theory, *except in the most general terms*, without being compelled either, on the one hand, to acknowledge that they did not understand it, or, on the other, to avow that in many, even of its essential and fundamental doctrines, it is untenable and contradictory. We need hardly add that the Commentaries of such Commentators are not very consistent, that, so far as the nature of Kant's philosophy is concerned, they are nearly as obscure as their original; and that they contain nothing, so far as I know, which advances in the slightest degree our knowledge of our own minds, or opens a way, directly or indirectly, to any species of information that can be useful, except in so far as they may serve to warn us against vague and indefinite speculations. These general remarks will be thoroughly appreciated in considering the system in detail, which, under the circumstances, it is evident, we should not be justified in evading.

The object of Kant, in his Critique, is clearly enough exhibited in the preface to his first edition, where he says—"The grand question is, what and "how much can reason and understanding, *apart* "*from experience*, cognise?"[a] "But, if, as we believe to be the fact, they can cognise nothing,

[a] "Weil die Hauptfrage immer bleibt, was und wie Viel kann "Verstand und Vernunft, frei von aller Erfahrung, erkennen und nicht? "Vorrede Zur erstein Ausgabe."

Digitized by Google

apart from experience, then would it follow that the grand question is no question at all, and that any attempt, consequently, at solving it, must end in contradiction, confusion, and absurdity.

Now, one would be inclined to suppose, from the very terms under which this "grand question" is proposed, that Kant had intended to analyse and determine the amount of *a priori* knowledge existing in the human mind, by some species of abstract reasoning, away altogether from any reference to experience, and that some such notion had originally suggested itself to him, and had even been the ground-work of his earlier speculations, seems clear from many passages of the work ;[a] but, finding, probably, that it was impossible, even by the most copious use of mysticism, to propose *a priori* cognitions discoverable without any appeal to experience, he changes his ground, and we are accordingly informed that "all our know-"ledge begins from experience ;" but, though "it "begins from experience," he holds, "it by no "means follows that it all arises out of experience" —a part of it, he thinks, is antecedent to experience existing in the mind itself, and which he calls scientific or *a priori*. The rest, we are told, comes from experience, which therefore he regards with the ancient Greeks, as empirical, or *a posteriori*. The *a priori* knowledge he divides into analytical or explicative, when the predicate is of the essence

[a] See specially Prefaces to both First and Second Editions.

Digitized by Google

of the conception, as "that all bodies are extended" —the idea of extension being essential to the idea of body—and synthetical or augmentative when the predicate is not essentially contained in the conception, as in the proposition, "In all changes of "the material world the quantity of matter remains "unchanged"—the idea of permanency, it seems, being unessential to the idea of body, though it must be presumed, somehow, "universal and neces- "sary" in itself. *A posteriori* knowledge must, in all cases, be synthetical, under the terms of the theory.

Now, according to these views, as truths of experience, are, and can only be particular, and as Kant has given us no other kind of truth, except that which is *a priori*, it would seem to follow, not as a probability, but as an obviously-demonstrative conclusion, that all general truths must be *a priori*, of the one kind or the other—analytical, or synthetical. Yet, strange and almost incredible as it would appear, Kant does not seem to have seen this, and accordingly he tells us that the proposition, "bodies are heavy," is a conclusion derived from experience, *i.e.*, it is *a posteriori*.[a] Now, no doubt, experience might teach us that any one body is heavy, but how it could teach us that bodies generally are heavy, does seem altogether inconceivable. Setting aside, therefore, the test of mere generality, which, although, no doubt,

[a] Critique, Introduction—Section 4. This conclusion is derived from the whole passage, which it is unnecessary to quote, as being of considerable length.

Digitized by Google

it would have rendered the whole object of his Critique manifestly ridiculous, was yet, under his own definitions, no less unquestionably the true one; he provides, what he deems the infallible tests of "necessity and universality," for discriminating betwixt *a priori* and *a posteriori* knowledge, but which, however, just bring us back, though somewhat more circuitously, to the very same conclusion—for, as was previously proved, every general truth is, in point of fact, necessary, and every general truth is universal, so far, at all events, as we can know anything about necessity and universality—and hence it must follow that, according to Kant, every general truth, of whatsoever kind, is a cognition *a priori*. At all events, there is here a difficulty, and, as it appears to me, an insuperable difficulty, at the very outset of the system, which Kant and his disciples have absolutely overlooked. If general truths cannot be discoverable by experience—and we presume no one will maintain this to be possible—then all general truths must be *a priori* cognitions, since there is no other source to which they can be attributed. We say nothing of other consequences, which are sufficiently manifest, but if this be true, the "infallible" tests, which we are now considering, are at once and hopelessly annihilated.

Having now reached the point at which experience is assumed, as the beginning of our knowledge, it might have been supposed, as the critique avowedly originated in Hume's speculations, that we

Digitized by Google

should next have been informed as to the mode in which such experience is to be attained, but this is not the case. In order, however, to have any conception of what follows, we must suppose that the philosopher of Konigsberg imagined the mind to be a receptacle of some kind or other, in which compartments are contained.[a] Of these the first is the sensory, or sensibility, which merely contains the "universal and necessary" notions of "space "and time," to which subsequently he seems to add "consciousness," though in what sense, and for what purpose, I am utterly unable to explain. These, we are told, are *a priori* cognitions, existing in this locality or faculty, or whatever it is to be called, altogether apart from, and prior to, experience. Consequently, "space and time" are only "subjective conditions," to which he "denies "all claim to absolute reality," therefore, "time," and, of course, space, "are not things in them- "selves, nor are they *any objective determinations* "*pertaining to or inherent in things*," so that, "if "we take away the subject, or even the subjective "constitution of our senses in general, then not "only the natures and relations of objects in "space and time, BUT EVEN SPACE AND TIME THEM- "SELVES DISAPPEAR."[b] The only difference which he

[a] "Die Fähigkeit (Receptivität), Vorstellungen durch die Art, wie wir von Gegenständen afficirt werden, zu bekommen, heisst Sinnlichkeit." Die Transsc., Aesth.—Sec. 1. Cousin—Lecture 8.

[b] Wir haben also sagen wollen: dass alle unsere Anschauung Nichts als die Vorstellung von Erscheinung sei; dass die Dinge, die wir anschauen, nicht das an sich selbst sind, wofür wir sie anschauen, noch ihre Verhältnisse

Digitized by Google

takes betwixt time and space is, "that while space "serves for the foundation of all *external* intui- "tions," he regards "time as a necessary represen- "tation, lying at the foundation of *all* our intui- "tions." But, if neither space nor time be external realities, how is it possible that there can be any external intuitions or perceptions at all, seeing that we cannot conceive an external world to exist, except in space, and during time? This must have occurred to himself, had he not used words to which no fixed ideas were attached by him. It is clear that he had no distinct notion, or rather he had no notion at all, as to the modé in which the "intuitions" and "representations," of which he speaks, can become "intuitions" and "representa- "tions" *to us*, and, consequently, he in this way allowed himself to be deluded by mere vague ambiguities, although, in no possible acceptation which the term will admit, nor under any conceivable theory of their mental forms, can the difficulty be obviated, nor the existence of an external world, at least to us, be rendered consistent with the assumption of the subjectivity of time and space.[a]

It is, indeed, certain, from the whole tenor of

so an sich selbst beschaffen sind, als sie uns erscheinen; und dass, wenn wir unser Subject oder auch nur die subjective Beschaffenheit der Sinne überhaupt aufheben, alle die Beschaffenheit, alle Verhältnisse der Objecte im Raum und Zeit, ja selbst Raum und Zeit verschwinden würden, und als Erscheinungen nicht an sich selbst, sondern nur in uns existiren können."—Tr. Aesth. Allg. Anmerkungen Zur Tr. Aesth.

[a] See Cousin, Leçons sur la Philosophie de Kant—Leçon 8.

Digitized by Google

the Transcendental Æsthetic, that his theory had, by a species of monomania, so completely acquired the command of his mind, as to blind him to absurdities, however gross, and contradictions, however glaring. Determined, as the avowed opponent of Hume, to stick to an external world in words, he yet, at every turn, shews its complete incompatibility with his other principles. He consequently reduces his external world to a mere shadow, a mere image, assumed as a species of magazine that might, by some unaccountable means, afford matter to the *schemata* and forms of his mental receptacle, but which to us, under his system, is absolutely unknowable, and its existence even impossible. "My purpose in the above remark," he says, "is "merely this—to guard any one against illustrating "the asserted ideality of space, by examples quite "insufficient—for instance, by colour, taste, &c., "for these things must be contemplated, *not as* "*properties of matter, but only as changes in the* "*subject*—changes which may be different in differ- "ent men."* Again, "on the contrary, if I "ascribe redness to the rose, *as a thing in itself*, or "to Saturn his handles, or extension to all external "objects, CONSIDERED AS THINGS IN THEMSELVES,

* Die Absicht dieser Anmerkung geht nur dahin: zu verhüten, dass man die behauptete idealität des Raumes nicht durch bei Weitem unzulängliche Beispiele zu erläutern sich einfallen lasse, da nämlich etwa Farben, Geschmack u. s. w. mit Recht nicht als Beschaffenheit der Dinge, sondern blos als Veränderung unseres Subjects, die sogar bei verschiedenen Menschen verschieden sein können, betrachtet werden."—Transsc. Aesth., sec. 3, where the original affirms the doctrine even more strongly than the translation.

Digitized by Google

"without regarding the determinate relation of "those objects to the subject, and WITHOUT LIMITING "MY JUDGMENT TO THAT RELATION"—the relation being ABSOLUTELY UNKNOWN, AND PERFECTLY ARBITRARY—"then, and then only, arises illusion." From this it is clear, that the extension which we know *a priori* is not "the extension of external "objects considered as things in themselves," which seems to mean, if it mean any thing, that IT IS NOT TO THINGS IN THEMSELVES THAT WE APPLY OUR A PRIORI COGNITIONS—while, farther, as if this was not enough, all knowledge of external qualities, declared, as the food of experience, to be essential for "beginning our knowledge," is absolutely and explicitly ignored. They are not to us "properties "of matter," but only "changes in the subject." We are not to ascribe "redness to the rose," nor any other property—not even extension to external objects, "considered in themselves"—but only to certain judgments, which, somehow or other, are formed of them, and our notions of all such propositions are to be strictly "limited" thereby. Yet, it must be understood, to appreciate this mass of contradictions, that, notwithstanding, Kant does not deny the existence of an external world; on the contrary, he undertakes to prove it, and by a

* "Dagegen wenn ich der Rose an sich die Röthe, dem Saturn die Henkel, oder allen äusseren Gegenständen die Ausdehnung an sich beilege, ohne auf ein bestimmtes Verhältniss dieser Gegenstände zum Subject zu sehen und mein Urtheil darauf einzuschränken, alsdenn allererst entspringt der Schein."—Tr. Aest., sec., 8.—*Note.*

Digitized by Google

process, he says, far more perfect than ever was proposed before, and his proof is to the following effect :—"I am conscious of my own existence, as "determined in time. All determination in regard "to time pre-supposes the existence of something "permanent in perception, but this something cannot "be something in me, for the very reason that my "existence in time is itself determined by this per- "manent something. It follows that the percep- "tion of this permanent existence is possible, only "through a thing without me, and not through the "mere representation of a thing without me. Con- "sequently, the determination of my existence in "time is possible only through the existence of "real things, external to me. Now, consciousness "in time is necessarily connected with the con- "sciousness of the probability of this determination "in time. Hence it follows, that consciousness in "time is necessarily connected also with the ex- "istence of things without me, inasmuch as the "existence of these things is the condition of de- "termination in time. That is to say, the con- "sciousness of my own existence is, at the same "time, an immediate consciousness of the existence "of other things without me.[a]" Now, we have

[a] "Ich bin mir meines Daseins als in der Zeit bestimmt bewusst. Alle Zeitbestimmung setzt etwas Beharrliches in der Wahrnehmung voraus. Dieses Beharrliche aber kann nicht Etwas in mir sein; weil eben mein Dasein in der Zeit durch dieses Beharrliche allererst bestimmt werden kann. Also ist die Wahrnehmung dieses Beharrlichen nur durch ein Ding ausser mir und nicht durch die blose Vorstellung eines Dinges ausser mir möglich. Folglich ist die Bestimmung meines Daseins in der Zeit nur

Digitized by Google

not the slightest hesitation in saying that all this approximates, as nearly as possible, to the "pure "unintelligible," and we challenge the most ardent admirer of Kant to explain, even generally, what he means. The only glimmering of sense is to be found in the conclusion of the passage, where, in violation of every principle of his system, he seems to appeal to a dogmatic faith. He evidently had got himself into a position of perplexity, from whence there was no extrication, except in the use, not merely of ambiguous but absolutely meaningless terms. He had, in truth, undertaken to prove a contradiction. An external world is not to be resuscitated by any proof, assuming the non-objectivity of time and space, since, if one truth be to us more necessary than another, it is that an external world can only exist in space, and during time. If these, therefore, be assumed as purely subjective, or, in other words, as mental cognitions, and not as objective realities, then the *non-existence of an external world becomes an a priori cognition!* If there be an external world, therefore,—nay, if there be an internal world,—nay, if there be any existence at all, the "critique of pure reason" becomes a pure delusion, since all things that exist

durch die Existenz wirklicher Dinge, die ich ausser mir wahrnehme, möglich. Nun ist das Bewusstsein in der Zeit mit dem Bewusstsein der Möglichkeit dieser Zeitbestimmung nothwendig verbunden; also ist es auch mit der Existenz der Dinge ausser mir, als Bedingung der Zeitbestimmung, nothwendig verbunden, d. i. das Bewusstsein meines eigenen Daseins ist zugleich ein unmittelbares Bewusstsein des Daseins anderer Dinge ausser mir."—Transsc. Analytik, B. 2., Widerlung des Idealismus.

Digitized by Google

we necessarily believe to exist in space, and during time—and the system which denies this, consequently must, by us at all events, be regarded as false and impossible.

In so far, then, as we have hitherto proceeded it would appear that we derive the "matter" of our knowledge from experience,[a] and this we do through some sort of "representation" of external existence, merely as existence, inasmuch as its properties, as are told, are not known as properties of the object, but as "changes in the subject." This external existence, however, does not exist in space, "nor "during time, for space and time, according to this "system, are not absolute realities," nor do they "absolutely inhere in things as conditions or pro- "perties," inasmuch as, being "universal and "necessary cognitions," they are to be found only as conditions of mind, and known only *a priori*. How these things could be—how we can know external existence without knowing its properties—or how we can know its properties, seeing that they are not known as properties of the object, but as "changes in the subject only"—or how intuition (perception) establishes a connection with space and time, which exist only *a priori* in the sensory—or how there can possibly be external existence at all which neither exists in time nor during space—are points not explained, nor, need we add, can they be explained. It is, indeed, manifest that the ad-

[a] See Cousin Leçons sur la Philosophie de Kant.—Leçon 8.

Digitized by Google

mission of an external world is an excrescence on the Kantian system, and absolutely irreconcilable with it. Its assumption was originally forced on the author of that system, in consequence of his having started in opposition to Hume, and being naturally unwilling to avow, that instead of answering Hume, he had come back to Hume's principles again, he perseveres, in direct violation of his own theory, to maintain the existence of such external world, though thereby plunging into perpetual and gross inconsistencies. Accordingly, his more eminent disciples (Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel) repudiate it altogether, while Jacobi and others, who admit external existence, are obliged materially to alter the system, in order, with any appearance of reason, to effect their object. It may, indeed, appear, we must however remark, before concluding this branch of the critique, that these extraordinary contradictions are modified by Kant's assertion, that "we have only to do with phe-"nomena, and that things in themselves, while "possessing a real existence, lie beyond our sphere;"[a] but this only adds a contradiction more. It is, in truth, impossible clearly to discover what he means by phenomena. That he does not mean "pro-"perties" of the object is evident from what has been already said. He probably in this, as in other cases, had no precise notion of what he meant, for we think it must already be obvious enough,

[a] Preface to 2nd Edition.

Digitized by Google

that the system is, in a great measure, one of mere caprice, so that it is rarely possible to assign anything approaching to an intelligible reason for its determinations. Perhaps, by phenomena, he may mean "those changes in the subject," which, he elsewhere informs us, is all that we know of "properties," though even this it is difficult to imagine, since elsewhere he tells us that "phenomena have no scientific value."

Having now exhausted the contents of the sensorium, we have next to direct our attention to the compartment of the intellect, which is called the "understanding."

The use of the understanding is to "cognise, by "means of those representations which the sensory "or sensibility receives from experience, and CLOTHES "WITH FIGURE AND DURATION by its *a priori* apprehensions of time and space." Now, here the first particular which comes naturally to be explained is clearly the way that "understanding" gets "such representations" from the "sensory," and this explanation, already substantively given in Kant's own words, as I can make nothing of it that has an appearance of sense, I shall now state, as expounded by Mr. Morell, another admirer of Kant and his philosophy. "This is effected," says Mr. Morell, "by a mediating representation, which "has such an affinity to the matter, on the one "hand, and the form on the other, that, by virtue "of its intervention, the formal notion and the

Digitized by Google

"outward phenomenon become united. This medi-
"ating representation is *time*, which Kant calls the
"*schema* of our notions, and by the aid of which,
"we regard the abstract forms of the understand-
"ing as having relation to something objective,
"concrete, and actually present."[a] To me, the explanation, I honestly confess, is as incomprehensible as any part of Kant's works, which is saying a good deal. I cannot conceive what is meant by a "representation" having an "affinity to the matter," in any sense which will suit the phenomenon. I cannot understand how "the formal notion "and the outward phenomenon" can "become "united by virtue of the intervention of a represen-
"tation;" on the contrary, the proposition appears to me mere senseless verbiage, and I cannot but believe that a proposition which makes "time connect "the abstract forms of the understanding" with "something objective, concrete, and actually pre-
"sent," or, in other words, makes "time" give us our feelings of hardness, softness, colour, smell, taste, is downright nonsense, and an insult to common reason.

But, assuming the thing to be possible, however it is effected, and accordingly taking for granted that the understanding actually receives "the representations of the sensory, clothed with "figure and duration," the next point is as to

[a] An Historical and Critical view of the speculative philosophy of Europe, in the ninteenth century—By J. D. Morell, A.M., vol, 1., p. 269.

Digitized by Google

what it does with them, and we are told that it "thinks" them. To effect this, it has three faculties—memory to recall the sensorial representations, imagination to unite them, and consciousness to ascertain the identity of the united representations with those representations as originally existing in, and transfused from, the sensory, by referring both to "the me"—though what "the "me" is, or how discovered, or how it differs from "the sensory and the understanding," on the one hand, and the faculties on the other, we are not informed. Yet, without some explanation of these particulars, it is manifest that the whole system is once more impossible.

Setting all this, however, still further aside, it must be observed, that in order to have any kind of conception as to the ulterior development of this extravagant speculation, we must keep in view Kant's primary object, which he declares to consist in giving a complete map of our *a priori* cognitions, that is, of all these truths which are "universal and necessary." In order to accomplish this, he set himself to discover those particulars which could be predicated of all existences, under the impression that these being "universal," in so far as applicable to every existence of whatever kind, we could not acquire a knowledge of them by experience, and, therefore, that they must be also "necessary," and referable consequently to *a priori* cognitions, inasmuch as he could not discover any

Digitized by Google

other source from which their origin might be derived. Nor is the process, under which he arrived at this most singular conclusion, at all difficult to trace. Educated in the Wolfian philosophy, which consists of a mixture of formal logic, with the theories of Leibnitz, he satisfied himself that the logic was true, whatever might be said of the philosophy, and, finding that the categories of Aristotle constitute the foundation of formal logic, he assumed, as indeed many had assumed before him, that in the processes of formal logic, we have a development of the processes of philosophical and practical reasoning. He assumed, in other words, that the mind, in reasoning, goes through the steps of a syllogism, in which case it is clear, that the most general truth, or major of the syllogism, must lie dormant in the mind until called into operation by the minor proportion received from experience, since otherwise, under the assumption that in reasoning the mind goes through the steps of a syllogism, it is evidently and indisputably impossible that we could ever begin to reason at all. It was manifestly in this way that Kant thought out, *a priori*, his system of metaphysics. And accordingly, in this view, he provided minor propositions, derived from experience, which passed into the "sensory," whence, being clothed with the attributes of space and time, they are subsequently transmitted for generalisation to the "understanding."

That in this theory we have the origin of the

Digitized by Google

Kantian doctrine of the nature of the "understanding" is proved by the whole tenor of his critique, and specially it seems to be formally propounded in the following passage:—"All intuitions (perceptions) as sensuous, depend on affections; conceptions (operations of the understanding) therefore upon functions. By the word "function, I understand THE UNITY OF THE ACT OF ARRANGING DIVERSE REPRESENTATIONS (images) UNDER ONE COMMON REPRESENTATION (generalisation). "Conceptions then are based on the spontaneity (voluntary action) of thought, sensuous intuitions (perceptions) on the receptivity of impressions, (capacity of receiving impressions.) Now, the understanding cannot make any other use of these conceptions than to JUDGE BY MEANS OF THEM (*i.e.*, judge to what conceptions intuitions belong). As no representation, except an intuition, relates immediately to its object, a conception never relates immediately to an object, but only to some other representation (image of memory) thereof, be that an intuition, or itself a conception, a judgment, therefore, is the mediate cognition of an object, consequently the representation (of memory) of a representation (by perception) of it. In every judgment there is a conception, WHICH APPLIES TO, AND IS VALID OF, MANY OTHER CONCEPTIONS, (*i.e.*, embraces many other generalisations,) and which, among them, comprehends also a given representation (by generalising it)—this last being immediately con-

Digitized by Google

"nected with an object, for example, in the "judgment—all things are divisible—our concep- "tion of divisible applies to various other con- "ceptions ; among them, however, it is here "particularly applied to the conception of body, "and this conception of body relates to certain "phenomena which occur to us. These objects, "therefore, are mediately represented by the con- "ception of Divisibility (*i.e.*, Divisibility to a "certain extent embraces them all). All judg- "ments, accordingly, ARE FUNCTIONS OF UNITY in "our representations, (*i.e.*, are generalisations) in- "asmuch as, instead of an immediate, a higher "representation, WHICH COMPRISES THIS AND VARIOUS "OTHERS, is used for our cognition of the object, "and thereby MANY POSSIBLE COGNITIONS ARE COL- "LECTED INTO ONE. But we can REDUCE ALL ACTS "OF THE UNDERSTANDING TO JUDGMENTS, so that the "understanding may be termed the FACULTY OF "JUDGING, for it is, according to what has been "said above, a faculty of thought. Now, thought "is cognition by means of conceptions, (*i.e.*, thought "consists in logical or syllogistic judgments,) but "conceptions, as PREDICATES OF POSSIBLE JUDGMENTS, "relate to some representation of a yet undeter- "mined object (*i.e.*, remain in the understanding "dormant till called into operation by some intui- "tion derived from experience). Thus the concep- "tion of body indicates something—for example, "metal—which can be cognised by means of that

Digitized by Google

"conception (*i.e.*, when metal is intuited through "experience it becomes known as body through "the conception of body which, *a priori*, lay dor- "mant in the understanding). It is, therefore, a "conception (a dormant predicate) for this reason "of itself, that OTHER REPRESENTATIONS ARE CON- "TAINED UNDER IT, by means of which it can relate "to objects. It is, therefore, THE PREDICATE TO A "POSSIBLE JUDGMENT; for example—every metal "is a body—all the functions of the understanding, "therefore, can be discovered when we can COM- "PLETELY EXHIBIT THE FUNCTIONS OF UNITY (*i.e.*, the "most general predicates applicable to existence) "in judgments; and, that this may be effected very "easily, the following section will shew."[a] Accordingly, in the following section, we have the process which is thus explained:—"If we abstract all the "content of a judgment, (*i.e.*, everything which "*makes it special,*) and consider only the intellectual "form thereof, (*i.e.*, in so far as it is applicable to "everything,) we find that the function of thought

[a] "Alle Anschauungen als sinnlich beruhen auf Affectionen, die Begriffe also auf Functionen. Ich verstehe aber unter Function die Einheit der Handlung, verschiedene Vorstellungen unter einer gemeinschaftlichen zu ordnen. Begriffe gründen sich also auf der Spontaneität des Denkens, wie sinnliche Anschauungen auf der Receptivität der Eindrücke. Von diesen Begriffen kann nun der Verstand keinen anderen Gebrauch machen, als dass er dadurch urtheilt. Da keine Vorstellung unmittelbar auf den Gegenstand geht, als blos die Anschauung, so wird ein Begriff niemals auf einen Gegenstand unmittelbar, sondern auf irgend eine andere Vorstellung von demselben (sie sei Anschauung oder selbst schon Begriff) bezogen. Das Urtheil ist also die mittelbare Erkenntniss eines Gegenstandes, mithin die Vorstellung einer Vorstellung desselben, &c."—Der Transsc. Analytik Erstes Buch. Des Transsc. Leitfadens Erster Abschnitt.

Digitized by Google

"in judgment, *(i.e.*, the forms or predicates of our "judgments,) can be brought under four heads, of "which each contains three *momenta* (species). "These may be conveniently represented in the "following table:—1. Quantity of Judgments; "universal, particular, singular: 2. Quality; affir- "mative, negative, infinite: 3. Relation; catego- "rical, hypothetical, disjunctive: 4. Modality; "problematical, assertorial, apodeictical."[a] Now, these forms of judging being universal, that is to say, being applicable to everything, since all things must be regarded as "universal, particular, or "singular," as "affirmative, negative, or infinite," as "categorical, hypothetical, or disjunctive," as "problematical, assertorial, or apodeictical," and, as in so far as "universal," also, "necessary," seeing that they could not be derived from experience, it follows that in them all there must be some *nexus*, as in the case of "cause and effect," which originates in *a priori* cognition. Accordingly, it is at once perceived, we are told, that the "necessary" link or *nexus* which can alone sanction a "singular" judgment (generalisation) is that of "unity"—a "particular" judgment, that of "plural- "ity"—a "universal" judgment, that of "totality"—

[a] "Wenn wir von allem Inhalte eines Urtheils überhaupt abstrahiren und nur auf die blose Verstandesform darin Acht geben, so finden wir, dass die Function des Denkens in demselben unter vier Titel gebracht werden könne, deren jeder drei Momente unter sich enthält. Sie können füglich in folgender Tafel vorgestellt werden."—Des Transsc. Analytik Erstes Buch. Des Transsc. Leitfadens Zweiter Abschnitt.

Digitized by Google

an "affirmative" judgment, that of "reality"—a "negative" judgment, that of "negation"—an "infinite" judgment, that of "limitation"—a "categorical" judgment, that of "inherence and subsistence"—a "hypothetical" judgment, that of "causality and dependence"—a "disjunctive" judgment, that of "community"—a "problematical" judgment, that of "possibility"—an "assertorial" judgment, that of "existence"—an "apodeictical" (demonstrative) judgment, that of "necessity." In other words, a "singular" judgment would be impossible without an *a priori* concept of "unity"—a "particular," without an *a priori* concept of "plurality," &c. Thus we have the categories, the "universal and necessary" predicates in all propositions deriving their matter from experience, and which, as "universal and necessary," must exist *a priori*.

Now, on the slightest consideration of this theory, we cannot help being struck by the enormous amount of mental phenomena which it leaves entirely unexplained, unaccounted for, and indeed impossible. We cannot help wondering what becomes of all the other general ideas and general propositions which constitute the mass of our knowledge, and, apart from which, we endeavour in vain to GET AT THE CATEGORIES. For, let our other general ideas be "universal and necessary" or not, they, at all events, cannot be ideas of experience, for experience, even according to Kant's own system, only

Digitized by Google

teaches us particular facts, or if it gives us general ideas, the difficulty (if possible) is only the more complicated. Whence, then, do we get the ideas of hardness? of colour? of magnitude? of desire? &c.? and how do we get a knowledge of the propositions in which they are involved? If every idea which is not attributable to experience be *a priori*, then there must be *a priori* concepts in the understanding which correspond to each, and, in that case, what becomes of the ESSENTIAL tests of "universality "and necessity?" The true test of *a priori* cognitions, according to the Kantian system, we must again conclude, is not "universality and necessity," but "generality," or, if this be not the case, it is manifest, that under that system the origin of general truths is inexplicable. Being neither truths of experience, nor *a priori* cognitions, we must conclude that there are no general truths at all! But, if this be the case, how do we get at the categories, or call into operation the concepts? since these are the very truths of which the categories are predicates, and which the concepts realise. Thus, to take an instance of Kant's own, recently quoted— "The conception of body indicates something—for "example, metal."[a] Now, we should like to know how he got the idea of metal? or, at all events, how he came to deem himself entitled to use such a

[a] "So bedeutet der Begriff des Körpers Etwas, z. B. Metall, was durch jenen Begriff erkannt werden kann."—Transsc. Analytik. Des Transsc. Leitfadens Erster Abschnitt.

Digitized by Google

word in a scientific argument? He could not possibly have got the idea from experience, for "metal" expresses a general idea. Have we then a concept, *a priori*, of metal? If so, the concept must, under the theory, imply a "universal and necessary" truth, and farther, such concept MUST IMPLY A KNOWLEDGE OF MATTER which, we are told, no concept does, inasmuch as matter is the subject of the predicates, and is derived from the sensory exclusively. Or have we no *a priori* concept of metal? Then, his own illustration must be delusion, since the categories can never be predicates at all—the very truths being entirely swept away, to which, according to his account, they are applicable. All that remains, indeed, is the particular facts derived from experience, WHICH OF THEMSELVES COULD NEVER IMPLY ANY PROPOSITION, and, therefore, could never call any concept into operation.

The whole of this absurdity results from confusing, as we have seen that he does, the process of formal logic, with a development of the ratiocination process as a mental operation. The categories, as invented by Aristotle, from whom Kant acknowledges that he copied the idea, and whose purpose he seems to have imagined to have been identical with his own,[a] included all minor generalisations, because, instead of being intended for the same

[a] "Es war ein eines scharfsinnigen Mannes würdiger Anschlag des ARISTOTELES, diese Grundbegriffe aufzusuchen."—Transsc. Analytik Erstes Buch. Dritter Abschnitt.

Digitized by Google

purpose as Kant's, they were merely intended to express the predicates of verbal propositions, so as to include within them EVERY POSSIBLE FORM OF MINOR GENERALISATION OR PREDICATE. The formal logic, indeed, so far from developing the process of reasoning in the human mind—as many besides Kant have imagined—is purely a verbal science, if science it can be called, teaching the accurate use of words. Thus, the syllogism is intended to ensure that the words in the minor are used in the same sense as the words in the major proposition, so as to guard, as far as possible, against any change of meaning in the terms during an argument, and the categories are, therefore, of importance in constituting the syllogism, by directing us to the most general predicates under which the terms of major and minor must *both be included*, either by identity or by contrast. But, both the categories themselves, as well as the less general terms included under them respectively, must, in the first instance, be formed from the lessons of experience in the generalisation of particular facts They are, in truth, formed, not syllogistically, for in this way they never could be formed, nor could any process of reasoning be realised, but by a process the very REVERSE OF THE SYLLOGISM. Thus, having from experience determined, for example, the qualities of metals, we term the union of these qualities, as again determined by another process to be afterwards explained, by the general name of "metal," and hav-

Digitized by Google

ing, by experience, known thus the union of several qualities in *one locality*, and having generalised this knowledge by a process also to be subsequently explained, we acquire the general idea of "unity." If, indeed, every idea, which is not derived from experience, is to be held *a priori*, or intuitive—as Kant, and indeed Reid likewise, suppose—then it is evident that every general truth, of whatever kind, must be referred to this source, since not one of them can possibly be referred to experience, which gives particular cognitions only. Nay, particular cognitions, it is manifest, must also, under such a supposition, be known *a priori*, since it is evidently impossible to know a general truth, while we are ignorant of every particular embraced under it. It is strange, that neither Kant nor Reid,[a] nor, so far as I know, any of their followers perceived these results, which yet appear, not only logically indisputable, but exceedingly obvious. Such being the case, even supposing that we could get at particular facts by experience, we must have, according to the Kantian theory, one concept for generalising hardness, another for generalising whiteness, another for generalising sweetness, &c. It seems hardly necessary to say, that all this implies contradiction and absurdity.

[a] It will be understood, that we have no intention, either here or elsewhere, of comparing, for one moment, the clear and instructive writings of Reid, with the mystical conjectures of the German speculator. We merely desire to indicate that, in this particular, both systems appear to imply the same misconception.

Digitized by Google

It thus would seem demonstratively to follow, that the very principle on which this theory of Kant rests originates in an absolute delusion. No proposition can be expressed, nor conception constituted, which does not involve knowledge of experience. The axioms of mathematics, for example, even the most simple of them, speak of length, equality, or similar qualities or relations, which terms abstractly, and away from experimental knowledge, have no meaning at all, and could not exist as concepts or as intuitions; for length must be the length of something, and equality the equality of something, and we must have, or must have had, a knowledge of something which gave us the particular ideas, or else we must know length, without knowing anything that is long, and equality, without having had experience of any two things that are or were equal; and the moment that this something is introduced, the proposition consequently involves, not only in reality, but manifestly experimental knowledge. But farther, the idea that the most general predicates of propositions, or in other words, the categories, give us "universal and neces- "sary" cognitions in the same sense as the proposition "every change must have a cause," is necessary, implies an utter confusion of things perfectly different. It implies a confusion betwixt general ideas and propositions, as will immediately be explained, and, accordingly, Kant has not added a single instance of what he calls "universal and

Digitized by Google

"necessary truths," to those previously recognised, viz.:—Mathematical axioms, and the proposition, "Every change must have a cause." Nay, in determining "space and time" to be merely mental *schemata*, he seems to have swept away even mathematical axioms, from the class of "universal "and necessary," or, rather, from the category of possible truths, altogether. For, if "space and time" be not objective, there can be neither "length nor "equality," nor any mathematical truth of any kind. They become mere states of mind—forms, in other words, of mental *schemata*.

But farther, a general idea never can imply a necessary truth, in the same sense as "mathematical "axioms," and the proposition, "Every change must have a cause," imply necessary truths. For a general idea, *per se*, neither affirms nor denies anything. It is merely the expression of a mental state. Nor does any general idea of its own nature imply the existence of an *absolute* fact which we must necessarily believe. Indeed, the only *modes* even of necessary existence, which general ideas express, that we must, from our essential constitution, necessarily believe, viz.:—"of time and space," are singularly enough excluded by Kant from THE MODES OF EXISTENCE ALTOGETHER. Relations alone, therefore, can imply necessary truth in the same sense as mathematical axioms, and the proposition, "Every change must have a cause," since we can deny the existence of essences and substances in every instance, without

Digitized by Google

any contradiction; but we cannot deny the validity of the relations betwixt them, supposing the elements which imply them to exist, as *must be assumed* in every proposition affirming or denying a relation. In each case, consequently, the necessity of the truth is predicated of the RELATION, and not of the elements which are related. The existence of the elements might be denied without any contradiction; but their existence being assumed, that the relations of such elements to one another must be what it actually is, obviously implies necessary truth, and is just what we mean by it. Thus, "mathematical axioms," and the proposition, "Every "change must have a cause," express relations which, to deny, would imply a contradiction of the terms under which such relations are expressed. But no absolute fact, or property, using the word in the widest sense, however expressed, can imply such a necessity. On the contrary, we might assume all existence to be annihilated, without any sense of absurdity, and express such an idea, without any contradiction in the terms. Hence, unless we can cognise relations, APART FROM ANY FACTS OF WHICH THEY ARE RELATIONS, which is an evident absurdity, in itself implying contradiction in the terms, it follows, demonstratively, that unless the facts and matter of our cognitions be *a priori*, it is impossible that we can have any knowledge *a priori* of necessary truth, in the sense under which "ma- "thematical axioms," and the proposition, "Every

Digitized by Google

"change must have a cause," are said to be necessary. It is true, that the existence of time and space, as objective modes, is felt by us as necessary truth; but this, it will now be obvious, is true in a totally different application of the word "necessary," and the repudiation of this truth by Kant—who, as we have repeatedly said, regards "time and space" as subjective, or, in other words, mere states of the mind—seems to prove, in the most striking way, his error in assuming "necessity" as the test of *a priori* cognitions, seeing that, in this way, he was obliged to include "space and time" among them, in direct opposition to the test itself, inasmuch as we NECESSARILY believe them to be objective, and not subjective, and this so irresistibly, that it is impossible to do an act, or speak a word, or think a thought, in which this objectivity is not directly and essentially implied. The argument, however, goes farther still, for, the notion that a relation involves the idea of a *nexus*, a link, an intermediate and absolute something that binds existences together, or connects them with one another, which gave its point to Hume's argument denying the connection betwixt cause and effect, and which is assumed by Kant as true in all cases of what he calls "universal and necessary" truths, according to this reasoning, is a perfect delusion. According to it, there can be no such intermediate something, relations being merely the connection, or bearing of any property or properties in one existence, with,

Digitized by Google

or on, any property or properties in another. The relations of existences, therefore, consist *in the nature of the existences themselves which are related,* and it is their own natures, or properties, and nothing without us, and still less, anything within us, that bind them to, and connect them with, each other, both in reality, and in our beliefs. How this comes to be the case, will be afterwards more particularly explained; yet, the fact is manifest and certain enough, even in its exposition, to warrant us, in so far, in founding upon it, and if so, then it would follow, that the *nexus,* or link which Kant was to supply for us in *a priori* cognitions, has no existence, though, if it had, it would only make Hume's conclusions more certain than ever, because, to us it would be absolutely indiscoverable, and this, we trust, makes a full and final end of the categories, for any such purpose, at all events, as Kant applied them, and on which, indeed, we fear, that too much time has been wasted; but we have been endeavouring to give something like an air, at all events, of intelligibility to this most confused and contradictory system, and thus, in so far as possible, save to others the annoying toil which we have had in attempting to discover the principles on which it might be supposed to be rested.

We now reach the third and last compartment of the mental receptacle, which is called the "reason," though, in what the "understanding" essentially differs from the "reason," or how it

Digitized by Google

contrives to get on without the "reason," the author never clearly determines. His whole thoughts, it is evident, were fixed on some notion perpetually present to his mind, that every idea not derived from experience must exist in the human mind *a priori*, as a "universal and neces- "sary" truth, absolutely indifferent to the incoherency and inconsistency of his system in other respects, as if his devotion to the processes of the formal logic would necessarily guard him against the risk of error. Certain it is that the "reason," in some way, is often called into requisition by him throughout the previous parts of his work, but whether it be the same "reason," or a different "reason," there seems to me to be no possibility of discovering. At the point where we have now arrived, at all events, we have a "reason," discriminated, indeed, from the "understanding," but it would seem, by no very definite line, as it is only employed in still farther "generalising," or rather "universalising, its concepts."

To appreciate the position, then, which this "reason" occupies in the Kantian philosophy, it must be remembered that the concepts of the "understanding" only apply to beliefs of which we have experience, and which they generalise. But there are other beliefs of which we neither have nor can have experience—these are "the thinking "subject or the me, the universe, and God." "The "thinking subject," says Kant, "is the object of

Digitized by Google

"Psychology—the union of all phenomena (the "universe) of Cosmology, and that which contains "the supreme condition of the possibility of all "that can be thought, the being of all beings, is "the object of Theology."[a] These three ideas are contained in the reason, and, as concepts have *their* matter from experience, so these "ideas of reason" have *their* matter from the "concepts," by "uni- "versalising" them under the "Categoric, hypo- "thetical, and disjunctive forms of reasoning." In other words, the Categories of "quantity, quality, "and modality," are thus universalised by the Category of "Relation." How the process is accomplished, or indeed, precisely, what it means, I frankly acknowledge myself unable to explain. This, however, is clear, that as the concepts, apart from experience, have no matter, and consequently of themselves would be utterly without object and void, so the "ideas," being only those concepts universalised, are necessarily without object and void. They apply to nothing real. They are mere phantasies, which may amuse us or regulate in some way our speculations, but, having no experimental content, they can give us no practical truth. The cause of this extraordinary conclusion is obvious. According to common opinion, the mind, receiving facts from experience, generalises or universalises, not merely the facts, but also the mental process which realises them, and hence that process becomes applicable to all identical cases, whether

[a] Transsc. Dialektik Erstes Buch. Absc. 3.

Digitized by Google

WE HAVE EXPERIENCE OF IDENTICAL PHENOMENA OR NOT. But, according to the Kantian theory, universal principles, applicable to experience (Categories), and universal principles applicable to concepts (ideas), being *a priori* cognitions, can only apply to the phenomena presented to them, and can, consequently, give no more than they get. Hence, as we have no experience of the "me," nor of the "universe," nor of "God"—these being merely the result of combined categories, or concepts, apprehended by the universals, or "ideas" existing in the reason—we have absolutely nothing, save "*a priori* cognitions," universalised. Thus, the "ideas" of reason, must, undoubtedly, under such a theory, be void and without object. We need hardly add, that this is to invert what is usually supposed to be the nature of reason, for it is usually believed, that the very use and purpose of reason is to assure us what will and must be, through our experience of what has been, and of what will and must be, in respect of the knowledge which it gives us of the nature of the power which operates in each instance, so that, though we may never have experience of that identical power a second time as directly addressed to our senses, yet we can perfectly understand its character, and measure its degree by its effects, in any future case where evidence of its presence may be exhibited to us. Moreover, the character of our "ideas" of the "me," a "universe," and a "God," are so entirely different from each other, and are derived

Digitized by Google

from sources so entirely different, that to confuse them with universalised ideas of a common character, and referable to the same origin, seems to manifest an almost inconceivable caprice in any one pretending to philosophise. We derive our idea of the "me" from immediate consciousness, of a "universe" from the combined action of almost all our feelings and faculties, and even then it is but a partial notion, since the idea of a "universe," in the widest sense, implies the conception of an infinity, which it is beyond our powers thoroughly to cognise, while our idea of a "God" is the result of reason and intelligence, determining under their ordinary laws. That any man should, therefore, have seriously proposed such a conclusion as philosophical seems so inconceivable, that we might naturally be supposed to have fallen into some misconception upon the subject; but this seems quite impossible, for however vague on other particulars, on this Kant is so distinct as to leave no room for misconception. Arguments are given by him at great length, for the purpose of proving that we cannot possibly attain any knowledge whatever, scientifically available, of a "universe, an immor-"tality, or a God." Whether he also denies the possibility of any scientific cognition of the "me," I am really uncertain; it would seem that he does so substantively,[a] but that he feels ashamed openly to avow it. "Pure reason," therefore, according

[a] Transsc. Dialektik Zweites Buch. 1, Haupst., &c.

Digitized by Google

to the Kantian philosophy, relates only to objects of which we can know nothing, and can, therefore, in respect to such objects, be of no use, except to lead us astray. Why he did not, under such circumstances, imagine a still purer "reason," which would have combined all the "ideas" of reason in one grand unknowable "absolute," we cannot say; such an apex seems certainly necessary to complete his system, and his successors, accordingly, have logically realised it.

With Kant's "practical reason" we have here nothing to do, except in so far as with reference to the consistency of his philosophy, it may be necessary to add, that it diametrically contradicts the whole of his speculative theory, and restores to us, happily, that "self, universe, immortality, and "God," which his "pure reason" had assured us was unattainable, and all conclusions with respect to which it had denounced as "sophisms."

We have thus endeavoured to give a fair and impartial outline of the Kantian philosophy in its leading features, for its details are, in most cases, reducible to no principles—being, indeed, frequently to us altogether unintelligible—the speculations of a man deluding himself; and we have done this, because we must respectfully maintain that this system derives the authority which has given currency to its phraseology, from no cause whatever except its being almost entirely unknown, and for this we think it must be admitted, that

Digitized by Google

its professed commentators are mainly responsible. These commentators, whether consciously or unconsciously I know not, have concealed that which is unintelligible in the system by evading it, and shrouded that which is contradictory and absurd, by the use of mysterious terms; while in no instance, so far as I am aware, has any one attempted fully and clearly to explain its principles, or informed us as to how a system which, in so far at all events, they so much admire, has failed, not merely to realise its pompous pretensions, but to effect any good whatever in the precise development of one single new fact, or the admitted determination of one single new principle. It seems full time, therefore, we repeat, considering the amount of vague and sceptical theories which it has generated, to call upon those who admire this system, at all events, to explain definitely what it means, to reconcile its apparent inconsistencies, and to point out plainly and precisely some good that it either has done, or is, hereafter, likely to accomplish. To preclude, therefore, any excuses for farther delay, we have endeavoured, after repeated perusal of the Critique itself, and a careful examination of all its most eminent commentators that we could find, to give, what so far as we are aware, no one has attempted before, a complete sketch of the leading features of the system, tracing each particular to its principle—and, if it be anything like what has been described, it can hardly fail, we think, to be regarded as one of the

Digitized by Google

most presumptuous pieces of ostentatious mysticism ever palmed upon the world under the name of philosophy.

It may, however, be asked most naturally, how a system so confused and contradictory—not the result of observation, but deduced, *a priori*, from the formal logic—could have exercised so wide and important an influence? But let any one consider the darkness still brooding over the principles of intellectual, moral, political, and theological science—subjects on which men will and must speculate, to whatever purpose their speculations may be—and his wonder will be greatly diminished. It is hardly possible to conceive a theory so extravagant on these subjects which, under the circumstances, will be without disciples. In regard to the Kantian philosophy, moreover, the difficulty that seems to be implied in the question is entirely and at once resolved, when we consider the nature of the influence it has exercised—for, in truth, the philosophy of Kant, *quâ* philosophy, died with its author. Its principles were, indeed, to a great extent, made available in Germany, as foundations for theories of wild scepticism—and these theories, indirectly, have been more or less propagated elsewhere in modified forms. But, throughout the world at large, it has not been his philosophy, nor even the principles of his philosophy, but his terminology, which has survived—imbuing men's minds with some indefinite notion of profound thinking, as if there were something

Digitized by Google

under it, which only the *elite* are privileged to understand. Such a style of writing, as we have formerly said, could hardly fail to captivate all whose ideas are not very precise, or who may desire, for some reason or another, only indefinitely to indicate them. It is thus that the Kantian terminology, and with it the vague style of thinking which that terminology implies, modified according to circumstances, has come, and with the most pernicious effect, morally, politically,and religiously, to colour the literature—we might almost say of the civilised world—with a greater or less tinge of phi losophical mysticism.

The immediate followers of Kant, even before his death, divided necessarily into two parties, a great majority adopting the idealistic or sceptical, the others the realistic, side of his philosophy. It was, indeed, obviously impossible, with even a shew of reason, to defend both ; for, as we have seen, they are directly antagonistic to each other. The assumed existence of an external world, was indeed a mere excrescence on the system of Kant, primarily adopted when he was first roused to speculation by the scepticism of Hume, and retained throughout in direct opposition to the other parts of his theory, from a natural unwillingness to admit that that theory had led him back again to Hume's conclusion, even in a more absolute form, though of course continually at a greater expense of probability and consistency.

Digitized by Google

Accordingly, Jacobi, who may be regarded as the chief of the realistic followers of Kant, casting aside his speculative, substantively adopted his practical philosophy, which, apart from the novelty of its phraseology—adopted apparently to conceal its inconsistency with his speculative science, and its perpetual straining at originality—is little different in principle from the opinions of the rest of mankind. Jacobi consequently assumes, as facts, not merely the existence of matter, and our knowledge of all external qualities, as discovered by experience, but generally all our beliefs, internal and external, in so far as guaranteed by our feelings and our faculties. He did not pretend to explain how such beliefs were realised, for, in thus far, he was like Reid, purely a dogmatist in his philosophy; but he maintained that to us they implied necessary truth, on the obvious ground, that wherever they are brought into doubt, philosophy, in any reasonable sense of the term must, *ipso facto*, be at an end. He objected, therefore, absolutely, to the principle of philosophising assumed by Kant in his Critique, and relative works, in attempting to deduce a philosophical system from the formulæ of logic, under the supposition that the most general notions are worked out in the mind *a priori* of all experience, and have a practical application, therefore, solely to the species of objects which experience enables us to cognise, because he saw that thus we must inevitably reach a point, where there would

Digitized by Google

be no matter for our cognitions at all, and consequently where our conclusions must, in direct opposition to our feelings and convictions, of necessity, be deprived of objective validity. This argument, indeed, evolves an absurdity which must appertain to all attempts at studying the human mind, under the assumption of its containing general truths *a priori*, whether innately or potentially. For, if assuming particular facts as true, under the guarantee of our feelings and perceptions, we ascend, by mental operations ON THOSE FACTS, to general ideas and propositions, then there can be no limit to the practical certainty of our generalisations, till we reach the absolute, in so far as a knowledge of the absolute may be embraced within them, because each step in the process will apply, not merely to identical cases, but to identical classes, however much they may differ in degree, or even in kind, so far as OTHER particulars are concerned; but, if we assume that general truths exist in the mind *a priori*, whether innately or potentially, and exist altogether apart from the particular facts of experience, which are known only in so far as embraced by these *a priori* cognitions, on reaching the absolute, we find it altogether indeterminable and impossible, not merely because it can have no matter, as being beyond experience, but inasmuch AS WE HAVE NO MORE GENERAL A PRIORI COGNITION, THROUGH WHICH IT MAY BE APPREHENDED. The very existence, therefore, of such a notion in

Digitized by Google

our minds, seems to imply inconsistency and contradiction, since, under the very supposition, it is neither anything in itself, nor is it possible that we can have any conception even as to what it means. No doubt, the theory has a logical appearance, but it is the logic of words, not of things, and, consequently, the words which express it, must necessarily be void and meaningless. It is, in fact, a recurrence to the mode of philosophising nearly universal during the middle ages; but it does seem almost inconceivable that any one should have been deluded by it during the eighteenth, or perhaps we should rather say during the nineteenth, century. His determination of this fundamental principle was the great merit of Jacobi. His ulterior philosophy is imperfect. Indeed, he did not pretend to put forth anything like a systematic philosophy, and his incidental views are mixed up with a theological mysticism, borrowed, probably, from the style of his master, but which, of course, entirely excludes them from the sphere of our present investigations. The followers of Jacobi are little known in this country, nor have I been enabled to discover anything which they have proposed, implying any material modification of the science of intellectual philosophy.

The purely sceptical development of Kant's philosophy seems to have taken its rise from Carl Leonhard Reinold, who, perceiving the utter inconsistency of his speculative and practical reason,

Digitized by Google

was thereby induced to seek some more general principle to which they could both be referred, and from which, consequently, they could be deduced—and had it been, that the existence of both was merely unaccountable, no doubt such a result would have been conceivable ; but, the existence of both being absolutely contradictory, we need hardly say, that he failed in his direct object, though he succeeded in giving a full exhibition of the difficulty, and thus in summoning all disciples of the metaphysics of Kant to an attempt at discovering a "purer reason," for generalising "the ideas," so as to give a theory of the absolute in the determination of some one essence, which should form the basis of all things, and to which all effects should be referable, as their primary origin. Accordingly, a rush, if we may be allowed to use the expression, was immediately made in this direction, and that not merely because a determination of this question must be essential to the validity and consistency of the Kantian philosophy, but because the difficulty thus exhibiting itself in that philosophy stands in close connection with a strong tendency of the human mind, however it may be accounted for, to believe that there is a unity in all things—a common source, to which they are to be all referred—an essence, which generates them all, and on which, consequently, they must be all dependent. Indeed, this tendency is more or less exhibited, in all forms of philosophy. We can trace it as an under-current of

Digitized by Google

thought, running through all systems, and all theories. Hence, the origin of absolute sensationalism or materialism on the one hand, and absolute idealism on the other. From this desire to discover unity of essence and origin, each party is hurried into an extreme hypothesis, without reflecting, that in either view common sense and reason must be left behind and forgotten, since we can no more believe thought and feeling to be results of hardness and colour, than we can disbelieve our senses, when they assure us that hardness and colour are external realities.

It was, therefore, by no means in a spirit of hostility to the Kantian philosophy, but rather for the purpose of following forth its principles, by resting them on a surer and broader foundation, that Fichte denounced our belief in an external world altogether, as a doctrine of science. But he was soon enlightened as to his error, by Kant's absolutely repudiating this development of his theory, and declining to give any sanction whatever to Fichte's speculations. There can in reality be no doubt, however, that Fichte was perfectly right in his determination of the true and logical results of Kantism, and the only mode under which it could even superficially be rendered consistent with itself, nor is it improbable, that an unpleasant suspicion to this effect was, in some degree at all events, the cause of the irritation of the Konigsberg sage, and his absolute refusal of any aid whatever in

Digitized by Google

consolidating Fichte's views, for the development of his own principles. The very fact, however, that Fichte's is a system of avowed idealism, renders it altogether unavailable for determining the objects of our present investigation, which has in view the explanation of phenomena, as we have them, and believe them, and not the substitution of new phenomena, whether flowing from the formulæ of a verbal logic, or from any other source, in direct opposition to the assurances of our feelings and faculties. Had Fichte, indeed, attempted to account for our belief in external existence, by any evidence sufficient to supersede that belief as a practical truth, his theory might have deserved the attention of those desiring to ascertain the philosophy of the human mind; but, seeing that he merely supersedes a difficulty, by denying that we are to believe as matter of science that which we must believe as matter of fact, we hold him to depart altogether from the object of philosophy, of which we understand the very end to be the explanation of our necessary beliefs of matters of fact, so as to ascertain the precise nature of the mental operation, in which such beliefs originate. To say that these beliefs are not real, puts an end to philosophy and to all manner of practical investigation, since, if the beliefs which we cannot help are imaginary, then all confidence in our faculties, and all conviction indeed of every kind, become substantively and scientifically impossible. There cannot, therefore, be a common

Digitized by Google

belief, as contra-distinguished from a philosophical faith, except in so far as philosophy may give us additional facts. Philosophy takes the common belief for granted, and professes to explain it.

But, if it be thus with respect to Fichte, much more does the same argument apply with regard to Schelling and Hegel, who, in their wish to reduce all things to a common unity, or ascertain the nature of the absolute under the application of formal logic, first invent cognitions above and beyond "personality and consciousness;" and then Hegel, assuming by a process of reasoning, as usual, merely verbal, and which, with an appearance of logic, is consequently perfectly unintelligible—that the universe is just a development of the absolute in the exhibition of an infinite activity—proceeds, with perfect consistency, to reduce this activity to the mere play of relations, without any reality whatever to which these relations could appertain. Thus, the metaphysicians of Germany have pushed the ideal philosophy, if philosophy it can be called, to the highest pitch of extravagance. Even Hume never pretended to push sceptical idealism to an absolute system, which his clear and logical mind saw would be CONTRADICTORY AND SELF-DESTRUCTIVE. His only object was to shew, that as no principles could be logically proved, so every conclusion must be scientifically uncertain. It was reserved for Fichte, and Schelling, and Hegel, at once to deny what every one believes, and, from this absolute

Digitized by Google

scepticism, to re-construct what they are pleased to regard as a perfect system of philosophy, out of materials, in the reality of which nobody believes. It is hardly necessary to add, that since their time the philosophy of Germany has become a mass of confusion. The disciples of the all-perfect theory of Hegel have divided into a variety of sects. Not one step of progress, however, has any one of them effected in any portion of spiritual science. The only practical result of their speculations has been scepticism in faith, and pantheism in religion, consequent on the propagation of those vague notions which such extravagant theorising has naturally, and, indeed, necessarily engendered, and which men receive the more willingly, and cherish the more fondly, because of the full scope which they afford for the indulgence of dreamy speculations on all subjects connected with the past, the present, or the future, by which they delight to pamper a loose and effeminate imagination, having neither power nor tendency to regulate the understanding, nor direct the judgment, nor purify the heart.

Digitized by Google

SECTION IV.

STATE OF INTELLECTUAL PHILOSOPHY DURING THE PRESENT AGE, AND ITS RELATION TO GENERAL LITERATURE AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF SOCIETY.

French Philosophy—Its materialistic character about the beginning of this century—French philosophers—Adopt the Scottish system—French eclectical philosophy—Cousin—Re-introduction of materialism—Comte—His misconceptions and inconsistency — British philosophy—Mr. James Milne—Sir W. Hamilton—Mr. Ferrier—Nature of his system—Its principles—Its value as a system of scepticism—As a system of absolute philosophy—Principle prominently put forth by him—The amount already accomplished in intellectual science—Analogy betwixt its present state, and that of physical science, anterior to the time of Bacon, more fully developed—True and only practical object of intellectual philosophy, and how to be practically realised—State of the science thus viewed at the present time, with a brief summary of modern systems—Cause of the comparative success of German philosophy, and the effect thereof on society—Impossibility of preventing, or even retarding, speculation on spiritual processes, and the principles of those varied sciences depending thereon—Disastrous effects which must, therefore, result from neglecting the study of the human mind—Only mode in which real success can possibly be attained.

The French school of spiritual philosophy, as we have seen, was, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, purely sensational, or, we should rather say, materialistic. It had pushed the principles of Condillac to absolute extravagance, regarding all mental states as merely the result of physical operations, in direct opposition to the dictates, both of intuition and experience. The utter impossibility,

Digitized by Google

therefore, of maintaining such a theory, so soon as men's minds calmed from a state of revolutionary frenzy, to such an extent as to enable them to cast off a measure of their prejudices, generated atendency towards the Scottish philosophy, first exhibited by M. Laromiguiere, and then followed up by M. Royer Collard, until, mixing with the speculations of the later German school, French philosophy assumed the character of a species of eclecticism in the hands of M. Victor Cousin. This notion of an eclectical philosophy, which proposes to select the truth from all systems, and combine it into a great whole, has ever been a favourite idea at certain stages of philosophical history, from the apparent reasonableness and impartiality which characterise it. But such a philosophy is always liable to the insuperable objection, that it leads us to look at systems rather than at facts, and thus, almost of necessity, induces us rather to attempt working out of them all, a theory logically consistent, than to seek out of nature a series of inductions experimentally true. Our ingenuity, in such a process, is exercised, rather than our observation. Words, rather than facts, are the phenomena that we investigate. Hence, in such systems of philosophy, we find exhibited, not only an indifference to facts, but, almost without exception, a substantive inconsistency, necessarily resulting from an attempt at reconciling contradictory principles. Accordingly, in the philosophy of Cousin, which is

Digitized by Google

partly, at all events, an attempt at combining the Scottish and German theories, while we find many important truths beautifully expressed, we should yet be disappointed in seeking for some clearer explanation of intellectual phenomena. In truth, the introduction of *a priori* cognitions into his system, under however modified a form, undermines, substantively, the conclusions of his psychological analysis, inasmuch as they imply, to a certain extent, an *a priori* knowledge of the very facts to which psychology addresses itself. If, indeed, the particulars embraced under the Categories of M. Cousin, with the elements which they involve, exist in the mind as knowledge *a priori*, it seems difficult to conceive what experience could teach us, or what is the use to which the faculty of reason is to be applied, seeing that every general truth, as in all such cases, must have been known before experience began, or reason called into operation, unless, indeed, reason be a power merely of looking into the mind, and dragging from thence the knowledge which, *a priori*, lies concealed in it. In fact, this theory of innate ideas, intuitive principles, *a priori* cognitions, or by whatever names they may be called, arises, as will afterwards appear, from confusing the conclusions which the mind, in the exercise of its faculties, derives from experience, with knowledge of some kind or other, supposed to exist in the mind absolutely, and anterior to experience, which is a mere delusion, since such

Digitized by Google

knowledge could not exist, without rendering the powers and faculties of the mind utterly useless, since it would substantively supersede their operation altogether. The assumption of relations, *quâ* relations, on the other hand, existing in the mind, we have already seen to be a supposition, if possible, still more untenable. On all this, however, it is unnecessary to dwell, as the explanation of the apparent difficulty involved in the origination of general ideas cannot be fully developed until we have had an opportunity of discussing the subject, as a portion of philosophical science, to the determination of which our attention will, by-and-by, be directed. That the use of the word "laws" may have tended still farther to the confusion of this subject, seems more than probable. That word, as thus employed, has, indeed, no definite meaning. It might mean, either, that *a priori* cognitions exist in the mind as laws, or, that the mental powers have laws which enable them, *a priori* of experience, to work out such cognitions for themselves. In either case, however, the conclusion is equally objectionable, for general conclusions, if we may trust to our consciousness, are not *a priori* at all. They consist in ideas, or notions, or conceptions, or by whatever name they may be called, worked out, not *a priori* of experience, but FROM THE FACTS WITH WHICH EXPERIENCE MAKES US ACQUAINTED. From this error in its principle therefore, the philosophy of Cousin is, as a system, altogether use-

Digitized by Google

less—being merely a jumble of assumptions, according to the Scottish school, mixed up with the unintelligible jargon of the idealistic disciples of Kant.

Pari-passu with Eclecticism, however, an attempt has been made, and with no small success, to resuscitate materialism in France. The most celebrated, by far, of this school is M. Auguste Comte, whose merits, however, as an intellectual philosopher, we cannot help thinking, have been most extravagantly over-rated. His theories are not new, nor true, nor consistent. According to M. Comte, the sciences progress through three stages: The Theological, the Metaphysical, and the Positive. During the first stage, men explain all phenomena by assuming the direct action of a God. During the second, they endeavour to explain phenomena, by the evolution of essential causes. In the third, philosophers, bidding adieu to all such imaginary causes, endeavour, by an appeal to phenomena alone, to determine laws, and thus to rise, step by step, to a grand and all-comprehensive generalisation. Now, it is true, that in the earlier stages of human progress, men usually refer the origin of phenomena to the action of a great first cause—none ever doubted it—but so they continue to do, which M. Comte seems to have forgot, during all the stages of their history. They, no doubt, discover by experience, that God has constituted secondary causes, and are thus led to inves-

Digitized by Google

tigate the nature of such causes, by subsidiary means; but they are only the more strongly convinced that there must be a great efficient cause of all these causes, and that for a FULL explanation of the phenomena, that cause must, of necessity, be recognised. It is also true, that men, when thus led to seek for secondary causes naturally, in the first instance, endeavoured to ascertain the substantive essence of the causes, as most likely, if it could be discovered, to realise the most perfect knowledge. This every one knows, and all history records. But, though experience once more teaches us that this is unattainable, under the form, at all events, which they supposed, as our faculties are at present constituted, yet no one is the less convinced, which M. Comte seems also to have forgot, that there are such essences, on which phenomena depend, and that, though we may be unable to discover their absolute nature, yet that such essences are no less certainly knowable. As to his third stage, it is sufficiently obvious that he has borrowed for it, in connection with his materialism, some form of the German idealistic theory of the absolute. According to him, the absolute is to be attained, not by *a priori* cognitions, but by successive generalisations from experience, and in so far we agree with him, that if it is to be attained at all, this is the only possible process for realising it. The fact is, however, that M. Comte has left this process—to which he has given the somewhat arrogant title of the

Digitized by Google

"positive" philosophy—shrouded in a veil of more impenetrable darkness than even that which envelopes its German prototype. For what are the phenomena, or facts of experience, on which his generalisations rest, if we know nothing whatever of essence, under any form? They can only be images, or species, substantively nothing at all in so far as we are concerned, leaving to us no substratum, as resting, in so far as we know, on no essence. So nearly do the extremes of idealism and materialism approximate to each other. It is quite unnecessary, however, at greater length to develope the details of M. Comte's philosophy, which, as a system of pure materialism, is just the system of all materialists, from Epicurus downwards, and liable to the same objections. M. Comte, however, is much more glaringly inconsistent than, perhaps, any of his predecessors, since, while his "positive" philosophy is founded on the assumption, that we know nothing whatever of essence, and that all true philosophy consists in ascertaining phenomena, and determining the laws which regulate them, he yet, substantively, himself, determines the essence of spirit—thus, in his "positive" philosophy, falling back to what he calls the second scientific stage, by identifying it with matter, AS MATTER IS REALISED BY THE SENSES. In other words, according to Comte, it is experimentally known, that wheels, or some such physical machinery, generate thought, and that nerves, or some such physical

Digitized by Google

instrumentality, generate goodness and truth. Now, to assert, *absolutely*, that spirit and matter originate in different essences, may be philosophically indefensible; but surely it is much more philosophical than to assert that matter is the essence of spirit—the phenomena being entirely different. It may, indeed, be, that in the nature of things, both are different exhibitions of the same essence, as an essence may have different qualities; but to us this is of no consequence, since we can "posi "tively" determine nothing on the subject whatever. They are to us different, in so far as the phenomena are different—the contrary assumption being merely a hypothetical conjecture, directly opposed to the only facts that we know, and consequently, in the highest degree, inconsistent with the very fundamental principle of the "positive" philosophy, assuming our knowledge even to be as limited as Comte imagines it. Whatever he may be, therefore, in other respects—as to which we are not called on to express any opinion—Comte, as a logician, assuredly belongs to the very lowest order. Yet, this man has been lauded, and by persons of some reputation too, as if he had discovered something new, or had evolved opinions of importance to the interests of science, whereas his theory is a mere repetition of the most commonplace materialism of former times, under the most untenable and inconsistent form.

About the same time as Comte in France, Mr. James Milne was attempting to re-introduce sensa-

Digitized by Google

tionalism into Great Britain, in his "analysis of "the phenomena of the human mind," though, as it appears to me, with much greater ability and logical acuteness. I must, however, decidedly protest against the supposition, that in so doing, he was, as has been asserted, following forth the philosophy of Locke. It is, indeed, the most entire mistake to suppose that Locke was, according to the modern sense of the term, in any measure a sensationalist. He did not by any means attribute our ideas solely to sensation, nor even to sensation and reflection, although he believed our simple ideas to originate in these sources, and believed that it was through reflection that we had cognisance of them. But our complex ideas he attributed—indirectly, at all events—to a strictly intellectual source, as is indisputable from the express words of his first letter to the Bishop of Worcester, in which he says, "I never said that the general "idea of substance comes in by sensation and re- "flection; or that it is a simple idea of sensation "or reflection, though it be ultimately founded in "them; for it is a *complex* idea, made up of the "general idea of something, or being, with the re- "lation of a support to accidents. *For general "ideas come not into the mind by sensation or reflec- "tion, but are the creatures or inventions of the un- "derstanding.*" Now, we are by no means prepared either precisely to explain, or to defend this argument. We do not see how a "general idea" is necessarily a "complex idea," nor do we think that Mr.

Digitized by Google

Locke could have very clearly understood what he meant by "a complex idea, made up of the general "idea of something, or being, with the relation "of a support to accidents;" but we maintain, that the concluding words of the passage remove Locke from the school of the modern sensationalists, although, no doubt, in evading any explanation of the mode under which the ideas which he does not attribute to sensation or reflection, in the limited sense of the term, are constituted, or rather, in failing when he attempts such explanation, he may, we admit, have led others to sensationalism, with the hope of perfecting his system, by giving it unity, in explaining under a sensationalist theory the phenomena which he had referred to other, though undetermined, or insufficient causes. While, therefore, we do not deny that Locke leant to sensationalism, we think it indisputable that he did so under the most modified form, and that no man would have, or indeed did, more earnestly deprecate every form of materialism. Milne, however, not only excludes other intellectual causes, but he seems to exclude even reflection itself, as a source of our ideas, and has endeavoured to explain all mental phenomena by a reference to sensation alone, under the collateral action of a principle, known, since Hartley's time, by the name of "the "association of ideas." Hence, like all other materialistic philosophers, Milne is a pure nominalist—his mental analysis consequently resolving itself

Digitized by Google

into an ingenious play of words, giving the appearance of an explanation which, however, conveys no information, and is available, consequently, for no practical use. Nay, admitting most readily, that this work is free from the extravagancies which usually disfigure idealistic theories, yet it is impossible not to feel, that many of its conclusions, however ingeniously and skilfully stated, are yet in direct opposition to the evidence of our consciousness. Who, for example, could induce himself to believe that memory has nothing in it exclusively characteristic, but is a mere result of association connected or combined with ideas of personal identity and time? We feel conscious, on the contrary, that without the specific something, which characterises and discriminates memory, the words "association, personal identity, and time," could never have been invented, and would, indeed, be entirely without meaning. The ideas even, which they are intended to express, could to us have no existence. In the same way, Mr. Milne is, of course, a strenuous advocate of Hume's theory, as to the relation, or rather the want of relation, betwixt cause and effect. He maintains, as if it were indeed a proposition nearly demonstrative, that cause and effect can only be known to us, as a uniform sequence of antecedents and consequents, that we consequently know nothing more about the matter, and hence that it is from no real knowledge of any necessary connection betwixt them, but

Digitized by Google

from a mere habit of connecting them, that we constitute our conclusion upon the subject. Now, this theory is obviously, as much as the other, in opposition to our firmest belief, so that, if it be adopted, all assurance of every kind must be at an end—not merely because our conviction of the necessary connection betwixt cause and effect lies at the very foundation of almost all our belief, but because it is a conviction so strong and irresistible, originate from whence it may, that if it be untrue, it is obvious that our faculties cannot be confided in. The character of the philosophy, however, which proposes seriously such a theory, can easily be determined, by comparing the fact with its proposed explanation, and probably no process could more thoroughly expose its weakness. The fact to be explained, is "a universal conviction that there "is some bond of connection betwixt cause and "effect which necessarily unites them." The explanation is, "that this supposed bond which we "imagine necessarily to unite cause and effect, is a "pure delusion, and originates merely in our obser- "vation of such a connection arbitrarily existing;" in other words, the fact is EXPLAINED by denying its existence. This would be perfectly legitimate in a sceptic, but in a materialist it is evidently absurd.

There can be little doubt, however, that Sir W. Hamilton, of whom we have already incidentally spoken, as belonging to the Scottish school, is entitled to the first place among the philosophers of

Digitized by Google

the present century. It is, indeed, true that his philosophy is only fragmentary, yet in its fragments it has effected a material improvement on the school to which he professes to belong, by the almost unconscious modifications which he has introduced, not only on some of its dogmatic principles, but even into its very mode of philosophising. But, though professedly of the Scottish school, yet Hamilton's unaccountable estimation of the value of the formal logic gave him a strong bias in favour of the Kantian metaphysics, as the undoubted offspring of that logic, although how the two systems could in any degree be reconciled with one another, does seem utterly inconceivable. Indeed, probably the difficulties in which he found himself involved in making the attempt, is the cause of our having little more than incidental papers from him on strictly philosophical subjects. Gradually it is certain that he tended more and more towards the later German and French eclectic school, and, from that time, the clearness of his views and the practical importance of his speculations began progressively to diminish. Assuredly, however, his partial adhesion to the Kantian and Eclectic philosophy has, at all events, given it an authority in this country, which, otherwise, there is no reason to believe that it would have realised. How far the merits which he attributes to it are well founded, we have already partially considered, and the conclusions already attained will be subsequently illus-

Digitized by Google

trated when we enter on a detailed analysis of the mental states and operations ; but we may remark, in passing, that, indisputably, the most important discovery which he himself has suggested in intellectual philosophy, in including our perception of external existence under consciousness, is diametrically opposed to the very fundamental principles of Kantism, which regards perception as a phenomenon of the subject, and, consequently, avoids all explanation of the process under which the external and internal existences are combined, as implying an impossible result, under any conceivable form of determination.

The last work of any importance which has appeared in this country on the subject of spiritual philosophy, is Mr. Ferrier's "Institutes of metaphysic: the theory of knowing and being"—a work which strikingly indicates that sense which universally prevails among thinking men, of the unsatisfactory state of intellectual science, and exhibits the fruits of an evidently earnest struggle in a powerful mind, to rest it on a more solid foundation. Were it not, indeed, from the earnestness of tone which pervades this treatise from beginning to end, one could hardly help thinking, from the nature of its assumptions, and the singular character of its conclusions, that it had been intended as a logical jest, for the purpose of ridiculing the deficiencies and contradictory principles of spiritual philosophy in its present state. But let it not be supposed

Digitized by Google

that we find fault with Mr. Ferrier on this account. On the contrary, we honour the man who, at any risk of misconception and misinterpretation, dares to give forth what he believes to be the truth. Our astonishment is, how he could have brought himself to believe that it is the truth! Nor can we imagine, supposing it were the truth, how he expects it to serve the interests of humanity, nor why he should have given himself so much trouble to work out a system of which the results can never be applicable to any practical purpose whatsoever. The truth seems to be of little importance, if it be just as useless as error. Its pursuit may be an innocent amusement, but would hardly be worth much pains to realise it.

That Mr. Ferrier's speculations, however, are perfectly original, we are, in so far, quite willing to accord to him; that their tone and character should bear a certain resemblance occasionally to the German school, is only what might have been expected in the pupil and friend of Sir W. Hamilton during his later years. In one particular, at all events, he differs from the Germans, in so far as, while they prosecute philosophical speculations under the processes of the formal logic, Mr. Ferrier is of opinion that philosophical speculation should consist of "an unbroken chain of clear demonstration carried "through from their first word to their last."[a] Now, this we apprehend to be his first mistake, inasmuch

[a] Intro.—Sect. 11.

Digitized by Google

as demonstration could never prove any actual state, or condition, or substance to exist at all, because it applies solely to RELATIONS. Hence, mathematical demonstration, *quâ* demonstration, never applies to any actually existing state, condition, or substance, but to the *relations of things*, ASSUMING THEIR EXISTENCE, nor can any instance be adduced, nor is it possible that there could be such an instance, where pure demonstration applies to anything but RELATIONS. Starting, then, from this error, he farther assumes the existence of what he calls necessary truths, as the foundation of his demonstations—whereas, as has been already said, we maintain, and are inclined to believe, that all who investigate the subject will agree with us, that there is no one truth more necessary than another. The circumstances which involve the truth may be supposed contingent, *i.e.*, we could conceive them to have been otherwise, but, these being assumed, the truth itself which they imply must be necessary. There can be no exception. To take Mr. Ferrier's own example—"Nature might have fixed that "the sun should go round the earth instead of "the earth round the sun." No doubt of it, but that is a necessary truth, unless Mr. Ferrier means to maintain that "nature could *not* have "fixed that the sun should go round the earth, in-"stead of the earth round the sun." At all events, if nature actually has such a power, it cannot be a matter of contingency whether nature has it or not

Digitized by Google

—nay, to say "nature has a certain power—but it is uncertain whether nature has it or not"—is directly opposed to the "law of contradiction"; the great test of all necessary truth—so that, by his own test, the very example which he has himself suggested of contingent is proved to be necessary truth; and so it will be in every case of every kind of truth whatever. There can be no contingent truth. The word contingent DOES NOT APPLY TO TRUTH. All truth *quâ* truth must be necessary. It is, however, clear that this species of truth which Mr. Ferrier recognises only as truth, cannot apply to anything but relations; for no other species of truth would admit of the "law of contradiction" being brought into operation. The existence of anything, therefore, however firmly all the world may believe in it, cannot strictly be regarded as truth according to Mr. Ferrier's definition of truth, because anything, with the exception of time and space, can be conceived non-exsistent, without implying a contradiction in terms. "The world "exists," is only a truth, if IT BE ASSUMED as a truth, in which case, of course, like all other truths, it becomes a necessary truth, but, unless it be so assumed, it is not a truth at all, since the opposite assumption—the "world does not exist"—implies no contradiction whatever; or, if it be put in another form—"we are conscious that the world "exists"—the conclusion is precisely the same, since our "consciousness" of external existence, being as-

Digitized by Google

sumed as false, involves no contradiction, and indeed we shall find presently that Mr. Ferrier actually denies that we are, in the ordinary sense of the word, conscious of it. So, in regard to the proposition, "I exist" and all others. This, however, Mr. Ferrier does not seem to have perceived, and, accordingly we receive from him, as *the canon of all reason*, that we are to "affirm nothing except what is en- "forced by reason as a necessary truth—that is, "as a truth, the supposed reversal of which would "involve a contradiction, and deny nothing, un- "less its affirmation involves a contradiction—that "is, contradicts some necessary truth or law of "reason."[a] This sweeps away all existence, and we doubt whether Mr. Ferrier, scientifically speaking, would hesitate to adopt the conclusion, were it not that "the subject *plus* object," "the thing or thought, *mecum*," vanish along with everything else.

We now come to his propositions, and the first is to the following effect—"along with whatever "any intelligence knows, it must, as the ground or "condition of its knowledge, have some cognisance "of itself."[b] Now, there is no attempt at a demonstration of this; it is taken for granted, and in this breaks down his whole argument, UNDER HIS OWN PRINCIPLES, for, to deny the proposition, "contradicts no necessary truth nor law of reason." But, farther, under the very terms of the proposition, we find ourselves in an inextricable difficulty—

[a] Intro.—Sec. 34. [b] Prop. 1.

Digitized by Google

for either we KNOW the intelligence which thus gives us "some cognisance of itself," or we DO NOT. If we *do not*, then the proposition is not true, or at least not to us, since we cannot know that an unknown existence gives us "cognisance" of anything—for to predicate anything of that which is unknown, would be to affirm, in violation of that "law of contradiction" which Mr. Ferrier truly enough gives us as the test of all necessary truth—of course using the word necessary in its only intelligible sense—as expressing the admitted relations of assumed elements. If, on the contrary, it is in this proposition implied that we *do* know such intelligence—though a confusion upon this subject runs through the whole book—we shall find that the assumption involves a direct contradiction of all the rest of his propositions. This will be made perfectly clear, by attending to the second and third propositions.

The second proposition is in the following terms:—"The object of knowledge, whatever it may be, "is always something more than what is naturally "or usually regarded as the object. It always is, "and always must be, the object with the addition "of oneself—object *plus* subject—thing, or thought, "*mecum*. Self is an integral and essential part of "every object of cognition;"[a] and the third, which completes it, runs in these words—"The objective "part of the object of knowledge, though distin-

[a] Prop. 2d.

Digitized by Google

"guishable, is not separable in cognition from the "subjective part or the ego ; but the objective part "and the subjective part do, together, constitute the "unit or minimum of knowledge."[a] Now, it is manifest, that by the terms of these propositions, there is no possible way under which Mr. Ferrier could have discovered that a cognition consists of an objective and a subjective part ; for to know that a cognition, or anything else, consists of two parts, we must know, at least, one of the parts, *per se*, which implies, of course, an indirect knowledge, at all events, of the other *per se*, since, if this be not the case, we affirm that we know, what under the assumption we do not know, in violation of the "law of contradiction." Hence it follows, necessarily, that if we know one of the parts, *per se*, the union, or, in other words, "the object *plus* subject" do NOT "constitute the minimum of knowledge." There seems something like an unconscious attempt at meeting this insuperable difficulty in the third proposition, where it is said, that "the objective part "of the object of knowledge, though distinguishable, "is not separable in cognition from the subjective "part or the ego;" but it is quite in vain, inasmuch as it is a distinction without a difference, since that which is "distinguishable" must evidently be "se-"parable" in thought, else we could distinguish in thought that which is inseparable in thought—an affirmation which is again manifestly disproved by

[a] Prop. 3d.

Digitized by Google

the "law of contradiction." But, without discussing the verbal distinction which might be taken betwixt the words "distinguishable" and "separable," it is, at all events, certain that that which we can "distinguish" we must KNOW, since, to "distinguish" expresses knowledge and something more, and can have no other meaning; so that, if we can distinguish "the objective from the subjective part" of knowledge, it follows again, beyond question, under the "law of contradiction," that we must know each *per se*, and consequently that "the objective part and the subjective part do" NOT, "together, constitute the minimum of knowledge." And it is in vain to reply to this, that we know the "subjective part of a cognition" as that which is permanent of it, since this is merely another self-contradiction in the theory, because, if we know the permanent from all the incidental parts of cognitions, it is manifest that, be the process what it may, we must know it somehow or other *per se*, and consequently, once more, that "the objective part and the subjective part do" NOT, "together, constitute the minimum of knowledge."

Not only, however, is it impossible to know that a cognition consists of a "subjective and an objective part," consistently with the assumption, that in their union they "constitute the minimum of knowledge;" but the very terms—"oneself," "intelligence," "knowledge," and the like, accord-

Digitized by Google

ing to the theory of Mr. Ferrier, are void and utterly without meaning; for we have, according to his account, only reached the existence of "ob-"ject *plus* subject"—and we say the existence, because it is impossible that "we" can know, or that "intelligence" can know anything, till the "we" or the "intelligence," which does know, has been determined. We have not discovered, however, any such "we" or "intelligence," but have only a cognition or phenomenon, as it would be called in ordinary language, which depends upon nothing; but, if it exist at all, must exist absolutely and *per se*. We have just the "idea" of Hume, which may imply a theory perfectly suitable for a sceptic, as leaving everything in a state of uncertainty, but is utterly inadmissible, under any system which assumes anything as certain, even though it should be only mathematical axioms. It is obvious that we cannot assume this "object *plus* subject," therefore, which exists only as an absolute cognition or phenomenon, as known by "oneself" or by any "intelligence" whatever, *per se*. We do not, indeed, know ourselves, *per se*, at all, under this theory, as has already been proved, and as, indeed, Mr. Ferrier maintains in the strongest terms. "But matter, "*per se*," he says, "the particular *per se*, the ego "*per se*, are what we neither know, nor are ignorant "of; and these, therefore, are not things which "absolutely exist, or of which true and substantial "being can be predicated, without giving utterance

Digitized by Google

"to a contradiction."[a] It is, therefore, evidently impossible that we can know, THAT WE CAN KNOW ANYTHING, since this would imply, that we know, that what we do not know knows something, to affirm which would manifestly violate the "law of "contradiction." Nay, it is impossible that "we" can know anything, since there is no "we" to know, seeing that to predicate the "ego, *per se*, as "a thing which absolutely exists, is to give utter- "ance to an absurdity." We must either know "ourselves," and "intelligence" absolutely as existences, or it is manifest that we cannot say that we "know," nor can we predicate anything about them whatever. No one cognition even can, under the assumption, have any connection with any other cognition. They are separate phenomena, each existing absolutely by itself, and consequently the "cognisance of self," which Mr. Ferrier speaks of as essential to every cognition, can have no relation to any real being, but is merely a delusion, constituting simply a portion of an isolated phenomenon. From the beginning to the end, therefore, of Mr. Ferrier's book, there runs the inconsistency, and no doubt, the *necessary* inconsistency of assuming an "intelligence" and a "knowledge," which, under his system, is not, and CANNOT BE. It seems, indeed, singular enough that he should have given us a theory of "knowing" which precludes the possibility of knowledge, and even supersedes the

[a] Summary and conclusion—Sec. 24.

Digitized by Google

very existence by which alone knowledge could be acquired. In conclusion, it is obvious, that if the "object of knowledge must always be object *plus* "subject," Mr. Ferrier's argument should have begun and ended with the first three propositions, which are substantively one, being merely explanatory of each other—for we can, under his principles, get no farther. We have reached not only the minimum, but also the maximum, both of knowlege, if knowledge were possible, and also of existence. We perceive, before another proposition is enunciated, that "object *plus* subject" must be the "sum of knowledge," must be the "sum of phenomena," must be "substance," must be "the absolute," must be "all-existence." He never advances a step, nor is it possible, under his system, that he should have done so. The rest of his propositions, so far as they bear upon the subject, are just the same thing, or parts of the same thing, repeated and re-repeated. They seem mere surplusage. At the very end, indeed, he once more tells us—for we have the same thing substantively, both in the first and second propositions—that "minds, together with what they ap- "prehend, are the only veritable existences."[a] But let it be remembered that these "minds" are not *per se* existences, but PHENOMENA OF COGNITION, and that in the same way "those things which they "apprehend" are not *per se* existences, but likewise PHENOMENA OF COGNITION—for he adds, in thus far,

[a] Summary and conclusion—Sec. 26.

Digitized by Google

with the utmost consistency, "that minds without "any apprehensions, and apprehensions without any "mind, are mere absurdities"—where, in contrasting "minds" not with what are usually supposed to be the "subjects" of apprehensions, but with "ap- "prehensions" themselves, he seems to indicate that he holds the one to be just as little absolute as the other. While, therefore, as an argued system of scepticism, proving the absurdities to which the principles usually adopted in spiritual philosophy naturally and necessarily lead—whether the scepticism be absolute, or merely relative to the present state of the science—we hold Mr. Ferrier's work, for in this view many of his ulterior propositions become available, to be one of no ordinary ability, and, as relatively sceptical, of considerable practical importance and utility; but, as we understand him to repudiate all forms of scepticism, and to propose his theory as an absolute system of philosophy, we cannot but regard it as an utter failure, implying assumptions impossible in themselves, contradictory in their terms, and altogether opposed to the determinations of universal consciousness.

We can now, therefore, understand why Mr. Ferrier's system should, "to use his own words, be an- "tagonistic, not only to natural thinking," but, "moreover, to many a point of psychological doc- "trine,"[a] and, that while it is only "by accident that "philosophy is inimical to psychology, in reference to

[a] Intro.—Sect. 43.

Digitized by Google

"natural thinking, she is essentially controversial." This antagonism of "naturally thinking," and philosophical speculation, must always, of course, be a favourite topic with all who deny the evidence of consciousness, and, like Mr. Ferrier, profess to suppose that philosophical conclusions can only be rested on some sort of mathematical demonstration, because demonstration of this kind, being inapplicable to the subject, can either lead to no conclusion, or must lead to a false one. But it is more difficult, at first sight, to understand the cause of his dislike to psychology, since he admits, that it is only by "accident that philosophy is inimical to "psychology." There may, therefore, according to his own account, be a philosophical psychology, and that we humbly think is the very psychology which, for the sake of human belief and human happiness, it is desirable that we should determine. It can only be, therefore, psychology in its existing form that he condemns, and in so far we agree with him, that it is a state far from satisfactory. We agree with him, indeed, as will be obvious from what has been already said, that its principles imply contradiction and absurdity. But this, instead of being a reason for rejecting the evidence of consciousness—on which, in conformity with universal and irresistible belief it professes to found—should rather be an inducement to inquire in what respects its analysis is imperfect, and its assumptions untenable; or, if we believe this to be impossible, we have,

Digitized by Google

and, as it seems to me, can have no other course, than to avow scepticism as the only philosophy, since, even were it possible to prove demonstrably our consciousness unworthy of confidence, it would merely be scepticism in another form. Nor does there seem any reason why Mr. Ferrier should repudiate such a method of philosophising, since he has himself assumed the trust-worthiness of consciousness in his first proposition, as evidence for the "cognisance of oneself"—an assumption on which the whole of his subsequent reasoning rests, however inconsistent it may be with his other assumptions, and really to assume that same consciousness as sufficient evidence, also, of our mental faculties, for which he expresses so much contempt, seeing they are merely the modes in which consciousness of "oneself" exhibits itself, does not seem any great stretch of assurance. We have dwelt on Mr. Ferrier's philosophy at greater length, not merely because he exposes with considerable effect many of the ambiguities and inconsistencies with which our ordinary systems of psychology are chargeable, but mainly because he gives forth, in its fulness, that notion of the identity of knowledge and existence which lies at the foundation of almost all the theories, either wholly or partially generated by the metaphysics of Kant, and which, indeed, must be involved in every form of idealism, but which we do not think any author has explained with so much clearness, or indeed so thoroughly and emphatically

Digitized by Google

realised. Of course, in a work on philosophy, we have nothing to do with consequences. Our business is to correct error and ascertain truth at whatever expense. We cannot hesitate, therefore, to say, speaking under this view of the subject only, that such a notion, whether right or wrong, implies scepticism of the most decided character—that it is substantively Humeism, though the conclusion may be somewhat differently argued out in different cases, according to the nature of the principles assumed—and that, consequently, any attempt at identifying it with certainty of belief, however zealous, must be unsatisfactory—and that every presumption of the success of such attempt, however sincere, must be logically delusive, since the very notion itself sets at defiance the determinations of consciousness.

In the foregoing sketch of the progress of philosophy it will be observed that we have, for the most part, purposely avoided entering on the consideration of details unessential to the respective systems, amongst which, however, we find in the writings of almost every philosopher, much that is valuable. It is, indeed, quite a mistake to suppose that as yet nothing, or next to nothing, has been accomplished in the analysis of the human mind, however little may have been done for ascertaining the principles of spiritual science. So far is this from being the case, that, on the contrary, almost every philosophical work, as has been said—every history of any value—every sermon above the

Digitized by Google

ordinary average—contain incidental analyses which we know and feel to be true; nay, it is impossible to read even the more eminent Poets and Novelists without being made aware of the extent to which they have studied the human mind, or of the success, in many instances, with which their efforts have been attended. It is, indeed, sometimes most erroneously supposed, that the excellence of these writers consists in their style rather than anything else, and that any one could have written those works who had the same facility of composition. But this is by no means the fact. On the contrary, the great merit of such writers consists in the accuracy with which they have observed the constitution of the human mind, and the acuteness with which they have detected its peculiarities. The difficulty of this any one may readily ascertain, by attempting to discover the more subtle processes of the mind for himself. Let him put his conclusions into any form of words that he may choose, he will quickly be made to know, that minute and anxious examination and comparison of character is necessary, and, at the same time, a careful scrutiny of the operations of his own mind, in order to discover the germs of mental peculiarities there, before he can either determine anything worth determining, or state his views with discrimination and accuracy. The great evil is, that the analyses, thus made, apply merely to incidental facts empirically known, without any reference to their origin or

Digitized by Google

development, and that, consequently, while we feel that the results as given are true to nature, we have no means of discovering in what causes they originate. It is, in truth, empirical philosophy which ascertains facts by experience and observation indeed, but attempts no explanation of the principles on which they depend.

There is in this way exhibited, as was previously indicated, a strong analogy betwixt the state of mental science at the present time, and that of physical science antecedent to the time of Bacon—an analogy which will now, perhaps, be better understood. There can be no doubt, that then many most important facts and details in physical science had been discovered, but they exhibited little connection among themselves. They were reduced to no principles. They had nothing of the character of a whole. They had been discovered incidentally, and by happy accidents, if we may so speak, rather than under any process of strictly scientific investigation—and consequently, though empirically known as true, they neither could be accounted for on any satisfactory principles, nor were they bound together by any common laws, so as to render the empirical knowledge of them in any great measure practically available; and so it is at present with respect to intellectual science, and from the very same cause. The same vicious principle of investigation, *even when professedly repudiated*, is checking its progress, which in physical science Bacon superseded.

Digitized by Google

It is the assumption that there are, in some form or another, innate or *a priori*, or necessary ideas or cognitions in the human mind, and that they are to be determined antecedent to experience. This is a result, indeed, of all kinds, both of idealism and materialism, and necessarily ends in scepticism, whether formally pushed to its legitimate result or not; for it is perfectly clear, that those *a priori* cognitions, if they exist at all, must imply a knowledge of absolute essences, since it is impossible to know, without knowing the properties that are known—and as these, by the assumption, are not known by experience, they must necessarily be known in their essence as existing *a priori* in the mind. Hence it is, that all those philosophers more or less unconsciously confuse essences with general truths—a theory which is, however, only logically realised by those who identify knowledge with existence. The recent German philosophy specially appears to regard them as the major propositions in syllogisms. Thus it becomes impossible to understand anything, unless we have an *a priori* knowledge of the essence or general truth from which it is derived. Under such a view we can easily account for Schelling's theory of an "Intellectual intuition," which is yet above the intellect, which supersedes consciousness, and by which alone we can appreciate the unconditioned and the absolute, since, if a knowledge of essence actually exist *a priori* in the mind, there can of course be no limit to the extent of know-

Digitized by Google

ledge which may be realised. In truth we have thus, in this assumption of *a priori* cognitions, the origin of this new word "unconditioned," which, in so far as it means anything, must mean the highest essence, the essence of essences, of which nothing can be predicated but its essentiality. It was necessary that the intellectual essence, which discovers this, should be "above consciousness," inasmuch as the assumption of such knowledge at all is a mere delusion, and consequently, of course, it cannot well be within consciousness. To us "the unconditioned" is simply nothing at all. It is, indeed, true, that some attempt has been made to realise an "unconditioned," by confusing it with infinity and eternity, which, no doubt, are "uncon-"ditioned," in so far as they are mere modes, in which, and during which, existence may be; but, the moment that we realise infinity and eternity in an infinite and eternal SOMETHING, we instantly imply conditions as appertaining to that something—for the very conception of something necessarily implies, that that which it is must be predicable of it; but nothing can be predicated of that which is "unconditioned," since, predicates being merely another name for conditions, if anything could be predicated of it, it could not be "unconditioned." It is evident, therefore, that the "unconditioned" must, to us, be nothing at all—for to us that is nothing, of which nothing can be predicated.

Digitized by Google

We need not wonder, therefore, at the confusion which has been generated in the systems of those who have defined philosophy to be "the science of the unconditioned," which, in reality, is the "science "of nothing at all." To us the primordial essence—the substance of essence—the essence of essences, if we may so speak—cannot be absolutely realised, and all philosophy attempting to discover it, must necessarily degenerate into the mere logomachies of verbal disputes.

As it appears to me, philosophy, whether of mind or matter, is "the science which explains the "causes of known and admitted facts." Hence, in mental science, we must take the facts which our consciousness exhibits to us, just as in physical science, and then endeavour, as also we do in physical science, to trace them to their principles. Except in so far, therefore, as we may have some absolute knowledge of our own minds—a point which will come afterwards to be considered—we have nothing to do with essences absolutely, because we have no consciousness of them, but only with phenomena, or essences as they relatively exhibit themselves. The only particulars, consequently, which we have to explain, as has been said, are the facts and phenomena of consciousness, which we must, therefore, assume as true, in the form that such consciousness recognises them. To assume that these are not facts, but the appearances of facts, the erroneous suggestions of natural thinking—and

Digitized by Google

that we are deluded in supposing them to be facts, even in any one case, and still more in all cases—is to introduce a system of universal scepticism; and to introduce new facts inconsistent with consciousness, as the result of some supposed demonstration, is to systematise scepticism, and absurdly enough to constitute a science under a theory of which it is the essential principle that there can be no science. The clear and logical Hume saw that inconsistency, and avoided it. Indeed it is manifest, that if we assume facts scientifically, in a sense and under an aspect, in and under which our natures repudiate them practically, it is not a human, but an ultra-human science, if science it can be called, that is generated. It is not, therefore, the mind of man that can be the instrument of such a science, supposing it to have any reality, but something above and beyond the mind, teaching us that the mind is mistaken, and guiding us under a different authority. To suppose that such a study can ever be of any practical use seems simply ridiculous, since it is from the very nature of the case, away from human things, beyond the reach of the human mind and of which the results, as in every case of a mere verbal science, must be either unintelligible or incredible; still, if any one chooses to follow forth this sort of speculation, we can have no manner of objection, we only state our reasons for repudiating it ourselves. We understand, by intellectual philosophy, the science which explains mental facts

Digitized by Google

and phenomena in the sense that all men feel and practically recognise them, and by such means, too, as all men, competent to understand ordinary language, can appreciate—and we say all men, because these processes which occur in the human mind, however unconsciously they may sometimes operate, being common to all men more or less, must necessarily be knowable by all men when they are analysed, the prejudices or habits which conceal them indicated, and their exact character precisely ascertained. To all men, consequently, under such circumstances, they become manifest, and are felt as true, just as in physical science, if the language describing such process be intelligible to them. It is, indeed, another test of the truth of any system of philosophy, that its analyses are found level to the comprehension of every human being who has paid such attention to ordinary literature as to understand definitely ordinary language. Whenever, consequently, we find a system of psychology or ontology, or, in a word, any system professing to develope the nature and processes of the human mind, which persons possessed of ordinary education cannot understand, it is simply because such a system is, of its own nature, unintelligible, as being founded on suppositious facts, and exhibiting, therefore, not really profound analyses, but that appearance of subtlety which results from the use of vague and newly-invented terms.

Now, this repudiation of all philosophy, resting

Digitized by Google

on the supposed existence of *a priori* essences in the mind, applies not merely to systems avowing such a theory, but also to the admission of the principle, however unconsciously, in the assumption of *a priori* truths of any kind, form, or degree; and hence it is that Dr. Reid seems chargeable with the substantive adoption of this very error, which his system theoretically negatives; for, in affirming the existence of certain truths, which he terms "intuitive"—or "principles of common sense," which, by our natural constitution, we must believe, and which yet can neither be analysed nor explained—he evidently assumes, under some form, those very "innate ideas" which he, in words, admits Locke to have exploded. Indeed, in maintaining such truths to be inexplicable, while he gives no means of determining precisely what they are—for he by no means limits them to what are usually called necessary truths—Reid established a theory even more pernicious than the strict theory of innate ideas, since, according to him, there can not only be no limit to such truths, but each of them must involve a number of innate ideas, all ready-made, and existing as propositions in the mind anterior to every sort of experience. Every proposition, accordingly, which he was unable to analyse, he immediately assumed as a "principle "of common sense." In this way the Scottish philosophy quickly became stereotyped. It could advance no further. Stewart hardly even made

Digitized by Google

the attempt. During his days the thunders of war silenced the voice of philosophy, and men were very well satisfied with a system which gave them some sort of assurance, however dogmatically and arbitrarily asserted. Stewart, at all events, seems to have regarded Reid as nearly perfect. Some suspicions, as to the indefinite number of his "principles "of common sense," do seem to have occasionally and slightly disturbed his convictions, but he recovered his equanimity by calling them "laws of "thought." It was a simple remedy, yet, such was nearly all his contribution to the progress of intellectual philosophy. Brown lived upon the verge of the time when men began to speculate more anxiously than ever, and the very character of the times seems to have impressed him with a conviction that there was some weakness at what were supposed to be the very foundations of the science; but his adoption of the theory of intuitive ideas hung like a dead weight on his energies, so that he not unfrequently misconceived Reid's meaning in struggling after originality, which, however, from the influence which Reid's primary principles exercised over his mind, he necessarily failed sucessfully to realise. Sir W. Hamilton was impeded in his efforts by the same cause, and only incidentally, in attacking Brown, discovered the elements of the true theory of perception; but at this point, when much more might have been expected from him, he fell in with the Kantian metaphysics, and, from thenceforward,

Digitized by Google

we have nothing worthy of the hopes which his earlier efforts had generated.

The French philosophers had, at a still earlier period, endeavoured to open a way to themselves, for some advance in intellectual science, by combining the German with the Scottish philosophy. But the union was impossible. Reid prides himself justly on the clearness and simplicity of his philosophy. The system of Kant, on the contrary, is, from beginning to end, as we have seen, vague, and, in many particulars, unintelligible. The combination consequently gives us a jumble of what is precise and distinct, with what nobody can clearly understand. We can hardly say, therefore, that the parts of the combination are inconsistent, because it is scarcely possible to discover what the system really is which the combination constitutes. One particular only have they in common in their adoption of innate ideas—the one calls them "intuitive truths," and the other "*a priori* cognitions," but whatever names they may get, they are the very same thing in reality.

It was impossible, therefore, that the two could co-exist, and, accordingly, the Scottish philosophy gradually receding, the German philosophy, as there was no other choice, has made proportionate progress, both in its idealistic tendency, and still more in its tone and terminology, and for the evident reason, that people will rather struggle through a thicket, than make no progress at all. They will

Digitized by Google

take indefinite ideas rather than none. But the result of this on intellectual philosophy, and its consecutive and dependent sciences of Theology, Morals, Politics, &c., has been to unsettle all principles, and to generate a sort of demi-scepticism universally — and we say universally, because, although there are many who know nothing of philosophy as a science, yet is their belief in no degree less affected by the state of philosophy at the time—the general character of belief in the literary world gradually pervading its whole forth-givings, and thus instilling itself into the minds of multitudes, who know nothing of its origin, nor even of the special sources from whence they themselves had gradually derived it. Accordingly, such is the position in which we actually are. It is Hume's theory, in so far, practically realised. Every subject is flooded with terms which nobody well understands. In Germany, indeed, for some time, scepticism was almost universally avowed, and, if there they are beginning to recover their senses a little, the wave, though it may be in the first instance with mitigated force, seems to be rolling gradually over other lands. It would, indeed, be difficult to say, with regard to spiritual facts and relations, in any of the sciences to which we have alluded, what is considered as settled, or what really is settled, on anything like precise and rational grounds. No doubt there are many things which we believe more or less firmly, and cannot

Digitized by Google

help practically believing, but the principles on which such beliefs rest seem more uncertain than ever, and hence the practical results on human life must be modified accordingly. It is in vain to tell us, as some more or less well-meaning persons do tell us, that we should abstain from such speculations altogether, seeing that we have succeeded so imperfectly hitherto, and that philosophical theories have probably done more ill than good, because it is impossible to induce men to abstain from such speculations, and specially in the present age. Those points which are involved in intellectual science, and which the conclusions of intellectual science can alone enable us therefore to determine, be it for good or evil, meet us at every turn. The Theologian, the Moralist, the Politician, the Barrister—nay, as we have seen, the Novelist and the Poet—perhaps above all, we might say, the Journalist—stumble upon them perpetually, and must decide them in some shape or another, directly, or indirectly; nay, in this present age, if we could even banish them from formal literature altogether, we should find the Porter in the street, the Peasant in his cabin, the Manufacturer in his workshop, propounding questions on the principles of Religion, Morality, and Politics, and each, to a greater or less extent, REGULATING HIS CONDUCT BY THE ANSWER WHICH HE IS CAPABLE OF GIVING. So far from being able to elude and avoid difficulties depending on intellectual science, we find, on the contrary, the

Digitized by Google

whole of society occupied with them, and it is evident, that they well tell specially as affecting the interests of education, and that right rapidly, on the fate, not merely of individuals, but of nations, whether we be willing or not. People will not, in the present state of society, take assertions for granted. If we cannot give them certainty, they will realise scepticism, and practically carry forth its principles both religiously and politically in the gratification, more or less exclusively, of their own interests, desires, and caprices.

Hence, however frequent may have been our past disappointments, it would seem that we are by no means to give over the attempt at determining the principles of intellectual and spiritual truth, so long as we have any hope, even of a measure of success. It is a duty which we owe to our fellow-creatures, to our country, and our God, the more especially, as we are forcibly directed to it by the very constitution of the human mind. To me, however, success, in so far, in such an attempt, seems very far from being hopeless. As has been said, not a few important truths have already been incidentally determined, and the number of our facts, at all events, in reference to points of very material importance, have of late years been prodigiously increased; but, in attempting their scientific generalisation, philosophers have, with one exception, been invariably confused by the notion, to which we have so often alluded, that there are many

Digitized by Google

beliefs which are inexplicable, and which, in some unaccountable way, we believe, simply because we cannot help believing them, but that how they originate, or why we believe them, it is impossible to tell. Now it matters nothing—and let it be observed that this theory is equally true of materialists as of idealists—it matters nothing whether these beliefs be called by the name of innate ideas, intuitive truths, principles of common sense, *a priori* cognitions, laws of thought, or by any other *alias* whatever, if they be assumed to be inexplicable in their origin. Shew that they naturally arise from the operation of our feelings or faculties, so that all can realise the process, and the whole subject is clear; but unless this be done, it is obvious that we must regard them, somehow or other, as innate propositions, IMPLYING AN A PRIORI KNOWLEDGE OF ALL THE SPECIAL IDEAS WHICH THEY INCLUDE. And, that their origin *may* be explained, seems certain, since there can be no mental process which is essentially inexplicable, inasmuch as the very meaning of the word process implies some operation, and of course, if there be an operation, it must admit of analysis. We may, indeed, readily admit, that there are operations which never have been analysed; but to say that it is impossible to analyse them, is just to say that there are compounds which cannot be reduced to their elements—a proposition which seems neither more nor less than a contradiction in terms. Now, we maintain that this notion

Digitized by Google

of inexplicable ideas existing in the mind *a priori*, however universally entertained, is not only erroneous, but must necessarily involve a principle of scepticism, because, assuming general ideas as existing *a priori* in the mind, we must also assume the particular ideas which they involve to exist *a priori* there too—thus completely annihilating every sort of experience, and substantively identifying existence and knowledge. In this way, consequently, science at once becomes divorced from consciousness. They are antagonistic, and yet both necessary beliefs. Instead of taking facts as we have them, just as in physical science, we assume some knowledge of the SUBSTANTIAL essence of mind, and thus get Materialistic theories on the one hand, and all the innumerable varieties of Realistic, as they are improperly called, and Idealistic theories—such as of Intuitional or Presentative Realism, Natural Idealism, Absolute Idealism, Egotistical Idealism, &c.—on the other. The truth is, that almost all these distinctions are entirely imaginary, originating in the rejection of facts as we have them, and the assumption of other facts in their room —a proceeding which results from the supposition, that there are innate or intuitive truths existing *a priori* in the human mind, and more worthy of scientific reverence than the ordinary convictions of ordinary mortals. In getting rid, therefore, of these innate, intuitive, or *a priori* ideas or cognitions, we get rid of this whole mass of confusion,

Digitized by Google

and bring philosophy back to the simple and single explanation of phenomena, originating in the operations of our minds on the facts of experience, whether internal or external, presented to them. We, in one word, to the fullest extent, concur in the doctrine of Locke, repudiating all forms of *a priori* ideas or cognitions, whatever name they may assume, or under whatever form they may present themselves. Our object will, therefore, be to reduce every intellectual phenomenon to the simple operation of our mental feelings and faculties on the facts presented to us by experience, and to do this in such a way as that the process may be at once understood, AND FELT TO BE TRUE; and, "bold as the assertion may be," to use the language of Kant, with reference to a very different system, we are not without hopes, that this, in so far, can be effected. Certain we are, at all events, that till it be effected, intellectual philosophy, as a science, can only be a system of verbal quibbling—for any practical purpose it must be a mockery and a delusion. We need only add, that a proposition sometimes put forth, to the effect that the ordinary plan of psychological philosophy is wrong, and that we should study the human mind, not by analysis of our mental processes, but solely by examining the psychological phenomena of history and experience, is about as absurd as if it were proposed to study chemistry apart from analysis, and simply by carefully examining the phenomena of

Digitized by Google

nature as they usually exhibit themselves to our senses. In either case we should discover the superficial character of the effects, but it would be perfectly impossible to form even an approximating conjecture as to the nature of the causes. This, indeed, is more manifestly true of mental, than even of chemical philosophy.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER III.

MODE OF INVESTIGATING THE NATURE AND PHENOMENA OF THE HUMAN MIND.

Remarks on the theory that the human mind can only be known by observation, and in no measure by experiment—Misconception involved in this theory—Nature forces men to speculate on spiritual subjects, and this through all classes—Advantages of the study when properly prosecuted—General mistakes on the subject—Use to be derived from objections to the study—Necessity of precision and clearness—How these are to be attained—Primary assumption—How followed forth—Must begin the study from the simplest forms of thought—Impossibility of *a priori* classification under such a mode of prosecuting the subject—Necessity of avoiding pre-conceived theories—Mischievous results of these exemplified—Circumstances which at present favour the prosecution of the science according to such a mode—Order of details.

It has been objected, as we have already said, that the study of the human mind can only be prosecuted by observation, and not by experiment, and that, as all human beings are necessarily acquainted with every fact which the philosopher can possibly observe, therefore the science must resolve itself into a mere science of classification, which, though it may afford scope for the subtle and accurate exercise of our faculties, can never materially increase human power, extend human knowledge, nor add to human

Digitized by Google

happiness. But, the assumption that mental philosophy resolves itself into a mere science of observation, is an utter misconception, however generally it may have been adopted. It may, indeed, be true, that we cannot experiment upon mind precisely in the same way as we do on matter, by repeating the process of analysis in different forms on identical objects, which is really all that physical experiment means, whatever mystical sense may occasionally be attached to it—although even this may be effected as to the mind, by long habit, to a much greater extent than, on a superficial consideration, might be supposed; but we can do better, and attain our purpose more thoroughly, by repeating the process of experiment on the self-same state of mind as often as we please, since states of mind do not disappear like lumps of matter, in the very process of analysis, but remain in our power so long as memory retains them, and consequently may, in the self-same form, be submitted to analysis, again and again, through the instrumentality of reflection—being thus subject to examination and discrimination to an extent, and with an accuracy and completeness, so soon as the habit has been acquired, implying results no less satisfactory than are attainable under physical experiment. Nay, as has been indicated, although it may be impossible precisely to remember, and thus to renew, in the case of more complicated states of mind, every element in the exact relative intensity of each feeling, as each primarily existed, yet we

Digitized by Google

can at any time recal our simpler processes of mind to their full original extent, which is all that is necessary, and this as often as we may deem it desirable—as with reference, for example, to simple acts of sensation, memory, reasoning, and feeling—and subject them to renewed examination, till we become so well acquainted with their nature as to be able to detect them in any process however complicated ; so that if the states and processes of our minds are not analysed by us, and known to us, it certainly is not for want of means, at all events, of submitting them to analysis and investigation.

If, however, it be indeed true, that as all men realise the same states of mind, so all men must know them equally well in their parts and relations, then it must follow, that we are naturally and necessarily conscious of the precise composition of all our mental states, or, in other words, of the precise faculties and feelings which come into operation in each instance, and the precise mode under which they act upon each other, and in this case, no doubt, the very idea of analysing them formally would be absurd, since, by the supposition, the analysis would be intuitive. Except as a species of subtle gladiatorship, therefore, which might seem to stimulate our perception of verbal distinctions, the study of the philosophy of mind would assuredly be the most frivolous of all frivolous occupations. Even were such the case, however, it would be still absolutely impossible for us to avoid speculating upon

Digitized by Google

the subject; such seems to be our mental constitution. But, under such a view, that constitution would indeed exhibit a singular anomaly. It would truly realise the fable of Tantalus, with respect to the whole human race, shewing us forth as wretches created for the purpose of being baffled in the very objects which the very nature, baffling us, had forced on our pursuit. The assumption, however, as nature herself assures us, in the very tendency which she has given us, is utterly unfounded. Were it, indeed, true, that we all know "the precise faculties and feelings which "operate in each mental process, and the precise "mode in which they act upon each other," it is manifest, that there could be no errors in our reasoning, and that there could be no misconceptions in natural thinking, or, if there were, that the evil would necessarily be without remedy or redress. We should almost know at once all that we could possibly know of mental states, and of the varied, and, as is usually supposed, profound sciences, of religion, morals, politics, &c., thereon dependent: but so far is this from being the case, that the more we study our own minds, carefully and without prejudice, the more thoroughly do we become acquainted with the faculties and feelings which they comprehend, and, of course, the more competent are we to appreciate all relative and cognate sciences. Hence, there are, probably, no two individuals in existence whose knowledge of the character

Digitized by Google

of their beliefs, and the operation of their feelings, is exactly equal. It is indeed true, that every one has made some greater or less progress in the determination of these particulars, just as every one has made some greater or less progress in determining the properties and relations of physical existence; but few proceed, in either case, beyond very narrow limits, because, in both cases, the mass of mankind are checked, either by want of application, or the indulgence of prejudice. The majority of our race, consequently, know their states of mind merely in the mass, as wholes, just as they know material objects; but their elements—the particular feelings or faculties they involve—are as little known to them, as the elements of those physical bodies which they see scattered around them, and hence it is, that we are so exceedingly apt to misconceive our motives, and to adopt, unconsciously, the most unsound and pernicious principles. We neither know our real feelings in the one case, nor the true grounds of our beliefs in the other. It is consequently here, at the very outset, that the unspeakable importance of the study of this science begins to discover itself, in the very compulsion with which it forces us at an endeavour to eradicate our pre-possessions and prejudices, that we may be enabled fairly to see, and accurately to examine, the operations that are going on within. The difficulty of this, every one will readily acknowledge; for, however ignorant we may be of their power

Digitized by Google

over ourselves, we can all sufficiently appreciate their influence with respect to others. Nor is it less necessary, for the successful prosecution of the study of mental philosophy, that we acquire the power and habit of accurately determining complex from simple states, and the precise faculties and feelings which operate in each case, that thus we may avoid ascribing to one faculty that which has, in reality, been the result of another, or to one set of feelings, that which truly is to be ascribed to another—and, in acquiring this power and habit, an amount of intellectual acuteness and clearness of logical perception is generated, exceeding all that could be derived from the study of any number of other subjects whatever. But it is a mere waste of time to reason abstractly upon points which experience immediately and irresistibly determines, as, indeed, may be ascertained by any number of instances or experiments. All men are conscious of sensations, for example, but all men do not know how much, and of what they assure us. And why? Just because we are, in general, satisfied to take impressions acquired by habit, and so instantaneously acquired, for primary states of mind, which, of course, would admit of no farther analysis. We, consequently, never attempt to analyse them, or if we do, it is very superficially, and, consequently, we never know anything upon the subject beyond these vague ideas which the mere habitual impression conveys to us, which, scientifically, is worthless, though,

Digitized by Google

no doubt, it may be perfectly sufficient for enabling us to carry on the ordinary practical business of human life. Again, all men reason; but do all men reason correctly? So far is this from being the case, that not only can extremely few reason correctly, but comparatively few can even be made to understand the process of a legitimate argument. Now, why is this? It is simply because they do not know what reasoning is, nor what the faculty of reason is, and consequently cannot possibly know when it is legitimately exercised or applied. Again, all men claim certain rights and privileges as appertaining to themselves and others, under the sanction of natural law. This is admitted, but no one has ever clearly determined where this sanction is to be found, or in what it precisely consists, or by what limit such claim is to be bounded? Now, why is this? Simply because these particulars depend on feelings and states of the human mind which have never been satisfactorily ascertained. We have, indeed, a vague belief that such rights and privileges, somehow or other, appertain to us, but little more is known upon the subject. Again, all men have certain apprehensions of sublimity and beauty; but how few know exactly what sublimity and beauty actually mean? or are capable of discriminating a false and fictitious from a real taste? Again, all men employ terms expressing general truths; but how few know all that such general truths imply? or could determine,

Digitized by Google

accurately, what it is that they intend to convey by them? or could explain how they got them? or shew why faith may safely be reposed in them? Finally, all men have notions, however vague, of infinity, eternity, and absolute existence; but how few appreciate, with any degree of precision, what these notions actually are which they thus feel, rather than know? or to what extent, or with what view, such notions have been given them? On all these particulars, and a thousand others of a similar character, the knowledge of human beings, so far from being identically the same, is nearly as varied as the variety of individuals who in any degree realise it, while it will hardly be disputed, as matter of fact, that none realise it to such an extent as is desirable, and, we believe, attainable; yet, these particulars relate to considerations not merely not of trifling import, but to considerations beyond all comparison the most interesting in the history, and the most important in the destiny, of man. The principles of taste, morals, politics, law, religion, and generally of all that bears most directly on human happiness, can only be ascertained with any degree of precision by a more or less accurate knowledge of mental philosophy, and they are, of course, ascertained with a clearness, just in proportion to the extent and precision with which such knowledge is realised.

Now, although such objections as those to which we have been thus indicating the reply, may be

Digitized by Google

supposed, naturally enough, to suggest themselves with respect to a science on which so much has been written, and yet, in which so little progress has been made, and may have, in a certain measure tended to retard its progress; yet we cannot help thinking that they are also useful in aiding its development, in so far as they exhibit clearly enough the causes of past failure, and thus afford us some guide with respect to the course, which in our subsequent investigations, may guarantee the best prospects of success; for we thus discover that no system of mental philosophy can command public attention and sympathy which does not teach men something that they did not previously know—or, at all events, know precisely—with respect to the nature and properties of their own minds, or of some portion of the spiritual world, and teach them this in such a form as to SATISFY THEM OF ITS PRACTICAL TRUTH. Instead of disputing about words, we must, therefore, if we are to do any good, direct our attention to things and facts, endeavouring so to explain them as that every one, possessed of ordinary intelligence and education, may not only know that he has been influenced by certain feelings, and arrived at certain conclusions, but may know farther the process under which such feelings were generated, and such conclusions attained, and hence, of course, as involved therein, the special feelings and faculties which each such process had called into operation—and, as a result of all, the

Digitized by Google

mode under which such feelings and faculties may subsequently be detected, when existing and operating in new combinations. In a word, each step in the science of intellectual philosophy, as in all other sciences, ought to be a positive step in the acquisition of practical and useful knowledge. If we study for this purpose, and adhere to the resolution therein implied, keeping in view that all men of ordinary education and intelligence must be able to understand us, we shall, beyond question, in so far, at all events, succeed either in making actual progress in spiritual science, or else in satisfying ourselves that the subject is beyond our reach. Hence, from the system that we propose to realise, it is obvious that not merely all unintelligible, but even all vague and indefinite terms must be excluded. These, as has been said, are never used, whatever apologies may be offered for them, except to conceal either conscious or unconscious ignorance. No doubt, it may be very natural to delude ourselves, or attempt to delude others, by attributing profound meanings to our vague language, which we indicate that only certain singularly profound intellects can understand; but such a species of philosophy never has done, and, we may safely say, never can do any good, for the minds of all reasonable men are substantively the same—and, hence, any actual fact or phenomenon can be explained in language intelligible to everybody. We may assuredly conclude, therefore, that

Digitized by Google

facts, which cannot be intelligibly explained to all who clearly understand ordinary language, are merely suppositious facts—notions, in other words, which have no real existence, and are, therefore, to say the least, but very imperfectly appreciated, even by those who propose them. A neglect of this most unquestionable truth has caused much of that confusion which confessedly exists in intellectual science, and, consequently, it is absolutely essential, if we are to do any good, that in prosecuting the subject, we carefully attend to it. In the same way, we hold ourselves bound to avoid any reference of our intellectual states to intuitions, whether in the form of innate ideas, or *a priori* operations of any kind, holding such a reference to be substantively a confession of ignorance, and consquently, no real explanation of such processes at all. No doubt, it may be, *ex facie*, a very simple way of meeting scepticism, if adopted in sufficiently general and cautious terms—and, when farther analysis of them is beyond our power, of course we must be content; but we trust to be able to shew that, in most cases, at all events, the analysis of states of mind is not beyond our power, and that we can in all, or almost all, mental processes, trace them up to the immediate operation of faculties or feelings, on some object or objects presented to them.

Hence, we must begin by realising the mind as an existence, like every other existence, possessing cer-

Digitized by Google

tain properties, usually called faculties and feelings, of which we desire to know the precise nature and relations. For this purpose, we, in the first instance, receive as facts all opinions universally entertained. These facts it is our business to explain, by shewing how they are to be accounted for, in such a way as to satisfy every reasonable being; not, let it be observed, that we are to admit every opinion commonly or even universally received as true. A universally-received opinion must be the result of some common mental process—of this there can be no doubt; but, whether it be true or false, is to be determined by ulterior considerations. If it be false, it is the business of philosophy to explain the misconception, and to shew in what common cause it originates. That we are, somehow or other, cognisant of external existence—by vision, for example—is a universally-admitted fact; and it was long a universal opinion, and it is still believed by many, that we actually see the external objects, however distant they may be, of which our eye-sight makes us cognisant. Now, the fact or phenomenon is certain, but the opinion implies an entire mistake. Nor is its origin difficult to discover; it is one of the many false beliefs which unreasoning habit palms upon us. The philosopher, however, tells us that we, in reality, see not the distant object of which we are indirectly cognisant, but only the rays of light reflected from it, since they alone come into contact with the eye, and the explanation, simple as it

Digitized by Google

is, at once satisfies every one who can understand ordinary language, that the philosopher is right, and his own original opinion wrong; and, accordingly, no intelligent man who ever heard the explanation, if he had no theory to defend, ever for a moment doubted its validity. Now, in the same way must we act in all cases; when we reduce a process to the operation of our feelings and faculties, there is no farther proof required; the mere analysis carries its proof in itself. We are made perfectly certain, that the philosophy of the process has been ascertained, and we rest contented, without any desire even of farther information. On the other hand, till we actually reach this point, till we ascertain the precise mode in which the operation is worked forth, in the direct action of our feelings and faculties, no form of explanation, no interposition of innate ideas, intuitive convictions, principles of common sense, *a priori* cognitions, laws of thinking, or by whatever name the same substantive idea may be expressed, will ever satisfy us; and in this way, in mental analysis, we can attain a much more perfect and definite conclusion, ultimately, than in physical analysis, for, in physical analysis, we never can reach an ultimate existence. We no sooner succeed in one analysis than we desire to analyse again the elements discovered by it; but, when we have analysed a mental state, and reduced it to the simple operation of some feeling or faculty, setting aside the incidents of which, in

Digitized by Google

the analysis we may have disencumbered the process, we are satisfied. Arrived at the direct action of a primary property of mind, we feel that we can go no farther; the essence, in so far as possible, is attained; the end accomplished; philosophy has done her work.

Now, in order to effect such an analysis, it seems necessary that we should make a commencement from the simplest forms of thought, tracing upwards and upwards, as the states of mind become more complicated, till we reach the most complex combinations of human thought and feeling, in determining the inferences which flow from the very constitution of our mental powers and relations, with which originate the principles that constitute the alone true science of ontology. Now, this process, it will be obvious, is comparatively easy, while we direct our attention solely to such properties as sensation and memory, which every one directly knows and feels, and, as to the operation of which, a simple statement of the fact is enough to convince us; but, when we come to reason, and other faculties of a more subtle character, and as to which, consequently, immediate consciousness cannot exactly determine what they are, or how they operate, in respect that very similar phenomena are apparently produced by different causes, as in the case of belief, for example, which, in some form, seems to arise from habit, and feeling, as well as reason, while reason itself seems to admit of various

Digitized by Google

kinds of proof, it is manifest that our analysis must be much more cautiously conducted, and our conclusions tested under every variety of form.

All this, however, clearly shews, that under such a mode of studying philosophy, every kind of *a priori* division of the subject—in so far as it may imply, in any measure, a pre-determined theory—must be utterly inadmissible. The truth is, that in mental philosophy the phenomena run into each other so much as to preclude the possibility of their formal classification, at all events, in the present state of the science, nor, indeed, does any formal classification seem necessary; for, though no doubt, in those sciences, wherein actual and important discoveries have been made, classification may conduce to precision and perspicuity—yet, in mental science, with respect to which we are still, in so far as principles are concerned, limited to the very elements of knowledge, any attempt at formal *a priori* classification can only have the effect of involving us in, and binding us to, some theory at the outset—a result of which the pernicious consequences, whether it originated in such attempted classification, or in some other cause, have been but too clearly realised with respect to almost all the systems of mental philosophy which have been transmitted to us. Locke started with a general division under which he was to explain all our mental processes by sensation and reflection. The consequence

Digitized by Google

was, that he not only felt it necessary to strain all mental phenomena, so as to force them into a verbal reference to one or other of these particulars, but he was ultimately compelled to increase their number, and that without clearly explaining what the addition was intended to imply.* It was from this cause, in a great measure, that he unintentionally paved a way for the theory of Condillac and the materialists. Reid commenced with a pre-conceived theory, called forth by the special circumstances in which he was placed, to the effect that there are certain common-sense principles in the mind which admit of no anlysis, and for our belief in which, consequently, we can assign no cause; and, with such an effective instrument, he quickly reduced all mental process to mere inexplicable phenomena—thus stopping at once, and so thoroughly, the progress of philosophy, that not one of his followers, while adhering to his principle, has been able to make a single step in advance. Kant, under nearly the same circumstances, set out with his theory of *a priori* cognitions, and, in following it forth, so absolutely excluded, not merely that very external world, the preservation of which was his primary motive for effort, but even mind itself, from all possibility of being rationally conceivable, that his disciples have most logically abandoned the former to its fate, and most of them, equally logically, have

* First letter to the Bishop of Worcester.

Digitized by Google

almost as thoroughly superseded the latter. But Kant, not satisfied with one, had another pre-conceived theory as fundamental of his system, in the doctrine that the processes of formal logic exhibit the mental operation which takes place in the rational determination of truth. Hence he was led to the conclusion, that universal propositions, or in other words, the major propositions in syllogisms, were the very things that he wanted for those *a priori* cognitions which he had previously assumed. It consequently followed, according to this theory, that these cognitions either ascend in the mind, if we may so speak, in *an infinite series*, or else that at some point, the proposition, or *a priori* cognition, on which all the descending series depend, must be wanting—the foundation of this system, it will be observed, being at the top, and not at the bottom. Hence, whichever of these alternatives be adopted, it is obvious that the system must end in absolute scepticism, if not in absolute absurdity.

Warned, therefore, by the example of these able and ingenious philosophers, we shall at least endeavour to avoid the rocks on which they seem to have made shipwreck. Apart from all theory, and all attempt at classification—which, as we have seen, almost necessarily implies theory—we shall endeavour to trace our mental processes from the beginning, selecting for this purpose the simplest states of mind for analysis, and thus progressing through

Digitized by Google

those which are more complicated. In this way, we shall endeavour to explain—or, at all events, to discover the principles under which may be explained—all those phenomena which are universally admitted to be practical facts, and shall candidly avow our difficulties when we feel them.

That we are exposed to a serious disadvantage in such an attempt, from the general prejudice which prevails against the philosophical study of the human mind, or of spiritual truth of any kind, must be admitted; but this seems amply compensated by that almost universal tendency towards an empirical study of it, which distinguishes the present age. All classes dogmatise on the profoundest doctrines of theology, morals, politics, education, &c., and, as it appears, without apparently having any solid foundation on which to rest their speculations. This can hardly be regarded as a very satisfactory state of things, even to the parties themselves, and hence there can be little doubt, that the prejudice, which exists against spiritual philosophy, arises mainly from its felt insufficiency for the explanation of spiritual phenomena, and that all men consequently, will be prepared to give a fair consideration to any system, which, repudiating every pretence at mysticism, professes in precise and intelligible terms to analyse and explain particulars, which, even appreciated under a vague form, yet interest men so deeply, in spite of themselves. The science, indeed, which we desire

Digitized by Google

to expiscate, however much disregarded in its philosophy, is evidently the science of the day, because the progress of the human mind, stimulated by the advance of physical science, and the incessant activity and collision of intellect therefrom resulting all over the world, has forced the subjects which it embraces, on every man's notice, and we cannot bid them away from us. We are perfectly satisfied, therefore, that if any attempt at the expiscation of such a subject ultimately fail in commanding public attention, it must be because it has, in the first place, failed in accomplishing, even in a measure, its destined end.

According to the mode which we have now proposed, for prosecuting the subject, the subsequent arrangement of our details, appears readily to develope itself. Having determined what we know of the mind as a whole, we shall next proceed to consider the modes in which it exhibits itself in consecutive order, beginning with its simplest forms, progressing in the series of its successive developments, and endeavouring at each step, as we advance, to determine what each of our faculties and feelings is, what each can effect, and how they operate in relation to one another. For the sake of precision, however, we shall, in the first instance, limit ourselves to a consideration of those, which, though perhaps not very accurately, are yet usually called intellectual faculties. The philosophy of

Digitized by Google

our feelings will come subsequently to be considered, should circumstances permit a further development of our views, and this, again, opens a way to the fullest exhibition of ontological science which is within the reach of the human mind.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IV.

NATURE OF THE HUMAN MIND.

Law of Parsimony and its relation to the present subject——Dogma of those who maintain that existences of essentially different kinds cannot generate, nor act on, nor combine with, each other—This dogma rests on no sufficient foundation, and is contrary to experience—Absurdity and pernicious results of idealism—Position of Hume with respect to this matter—Cause of the horror with which Theists usually regard materialism—Only possible theory of materialism perfectly harmless—Distinction betwixt this theory and the more gross theory of materialism—Tendency of Theists, in opposing materialism, to annihilate the essence of mind altogether—Absurdity and impossibility of the ordinary and gross theory of materialism—Only philosophical opinion possible with respect to the nature of mind—Yet it is of no practical importance whether we proceed in analysing the processes of the mind under this, or the only possible materialistic theory—Identification of mind and matter so as to constitute a complex whole—This a certain fact, though we cannot explain its rationale—Necessity of exposing specially, in this science, dogmas resting on insufficient authority—Points relating to this subject which can only be determined at a subsequent stage of our inquiries.

THAT human beings have a natural tendency to generalise, as it has been called, causes and existences, or, in other words, to reduce causes and existences to the smallest possible number, by substantially identifying them with one another, is a fact so clearly proved by experience, in all cases, as not to admit of difference of opinion.

Digitized by Google

This tendency has been called the law of parsimony, and implies, practically, that we are neither to admit more causes than are true and sufficient to explain the phenomena, nor, consequently, to admit more existences than are true and sufficient to embrace the phenomena. From this tendency it would seem to follow, that all causes may be ultimately reducible to one cause of causes, and all existences to the development, directly or indirectly, absolutely or creatively, of one source of existence. Such a conclusion seems not only probable, but certain, if we are to put confidence in the irresistible suggestions of our natures, as they are constituted.

But, though we may thus be justified in referring all causes to a primary cause, and all existences to a primary existence, as, somehow or other, generating both the one and the other, it is obviously a mere begging of the question to assume one particular mode under which this result is realised, as if we were bound down to the one form of conclusion, which would determine all causes to be the same, and all existences to be essentially identical. The primary cause, or primary existence may, for aught we can tell, at all events *a priori*, have produced existences, and, consequently causes, both different from itself, and from one another; and, therefore, to assume, on such a point as this, or, indeed, on any point, that of which we have no knowledge *a priori*, and which is indiscoverable by

Digitized by Google

anything implied *a posteriori* in the phenomena, seems absolutely inconsistent with the very law on which the conclusion professes to rest for its validity, since it is to substitute assumption for fact, in direct violation of the most important principle which that law is intended to vindicate, inasmuch as the law of parsimony requires not merely that certain given causes or existences be "sufficient to explain the phe-"nomena," but also that they be "true," as proved by satisfactory evidence; whereas, in so far as mental philosophy, at all events, is concerned, the assumption that all causes and all existences are one and the same thing—exhibiting itself in different modes, or forms—seems not only insufficient to explain the phenomena, but is so far from being indisputably true, that it is a mere guess—a mere conjecture—which, so far as our feelings and reason can guide us to a conclusion, is manifestly and indisputably false. Yet, it is under such an assumption that idealists, on the one hand, and materialists on the other, can alone justify their respective theories. By an utter perversion, in thus far, of the law of parsimony, the former have reduced all existence, and, consequently, all causes to mind; and the latter have reduced all existence, and, consequently, all causes to matter. To such conclusion they have been apparently led by an hypothesis which, it must be admitted, has long prevailed among philosophers, to the effect that existences of essentially different kinds cannot possibly generate, or act on,

Digitized by Google

or combine with, each other. Whence this dogma took its origin, it is very difficult to imagine ; but, wherever it originated, there seems no foundation for it. We have never, indeed, seen any attempt at proving it, nor can we discover, either from the primary tendencies of the human mind, or in any deduction of reason, the shadow of a principle on which it could be rested. On the contrary, so far as universal experience goes, it would seem altogether inconsistent with our knowledge of the facts. The mind acts upon the body, and the body upon the mind, and though, no doubt, we cannot explain how such mutual action takes place, yet have all human beings no less surely convinced themselves, as matter of practical fact, that body and mind are essentially different kinds of existence; and, assuredly, it would require something more than the assertion of an unproved and unaccountable dogma of philosophers to satisfy us that they are, theoretically, mistaken. Like many other similar theories, it has been transmitted from generation to generation without examination, and received, in virtue of its antiquity; and, as might under such circumstances have been expected, the deductions, either consciously or unconsciously drawn from it being necessarily false, have tended materially to prejudice the interests of intellectual science, by those misconceptions as to the very primary nature of the human mind, which they have generated.

Digitized by Google

At the same time, we are by no means prepared to say, that the theories thence resulting are equally absurd or equally mischievous. The assumption that all supposed external things are merely deceptions, originating in modifications of our states of mind—that our strongest intuitions, MEANING THEREBY MERELY THE BELIEFS INVOLVED IN THE EXERCISE OF OUR FACULTIES AND FEELINGS THEMSELVES, are consequently pure delusions—that the facts, which we must practically believe, are nevertheless scientifically untrue—implies a doctrine, not only subversive of all real philosophy, but evidently of all belief, and, therefore, necessarily runs into nihilism, or relationism, as was exemplified in the progress from Berkely to Hume, and from Kant to Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. It is a mere mockery of the human intellect, and, when seriously proposed, is rather to be answered by ridicule and contempt than reasoning, inasmuch as, by its very nature, it sets aside all reasoning. That able men have adopted it, is merely a proof that able men are frequently apt to be seduced into extravagant speculations by a love of notoriety, and that they occasionally delight more in subtle investigations and verbal arguments than in the elucidation of plain and practically indisputable truth; yet, from this censure—which assuredly applies to the larger proportion of idealistic philosophers—we must admit that Hume appears, in a great measure, entitled to claim an exception. Hume, taking philosophy as

Digitized by Google

he found it—with its unsound principles deeply rooted in his mind, as they had been universally recognised by all that had preceded him, and as they were universally recognised by all his contemporaries—reasoned logically from those premises, which, under the circumstances, it was almost impossible for him to have doubted; and he does so, with a simplicity, a precision, and a moderation which cannot but command our respect. He propounds no new principles—he invents no new words—he uses no vague terms; but he takes matters as he had them, and, by singularly effective and luminous arguments, without any appearance of disingenuity or unfairness, at least, for the most part, he arrives at conclusions which, probably, in the first instance, startled himself, as much as they ultimately did other people, but which yet were so clearly founded on a legitimate deduction from recognised principles, that it was some time ere any approach, even to their refutation, could be imagined. In truth, however unintentionally, there can be no doubt, that few have done so much for philosophy as David Hume. He forced philosophers backwards to the determination of first principles, which, apart from the singular precision and logical power with which he reasoned out the then received dogmas, *ad absurdum*, would not, probably, to this day have been effected. It is to him, in fact, that we owe our assurance for the necessity of a re-construction of the science, and if this has only,

Digitized by Google

even yet, been but very imperfectly realised, matters would have been in a still worse condition, had we been ignorant both of our errors, and of their legitimate consequences.

But, while we thus condemn idealism in any shape which it ever has, or which, perhaps, practically, it could possibly assume, we are by no means prepared to speak so harshly of the opposite theory of materialism under every conceivable form. It is, indeed, true, that materialists have generally been practical Atheists or Pantheists; but this, we apprehend, has rather arisen from their previous habits and dispositions leading them to adopt a species of materialism utterly absurd and untenable, than from any necessary result of the materialistic theory regarded in the only possible form under which it can be, in any sense, legitimately adopted. It is this usual result that has led Theists, not unnaturally, perhaps, to regard every tendency to materialism with a species of religious horror; yet, considered as a mere guess, with regard to the primordial nature of essence, which is the only character that it can legitimately assume, the materialistic theory in itself seems perfectly harmless. We know nothing of the primordial or substantive essence of matter any more than we do of mind, and, accordingly, in the very same way, if, instead of ignoring external existence altogether, and assuming such supposed existence to consist merely in *our own* states of mind, we could conceive

Digitized by Google

idealists admitting external existence; but, regarding it essentially as a species of spirit, or, in other words, as different forms under which mind developes itself—and some of them have approximated very nearly to such a supposition—we might regard it, as we regard the materialistic theory, abstractly considered, as a silly, perhaps, and unwarranted, but, at the same time, a harmless hypothesis. The materialistic theory, however, has, it must be admitted, in its legitimate form, something more to recommend it than even such an idealistic hypothesis as that which we have now supposed; for, setting aside the singular, but indisputable fact of the soul, for the most part, to all appearance, decaying along with the body, which might be balanced by the equally indisputable fact, that the body is sometimes acted on by the mind, it does seem extremely difficult to conceive an existence which does not exist in space, or which, existing in space, exists in it immaterially. We have no experience of anything existing in space, except matter, or mind in connection with matter; hence, as it is impossible to conceive primary and simple notions transcending experience, so we are extremly apt, from a tendency thus originating, either to image mind as an extremely subtle and refined matter, or—as some Theists seem actually, though unconsciously to have done, in attempting to get quit of this assumption—to annihilate the essence of mind altogether, by substituting in its place

Digitized by Google

those faculties and feelings which are merely its properties, or, in other words, the modes, under which mental essence exhibits itself. Now, this latter error is evidently much more objectionable than the former, both philosophically and religiously, as just leading us back again, by a very obvious process, to a much more gross form of that very materialism, from which it is intended as an effort to escape. Whereas, we repeat, that the assumption of mind being a subtle form of matter, as a hypothesis explanatory of its essence, seems in itself perfectly harmless, and this is the only possible form which the materialistic theory can assume, without absurdity and contradiction; for, surely, nothing can be conceived more absurd and contradictory, than the ordinary form of that theory which identifies mind with solidity, and desire, passion, emotion, &c., with the physical particles which generate in us a sense of taste, colour, or smell. No man would presume even to avow such extravagance in express terms, however necessary a result it may be of the modes in which materialistic theorists frequently put forth their opinions; nor is the extravagance diminished, by supposing that thought, feeling, &c., are not, indeed, hardness, colour, or the like, but only the results of these generated by a mechanical process; for we know that physical machinery can only generate physical results—that wheels, pinions, levers, and the like, break only, or move in some way or other, the ob-

Digitized by Google

forms submitted to their action, and, of themselves, could never generate spiritual states, nor in any way realise spiritual conditions, except in their union with a living being. We have been taught, by experience, the nature of the physical properties realised in these physical instruments, and he who should seriously tell us, that a watch could be made to measure truth, or a mill-wheel to grind benevolence, could only be regarded as more or less insane: yet, this is really, and, in principle, the species of absurdity which the grosser form of materialism, however cautiously or loosely expressed, proposes for our acceptance. The fact is, that its authors either deceive themselves, or attempt to deceive others, by confusing it with a *possible* materialistic theory, which, as we have already seen, must be of a totally different character, but which could not at all serve their purpose, because it would not lead to any conclusion—moral, political, or religious—different from those, which the ordinary supposition that mind and matter are different essences, would legitimately warrant. Hence the unspeakable importance of distinguishing that which the different forms of the theory imply. The gross form of it, which, directly or indirectly, identifies thought and feeling with solidity and figure, is so evidently absurd, and so thoroughly contradicted by our own personal knowledge and experience, that the moment its real character is ascertained, it is necessarily rejected. Thus it follows, demonstratively,

Digitized by Google

that if we are to suppose mind to be, in any way, identified with matter, it must be a species of matter altogether different from any with which we are acquainted, and endowed with wholly different properties, as competent to generate thought, reasoning, feeling, desire, benevolence, &c.; a power so entirely discriminating it from ordinary matter—with its properties, generative of physical results only—and so thoroughly identifying it with a separate species, at all events, of existence, that whether we assume mind to be a form of such matter primarily, though differing thus in *species* from ordinary matter, or some other existence *generically* different from matter, seems very much a dispute about words. We neither know the primordial essence of mind, nor of matter, nor, indeed, of anything else—so that any hypothesis on the subject can only be a pure conjecture, and, consequently, in no shape entitled to deference from any one who considers philosophy as having nothing to do with conjecture of any kind, and as only useful, in so far as it deals exclusively with indisputable facts.

It will thus appear, that we have very little sympathy, either with those who choose to idealise matter on the one hand, or with those who confuse intellectual science with anatomy on the other. These latter philosophers, if we are to call them by such a name, so far as they precisely seek anything, seem to seek the essence of mind in the use of the knife and the scalpel. They imagine, appa-

Digitized by Google

rently, that they can explain our processes of thought, by evolving the convolutions of the brain, and our processes of feeling, by expounding the relative positions of the nerves. This is something more than a misconception, it is substantively identical in kind with the absurdity of those who, in former ages, hoped to discover the essence of matter by profound cogitation. Hence it is, that without pretending to dogmatise upon the subject, we cannot help concluding, that every one claiming the character of a mental philosopher, and determined in that character to receive nothing as true, except such facts as are known and realised as true by our consciousness or our reason, must regard the essences of mind and matter as generically distinct entities, simply because the phenomena which they exhibit, so far as we can discover, are generically different—while of the absolute constitution or composition of the essence of either we know nothing at all. In this way, casting aside all manner of conjecture and theory, we square our assumptions by our knowledge; we express no opinion whatever absolutely upon the subject, but merely take the facts as we have them, and limit our inference by the extent of our information. It may, indeed, be difficult for us to conceive an existence absolutely immaterial, yet this does not afford the slightest ground for assuming that there can be no such existences; while generic difference in phenomena actually known to us, lead us by the only philoso-

Digitized by Google

phical process open to our investigation to conclude, either that mind and matter are generically different entities, or, at all events, that there is a species of matter, altogether incognisable by our senses, that generates spiritual phenomena, which, as we have seen, is substantively the same thing in so far as we are concerned, since it no way affects our investigation of the subject—our mode of studying the mind, and our conclusions in regard to its processes being, under either assumption, precisely the same. At the same time, though the theory of the mind, being essentially a species of intellectual matter, as contra-distinguished from physical matter—which, as we have seen, is the only materialistic theory that can be maintained without absurdity and contradiction—would really in no way affect the science of mental philosophy, so long as kept in its proper place, inasmuch as it signifies nothing what name we give to an object to be observed or analysed, provided such object be definitely designated, so that all may be enabled to observe and analyse the right and the same object; yet, it is undoubtedly found as matter of experience, that no sooner do philosophers assume, in any form, the identity of matter and mind in generic essence, than they are naturally impelled towards the absorption of that which is less prominently before them, in that to which their attention happens more especially to be directed, so as to identify them not only in generic but specific

Digitized by Google

essence—not only in entity, but in property, in direct opposition to all that we know, and all that we feel in respect to them; and hence, different people are found engaged in the observation of different objects, to which they have attached the same name; and this, just in proportion to the extent to which the properties of the two are erroneously assimilated, though none of them who do recognise such assimilation, either have or can have their attention directed to the alone right object which they profess to analyse and explain, because the very principle from which they set forth necessarily generates, in its stead, an object more or less suppositious. This result is specially exemplified in the case of materialistic philosophers; they, in defiance of all legitimate induction, and, as it appears to me, of every assurance of consciousness, departing almost without exception from the only materialistic theory which is possible, insist on regarding the mind as a mere physical machine—and, consequently, we need hardly say, that, by a materialistic philosopher, no analysis has ever been proposed, at all events, so long as they adhere to their theory, which has either ultimately been received as satisfactory, or has been found, in any measure, practically of the slightest use in elucidating the nature, tendencies, or operations of the mind.

Under such circumstances, we need hardly say, that we hold Realistic Dualism, as it is technically

Digitized by Google

termed, or, in other words, the assumption of mind and matter as two real and separate entities or essences, to be the only form of theory respecting existence which is philosophically admissible; and we call this assumption a theory, because though it cannot possibly lead us to any error—since, practically, the conclusions which follow from it, are identically the same as those which would follow under the only other possible theory upon the subject—yet we cannot say, as matter of certainty, that that theory is absolutely true, or that the essences of mind and matter may not be reducible to the same genus. But, though as knowing nothing of primordial or constitutive and substantial existence, we cannot absolutely deny the generic identity of mind and matter in their essence, yet, so far as we are concerned—which is the only point of view in which the matter can be to us of the slightest importance—we are not only entitled, but bound to regard their generic difference as a philosophical fact, as being the alone assumption, which, under the generic difference of the phenomena exhibited by each, a sound philosophy will sanction. Although, however, we thus hold, that matter and mind must be philosophically regarded as generically distinct in their essences, just as we hold the various physical objects around us to be specifically different in their essences—and for the same reason, that the phenomena in the one case are generically as the phenomena in the other are specifically different—it

Digitized by Google

is not, therefore, to be supposed, that we overlook the intimate union which subsists betwixt them in the nature of humanity, under which they are so combined and interwoven, as substantively to constitute one being. The old difficulty, in regard to the incompatability of a union betwixt different genera of existence, we consider as perfectly devoid of force, inasmuch as it rests on no conceivable ground either of reason or experience. No doubt we do not know the constitutive essences of those existences, so as to discover how they do combine, and must combine, when suitably arranged *a priori* for the realisation of a complex whole; but we know this, just as well as we know how different species of the same essence so combine, which is a phenomenon every moment submitted to our observation. So far as we are concerned, the difficulty, if there be a difficulty, is in both cases precisely the same, except in so far as we have continued opportunities of being cognisant of the one—whereas, from the very nature of the case, we have only one single instance in which we can become cognisant of the realisation of the other; in that instance, however, the union of mind and matter is found realised up to a certain point, under a more entire intimacy than occurs in any individual case of the combination of species. No doubt, at that point, when the mind takes a strong tendency in a particular direction, it seems almost to shake off the body, so that not only are ordinary objects presented by the senses, unper-

Digitized by Google

ceived by it, but, in extreme cases, considerable bodily pain, or at least, processes which, under ordinary circumstances, would generate considerable bodily pain, are unfelt by it; but this in no way affects the question of the natural and ordinary intimacy of the union which subsists between them. It is a fact which there is no gainsaying, and which we must consequently submit philosophically to realise, however many theories and speculations may be subverted by it. We have dwelt upon this particular at some length, because, although we doubt if any one in the present day would venture to maintain the inconjunctibility, if we may use such a word, of different genera of existence, which is merely an arbitrary and unsupported dogma of the schools, yet, a sort of feeling derived from the habitual belief generated by that dogma, still continues, as in many other cases of a similar character, to qualify a hearty adoption of the only legitimate and philosophical conclusion as to the essence of existence, and, consequently, to impede our thorough apprehension of some of the most elementary truths of mental science, with which that conclusion is necessarily connected. The exposure of this, therefore, and similar dogmas, seems essential to the cultivation and progress of that science in an especial degree, as the science of all others in relation to which they are to be found most frequently exhibited. Indeed, it is almost impossible to take a step in mental philosophy

Digitized by Google

without finding them in our way, so that we doubt whether, even yet, there is not more to be done for the science in the first place, at all events, by the indirect and incidental supersession of error, than by a direct prosecution of the discovery of truth. At the same time, we need hardly add, that we feel, in such a case, the necessity of caution, and that, as nothing is to be adopted as true, so nothing is to be absolutely condemned as erroneous, except when the conclusion is so clear as necessarily to command the assent of every reasonable man.

As to how mind and matter do thus unite together, so as to constitute a complex whole, we can, as has been said, know nothing whatever. This would, indeed, imply a knowledge of their constituent essences. Did we thus know essences in any instance, it is obvious that we should at once be enabled to determine, *a priori*, what would be the result were the existences, with the essences of which we were so acquainted, brought into such a position, that their mutual qualities could act upon each other, and thus their mutual relations be realised; but, as we have no such knowledge in any case, it is obvious that we can only discover the mode in which existences affect or operate on each other by experience. And, indeed, were it otherwise—did we either know *a priori*, or could we, through the instrumentality of any sense, become acquainted with the constitutive nature of essences, it is evident that all philosophy would at once be

Digitized by Google

at an end, since every species of cause would thus, without either experiment or observation, in itself be known to us. That mind and matter do unite with an intimacy so entire, as up to a certain point to become identified as a complex whole, is, therefore, all that is necessary to be known to us as of practical importance; and to know this is of the most material importance, as we shall afterwards endeavour to shew more particularly, as giving us the means of appreciating the immediate perception of existences external to ourselves.

Such, in so far as we know, is all that has been determined, legitimately, with respect to the nature of the human mind, or perhaps, we should rather say, with respect to the nature of the human being, as human beings ordinarily exist; but, at the same time, we are aware that there is a portion of the subject more or less affecting our argument, which is left wholly untouched. We mean, that which regards the singular phenomenon of idiots, whose bodily form and bodily parts, though it may be sometimes smaller or larger than in ordinary mortals, are yet in all respects, so far as we can discover, perfect and complete, but who are yet manifestly deficient in their mental organisation, with the cognate phenomena of the mind apparently wasting away under the operation of disease or old age. This subject, though generally overlooked by mental philosophers, has yet a very considerable bearing on the nature of the elementary constitu-

Digitized by Google

tion of the human mind, and, in this respect, is not only important and interesting, but, in its ultimate relation to human destiny, is, it must be admitted, awful, dark, and mysterious. We shall, therefore, at a subsequent stage of our inquiry, endeavour to ascertain all that the limited amount of certain facts hitherto collected in regard to it, will enable us to determine. At present, it is manifest that we are utterly unprepared for such a determination, as it must depend on a combination of particulars, of which, until the special faculties of the mind be realised, we can, philosophically, know nothing whatever. It is mind and its processes, therefore, as mind ordinarily exists, that we now proceed to investigate, and it is the phenomena resulting from mental operations that we now proceed, for this purpose, to analyse.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER V.

ON CONSCIOUSNESS.

We become acquainted with the human mind and its cognitions through consciousness—Different uses of the word—Consciousness is merely a mental capacity—Error of Dr. Reid's theory on the subject—Errors of Dr. Brown's theory—How the contradictions, into which philosophers have fallen on the subject, can alone be explained and reconciled—Feeling of some kind essential to consciousness—This subject illustrated—Must beware of supposing such feeling and consciousness the same thing—Illustrated by Dr. Brown's errors—How far feeling, in each case, constitutes the subject of our consciousness, and singular fact elicited by this inquiry—Summary of conclusions.

In studying the philosophy of the human mind, the first particular which naturally suggests itself for our consideration is the mode in which we become acquainted with the mind, its properties, and its cognitions, as on a knowledge of this it is evident that we must, to a considerable extent, depend for a suitable application of these principles, under which we formerly endeavoured to shew, that such a study is to be pursued. Now, it is universally admitted, that we are made acquainted with all we know of our minds and their cognitions, exclusively, through consciousness. What this consciousness is, of course, we cannot define, because

Digitized by Google

[illegible] a simple idea—and definition being [illegible] of the parts of a compound [illegible] a simple idea cannot be defined: but [illegible] and illustrate it so as to make the [illegible] of which we speak perfectly intelligible. [illegible] is usually easy matter, with regard to [illegible] and feelings of mind, which we [illegible] as to their general [illegible] that it is hardly possible to misconceive the [illegible] which habit has taught us to associate [illegible].

[illegible] in the sense, "is the appre[illegible] by the mind of any cognition;" but, let [illegible] that this is realised consciousness. [illegible] is used in a different sense, to mean [illegible] of the mind to realise such appre[illegible]." The two meanings are closely con[illegible]—they are very much connected, indeed, as [illegible] and effect: but yet it is obvious that they [illegible] different, and we shall afterwards find [illegible] confusion of them has led to the most [illegible]. Of course, it is only in the latter of [illegible] meanings that consciousness is undefinable, [illegible] the former, it implies an operation, and, [illegible] a complex idea, and may be defined "an [illegible] of the mind absolutely cognising." The dis[illegible] may be still farther illustrated by noting a [illegible] ambiguity, with respect to the words "sen[illegible] and thought," which is also of material [illegible]. In the case of memory, such an

Digitized by Google

ambiguity does not, or need not, occur, for the word "memory" expresses the mental capacity, while the word "recollection" serves to express a state realised; but "sensation and thought" are the only terms for expressing both "the object" and "the object realised," in thinking and sensing. A "sensation" means both the object presented to the consciousness, and that object "realised by the consciousness," so of thought, we shall also find that a confusion of these particulars has, in like manner, originated serious and fundamental error.

It being admitted, then, universally, that we are made acquainted with all we know of our minds, their operations and their cognitions, by the capacity of consciousness realised, so it must follow that consciousness, regarded as a mental property, is a capacity of the WHOLE mind, or, in other words, of the mind, *quâ* mind, realising the processes of its various faculties and feelings; it is, therefore, through consciousness that the processes of these faculties and feelings are brought into combination, so as that they mutually act upon, combine with, and modify each other. Hence is manifest the error of Dr. Reid, who draws no distinction betwixt a capacity and a faculty or power, when he enumerates consciousness among the "powers" of the mind, and elsewhere speaks of it as an "operation "of the understanding;" whereas, it does not imply an operation at all, strictly speaking, but a mere reception, nor is it a state of the "understand-

Digitized by Google

"ing," if, by the understanding, be meant anything different from the mind itself; nor is it a power, or faculty, but a capacity of the mind for receiving, as memory is a capacity of the mind for retaining, and its result is a state, or condition, or cognition, and nothing else. This is the more worthy of attention, because Reid seems to have regarded mental powers as somehow separate and distinct from mind itself, or the essence of mind, and this necessarily from a cause which will afterwards be explained; whereas, powers of mind, even properly so called, are merely the forms under which the mind itself, the essence of mind, actively exhibits itself, and of which the action, and the existence in the action, is realised through consciousness. But, consciousness is not even a power of mind—it is not the mind acting at all—it is simply a capacity of the mind, *quâ* mind, to receive cognitions or impressions; and an appreciation of this is of very great importance, because, if consciousness be a distinct power, or faculty of mind, and not a capacity of the mind itself as a whole, by which all the powers, and feelings, and operations of the mind, are realised, then how are we to connect this consciousness with the other feelings and faculties that co-exist with it? How does consciousness get at sensation? or how are memory and reason combined with either? If the mind, as mind, *i.e.*, as a whole or an essence, be conscious of every state which can become the subject of thought or

Digitized by Google

feeling, then, that all the faculties and feelings of the mind, cognate to each state, will immediately connect themselves therewith, in their due measure and proportion, is evident; but, if consciousness be a separate and distinct power of the mind, then the mode in which the various faculties and feelings can combine, so as to constitute states of mind, depending upon two or more of them, seems altogether inconceivable. This, however, will be made still more manifest by a consideration of Dr. Brown's theory on the subject, who, perceiving that there was something or other wrong in the theory of Reid, thus endeavours to correct it:—"To me, "however," he says, "I must confess, it appears, "that this attempt," of Reid's, "to double, as it "were, our various feelings, by making them, not "to constitute our consciousness, but to be the "object of it, as of a distinct intellectual power, is "not a faithful statement of the phenomena of the "mind, but is founded, partly on a confusion of "thought, and still more on a confusion of "language. Sensation is not the object of con- "sciousness, different from itself, but a particular "sensation is the consciousness of the moment."[a] According to Brown, therefore, sensation, and the consciousness of the sensation, are one and the same thing. This mistake would be of less importance, perhaps, did he not deny sensation, in any sense, to be the "object of consciousness," since,

[a] Brown's Lectures—Lecture xi.

Digitized by Google

unless it be the "object," it cannot be the "cause" of consciousness, for, in such a case, object and cause must mean the same thing; and, consequently, according to Dr. Brown, we are conscious of a sensation, without any cause of such consciousness.[a] Farther, it necessarily follows, according to this theory, that each particular sensation must be a separate consciousness, because "each particular "sensation being the consciousness of the moment," each must exist absolutely, and *per se*—the consciousness disappearing with the successive sensations, and re-appearing as a different thing with those that come into their places in consecutive order; but, in this case, the objection to Reid's theory recurs, in an aggravated form, since, if every particular sensation be a separate "consciousness "of the moment," how is it possible that they could be combined or connected together, or how could our states, our faculties, and our feelings, co-operate in the production of any one given effect? It is clear, that either the mind, as a whole, must be conscious—thereby linking all our thoughts, faculties, and feelings together, so as to bring them to bear on each state of mind; or else there must be another consciousness for effecting the same process—which would be an assumption, not only inconsistent with the law of parsimony, but which, being unknown and unfelt by us, is philosophically

[a] In the same way he must have held that consciousness and reasoning are the same thing.

Digitized by Google

inadmissible. The error of Dr. Brown, however, is still more strikingly exhibited in the following passage, where he says—"For the sake of greater "simplicity, let us suppose the sensation to be of a "kind as little complex as possible, such, for ex- "ample, as that which the fragrance of a rose "excites. If, immediately after this first sensa- "tion, we imagine the sentient principle to be ex- "tinguished, what are we to call that feeling which "filled and constituted the brief moment of life? "It was a simple sensation, and nothing more; "and if we say that the sensation has existed— "whether we say, or do not say, that the mind "was conscious of the sensation—we shall convey "precisely the same meaning, the consciousnes of "the sensation being, in that case, only a tau- "tological expression of the sensation itself."[a] It would be difficult to conceive more confusion and error, agglomerated into so small a space. It is he himself, that, by the very nature of his theory, "imagines the sentient principle to "be extinguished" immediately after the first sensation, since it is evident that if sensation and consciousness be the same thing, the consciousness must not merely cease from operating, but must be "extinguished" with the sensation. To say, moreover, that "the feeling," or, in other words, that the "sensation" constitutes "life," though perfectly consistent with the theory,

[a] Brown's Lectures—Lecture xi.

Digitized by Google

yet violates one of the most clear and unquestionable convictions that we possess, since it necessarily follows, that whenever the sensation passes away we cease to live, and hence, whenever we are without consciousness of some absolute state or another, as when the mind is void of thought, from that depression which frequently follows over-excitement, or when we are sunk in deep sleep, then the being must be annihilated. And farther, when he speaks of "the feeling" constituting not merely "life," but "the brief moment of life," he seems clearly to indicate that life is not one continued course, but a series of broken and detached fragments, ever and anon coming into existence with the recurrence of acts of consciousness. Lastly, the expressions—"the sensation existed," and "the "mind was conscious of the sensation existing," are the farthest possible from being tautological, unless he understand the words, "in the consciousness of "the mind," in connection with the former, in which case the expressions would not only be tautological but identical; for, if he does not understand this, then the expression, "the sensation "existed," must mean that it existed APART FROM MIND, so that thus the sensation would be subject, object, and feeling, all in one; nay, that this is really Brown's meaning, so far as he has a meaning, is unquestionable, not only from the logical deduction under which we have endeavoured to shew, that such is the only legitimate conclusion from

Digitized by Google

his premises, but from his own explicit declaration, when he says—"There will be, in this first momen-"tary state, no separation of self and the sensa-"tion, no little proposition formed in the mind, *I feel*, or *I am conscious of a feeling*—but the feeling, "and the sentient I, will, for the moment, BE THE "SAME."[a] Now, this is just the identification of existence and knowledge, a theory which may fairly be inferred from almost every existing system of philosophy, and specially from idealistic systems; but we know of no one in which it has been more plainly asserted than in this passage of Brown's, however inconsistent it may be with other parts of his writings, nor are we aware of any one, except Mr. Ferrier, who has formally proposed it as the grand denouement of the science. The origin of the error, in so far as Brown is concerned, manifestly originates in his assumption, that "sen-"sation" and "the consciousness of the sensation "are one and the same thing"—an assumption again originating in the confusion of consciousness as a mental capacity, and consciousness as a realised operation of the mind on the one hand, and of sensation as an object of consciousness, consisting in a certain state of the organised being, and that object realised by consciousness, on the other. But, even when the consciousness and the sensation are united, or, in other words, when the sensation is apprehended as a feeling, so as to constitute

[a] Brown's Lectures—Lecture xi.

Digitized by Google

a mental state, "the feeling, and the sentient I," will *not*, "for the moment, be the same"—the feeling will merely be a something of which the "sentient I" is conscious—and our consciousness, by a process to be afterwards explained, at once distinguishes the one from the other. The feeling, in other words, implies something conjoined with, or super-added to, the "sentient I," and this is the universal and intuitive conviction of the whole human race; nor could any amount of argument, however subtle, or however demonstrative in appearance convince us that sensation, and consciousness, and mind, are merely different names for the same thing.

To reconcile all these absurdities and contradictions, therefore, and to make the whole subject plain and perspicuous, we must suppose—what, indeed, whenever it is stated, every one feels to be true—that consciousness is merely the mental capacity of cognising; but, in order to complete our application of the subject, we must farther keep in view what is proved by the analysis of every act of consciousness, that the existence of some feeling, *i.e.*, of some passion, desire, or affection, is essential to the mental apprehension of phenomena, and that the stronger and more interesting the feeling so connected or combined with any phenomenon, the more fully is it realised by our consciousness, and the more deeply is it impressed on our minds. To be satisfied of this, we have only to examine the

Digitized by Google

facts of our past experience, and the more carefully we do so, we will be the more entirely satisfied that no sensation, no thought, no operation can be consciously felt by the human mind apart from some feeling connected with it, and giving it, if we may so speak, an interest to the mind. Just in the same way, indeed, as there can be no feeling without a subject, so there can be no consciousness of a subject without a feeling, and an adequate one. The feeling which thus originates consciousness may be very slight—it may be merely a passing curiosity, or even merely a desire to get rid of the ennui of listlessness—but still there must be some feeling, and the consciousness will be more and more engrossing, just as the strength of the feeling increases. Hence it is, that while, when we are listless, the merest trifles arrest our attention, and nothing that passes around can escape our observation, it is, on the other hand, well known to every one, that even under ordinary circumstances, and the excitement of ordinary business, we are perfectly unconscious of the mass of our sensations; for there can be no doubt that our organic natures must be acted upon every moment by the multitude of objects which present themselves to us, although we never observe them; and when, still more, we feel deeply, or meditate anxiously, on any subject, it is equally certain, as matter of experience, that we are hardly conscious of external sensations at all. Thus the whole mind may be absorbed in

Digitized by Google

the contemplation of one subject, under the influence of some over-ruling feeling, so as to be utterly unconscious of all that is passing in our immediate presence, and even before our eyes. Everything else is repudiated, and consciousness is found to be concentrated on this single particular exclusively. Nor are we to suppose that any one special class of feelings is so identified with specific states of mind, as to be essential for the realisation of consciousness. It is, indeed, true, that every faculty of an operative kind, *i.e.*, every power and even every capacity have, as we shall afterwards more particularly shew, connected with them cognate feelings, realising them to consciousness; but, by habit or circumstances, any feeling of any kind may become cognate to any idea or any state, and thus be the instrument of impressing it, through consciousness, on the mind. Hence, we can understand how it is, that persons who think profoundly, and feel strongly, are never cognisant of passing events to the same extent, and with the same minuteness, as those who think superficially and feel feebly. Thus it is, in the same way, that when, from over-excitement, or any other cause, the passions cease to operate, we fall into a sort of mental sleep, conscious of nothing save the mere vague feeling of existence, while yet the body continues for a time awake, although the mental sleep undoubtedly tends to the generation of bodily sleep also—so intimately are body and mind connected

Digitized by Google

together—and ultimately, if no mental stimulant intervenes, will inevitably produce it. In the same way we have sometimes the mind partially awake, and in some measure conscious of what is passing around, when the body is asleep, especially in cases of somnambulism, though the mental action will unconsciously, in most cases, soon force the body to awake, by its instinctive operation on the nervous system. It is, however, true, that the half mental sleep of which we have spoken rarely occurs, because every sensation, and every thought, have their cognate feelings, and hence, if no stronger feeling be associated with any power, or sensation, or thought —or if there be no power operating, nor any sensation or thought realised—the natural aversion of the mind at absolute vacuity, or the tendency, in other words, which the mind has to act and to operate, will give any one of such feelings influence enough to keep the mind employed. Such a half mental sleep, therefore, can only occur when the mind is so depressed as to feel action, an effort, and a pain ; but, that under such circumstances, it may and does occur occasionally, we all know from experience. From these considerations it is clear, that in complex states of mind our consciousness of the different elementary states involved in it, will be precise and ascertained, just in proportion to the strength of feeling by which each is accompanied. In this way, we may be conscious of one portion thoroughly and permanently, and of another, partially and vaguely, and

Digitized by Google

it will be found that our subsequent recollection of these various particulars becomes modified proportionally. But, though feeling be thus essential to consciousness, it must not be supposed that feeling and consciousness are the same thing, since, as we have seen, consciousness is nothing absolute. It is no power, no faculty; it is simply the name by which we designate a mental capacity. Hence, when Brown says, that "a particular sensation is "the consciousness of the moment," he evidently uses "consciousness" as equivalent to apprehension, which, as we have seen, is a meaning from the imperfection of language occasionally attached to it. But, even under this sense of the word, he is mistaken, since the apprehension of the moment embraces more than the sensation, inasmuch as it implies also that the sensation, as felt—or, in other words, the feeling—is referable to an external cause. But this is only a small part of his error, since—having come to the conclusion that "a particular "sensation is the consciousness of the moment," and afterwards confusing that consciousness, which means apprehension, with the consciousness which is merely a capacity of mind, and that, again, with the essence of mind itself—he is led to the monstrous conclusion, that "the feeling, and the sentient I, "are, for the moment, the same." Thus the sensation, the feeling, the mind, and the consciousness, become all one and the same thing!

That, however, the feeling is the main subject of our consciousness--using the word consciousness in

Digitized by Google

the sense of apprehension, in certain of our sensations—is perfectly true. The sweetness of sugar, for example, apart from the externality of its cause, is all that, by the sensation of taste, we know about the sugar, although, at the same time, the tongue may feel the hardness of a lump of sugar, for example, causing the taste, which, however, has nothing to do with the special sensation. But this does not seem to hold good of all our sensations, for, in sight, we may be conscious of pleasure, derivable from the beauty of the object seen, and also of the special qualities of the object seen *in the same sensation*, and yet it may be perfectly true, that, apart from the beauty of the object seen, we might never have observed it at all, or, in other words, never been conscious of its special qualities. The same thing may be said of sounds. We may be conscious in the same sensation of the beauty of sounds in melody, and of the special character of the sounds, *quâ* sounds, and yet, had it not been for the former, the latter might, very probably, never have attracted our attention. Hence, it would appear that, in such cases of sensation, at all events, the feeling, as generating the consciousness of the sensation, must antecede our consciousness of the sensation itself; and yet, that the sensation must actually be felt by our organic system, although we are unconscious of it. Still less are we to suppose that, in other cases, the feeling generating consciousness is the main subject of our consciousness,

Digitized by Google

since, in reasoning, for example—though no doubt there is a pleasure in the exercise of our intelligent natures, and this is the only feeling strictly cognate to reasoning—the feeling is hardly realised to consciousness at all, the main subject of consciousness being the process of reasoning itself, or, at all events, the conclusion to which it leads us. No doubt we are, moreover, led to reason, not merely from the pleasure which an intelligent being naturally feels in the exercise of his intelligent nature, but from the impulse of other feelings, only incidentally cognate to reasoning. This, however, makes no difference, in so far as the particular is concerned which we are now considering, since still the process of reasoning must be the main, or, at all events, one main subject of our consciousness, else, indeed, it is obvious that it could not be efficiently carried on. The depth of incidental feeling, however, will make us more deeply devoted to it, and force us more thoroughly in our consciousness to realise it. In this case, again, therefore, it is obvious that the feeling or desire must, in consciousness, antecede the ratiocinative process, because it can be alone causative or generative of it. It is the same in all cases. Feeling must antecede and generate every strictly intellectual process whatever, and a knowledge of this, it will be found, is of essential importance for appreciating the farther development of our mental states.

Digitized by Google

These remarks will, we trust, enable every one, in so far, to understand the meaning of consciousness absolutely, and the mode in which it is realised, although we are by no means prepared to say that the subject is exhausted, or that much more, both of an interesting and important character, may not, by a still more careful analysis, be discovered with regard to it. We have, however, determined enough for enabling us to proceed with the consideration of the states of mind with which it makes us acquainted. The great primary particular to be kept in view is the mental capacity which it implies. That consciousness is sometimes used as a term to express absolute apprehension is true, but this is a state of mind, and must be carefully distinguished from that form of consciousness which, in itself, is no power, no faculty, no state, but merely the name of a mental capacity to receive apprehensions, and which is realised by feeling of whatsoever kind, provided it be sufficient to give the apprehension or cognition interest, and to draw, in this way, our attention to it.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VI.

ON OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE HUMAN MIND AS A SEPARATE EXISTENCE AND THE PHENOMENA EXPLAINED THEREBY.

We must know that the subject of our consciousness exists—Reid's theory—Refuted—An intuitive belief in our own existence, apart from consciousness, a contradiction—Knowledge of properties, apart from any knowledge of the existence of the subject in which they inhere, impossible—Real nature of consciousness—We are conscious of our minds at all times, while awake, even though not objectively conscious—Universal belief upon the subject—We do not know the substance of mental essence, but only are conscious of its existence—This doctrine explains the nature of the will—Explains also the grounds of our belief in our personal identity—Locke's Theory—Reid's—Brown's—Their respective misconceptions pointed out, and the impossibility of accounting for our belief in personal identity under these theories proved—Sir W. Hamilton's note illustrating Reid's theory—Cause of the confusion and difficulties of philosophers on this subject—Universal belief of our consciousness of our own minds—The foundation of the universal belief in personal identity—Any other theory must end in scepticism—Origin of the extravagant form of scepticism implied in the Kantian philosophy—Our consciousness of existence implies a knowledge of non-existence—This doctrine crushes both the extremes of Idealism and Materialism—Conclusion.

We have now determined, in so far, the nature of consciousness, through which alone we can be made acquainted with anything, and this is true, let it be observed, whatever theory be adopted, even were we to admit the existence of *a priori* cognitions, for even these, if they existed, could be known only

Digitized by Google

by consciousness, or, in other words, by our mental cognition of them. But, if this be the case, it would seem irresistibly to follow, that we must, in the very act, know something also of the existence or subject realising such consciousness; we must be conscious, at least, that such existence or subject ACTUALLY IS, or otherwise, it seems more than evident, that we could not predicate its consciousness, nor, indeed, predicate anything about it at all, yet, plain and elementary as this conclusion seems to be, and consonant as it is, to the universal conviction of all ages, it is a conclusion positively ignored by every system of philosophy. This will be evident, in so far as Dr. Reid is concerned, from the very terms in which he has defined consciousness, when he says—"consciousness is the immediate knowledge "which we have of our present thoughts and pur- "poses, and, in general, of all the present operations "of our minds."[a] In this definition, consciousness, the result, is confused with consciousness, the mental capacity; but, receiving it as in so far an accurate definition of consciousness realised, it will be obvious, that in limiting consciousness to the knowledge of mental "states and operations" only, it necessarily excludes from its knowledge both the mind itself, and the matter which is perceived in sensation. Indeed, Reid never seems even to have imagined the possibility of our being conscious, either of the one or the other. It would, indeed, have

[a] Intellectual powers—Essay 1, ch. 1.

Digitized by Google

been inconsistent with his whole system so far as mind is concerned, and would have substantively superseded it; and, that he had as little idea of the possibility of being conscious of external existence, appears from the express terms of the clause succeeding that previously quoted, where he says—"It is likewise to be observed, that con-"sciousness is only of things IN the mind, and "NOT OF EXTERNAL THINGS;" and he repeats the same assertion in various parts of his works, to which we shall afterwards have to direct our attention. Nor is Reid singular in this respect: on the contrary, he merely gives expression to the common assumption of all philosophers, for, though many have sought for a universal essence, under some form of process, there never has been any one, so far as we are aware, that has suggested even the possibility of our being *conscious* of essence in any form, whether mental or material, and hence it is, that every system of philosophy must, logically, involve a principle of scepticism. Even Sir W. Hamilton, who, as we have seen, *took* a step in advance of all that had preceded him, in the analysis of the philosophy of perception, never even indicates any idea of such a theory. Leaving entirely out of view, however, for the present, the consideration of external existence, it does seem extraordinary how it should have been conceived, that we could become acquainted with our own minds relatively or indirectly? How, in other

Digitized by Google

words, mind could have only a relative or indirect knowledge of itself? This is surely, to say the very least of it, a very round-about way of attaining such knowledge; and the idea is the more extraordinary, inasmuch as it is in direct opposition to universal belief, since, assuredly, if there be any belief universal, it is the belief that we are conscious of our own existence; and this universal belief is unquestionably in conformity with fact—for the more we consider and examine the subject, we will be the more convinced, that unless we know our own existence, through consciousness, it is impossible that we can ever be assured that we exist at all, since any indirect proof of our existence must necessarily, at some point, fall back on the assumption of that very consciousness of existence which, by supposition, is repudiated. Hence, to assume that we have an *a priori* or intuitive belief of our own existence, while an absolute consciousness of such existence is denied, seems as clearly as possible a contradiction in terms—since the assumption of such a belief existing in OUR MINDS implies necessarily, in itself, that we are CONSCIOUS OF HAVING MINDS—or else, of course, it would be impossible either to know or to believe that anything existed in them at all. The belief, indeed, apart from such consciousness, of our minds existing as separate entities would evidently, in each case, be a mere isolated feeling which, like Hume's ideas and impressions could apply to nothing, and prove nothing.

Digitized by Google

We have here Mr. Ferrier's fundamental error, in supposing that the minimum of our knowledge is "subject *plus* object," or "thought or thing *mecum*" —an error which he has adopted from that very objectionable psychology which generally he repudiates; for, if the minimum of knowledge, and, consequently, the totality of existence be "subject "*plus* object," each act of knowledge, if knowledge it can be called, must be isolated and *per se*, as reducible to no existence in which it inheres. He has, indeed, attempted to escape the difficulty by regarding the "subject," in each case, as "permanent;" but this apparent "permanency," by the very nature of the theory, can only be suppositious—there being no "ego *per se*," at all events, which we can know, even assuming its predicated existence not to be an absurdity—and consequently the successive "*minima* of knowledge" can only be isolated phenomenal cognitions, TO A CERTAIN EXTENT IDENTICAL WITH EACH OTHER, but otherwise having no connection whatever; while any reference of them to a common entity or subject becomes, as Mr. Ferrier has, indeed, expressly and consistently maintained altogether absurd and impossible—there being no entity or subject in existence BUT THEMSELVES IN UNION. We need hardly add, that Kant is no exception to the rest of the philosophical world; on the contrary, his system is more opposed to the possibility of our being conscious of our minds absolutely than almost any other. His disciples have, consequently, logi-

Digitized by Google

cally carried forth the result in formally denying the existence of mind altogether.

Nor does it seem less absurd, to suppose a knowledge of properties, apart from any knowledge of the existences to which such properties appertain—a theory which, as veiling the results of an avowed denial of our consciousness of our minds, is the form which the hypothesis has usually assumed—since it comes to the very same thing in reality. Properties are not anything different from the existences to which they appertain, ELSE WE COULD NEVER GET AT THE KNOWLEDGE OF SUCH EXISTENCES AT ALL, but they are those existences themselves, operating in a particular way. The assumption of such a difference is another philosophical error, directly opposed to universal belief, but which is entertained by almost all philosophers as having grown out of that verbal metaphysic which has so long reigned supreme over intellectual science. Hence the faculties, or attributes of mind, are not anything different from mind, but are the mind itself, either existing in different states, or developing itself under different relations. If a man perceive, for example, the perception by the mind is not the act of something different from the mind, but is the mind, the essence of mind perceiving. If, again, a man reason, the process of reasoning is not the act of a faculty, or whatever it may be called, distinct from the mind, but is the mind itself engaged in the operation of reasoning,

Digitized by Google

and hence, consequently, we are not only conscious of reasoning, but in that very operation of reasoning we are conscious of the mind which reasons, NOT ONLY IN SO FAR AS IT REASONS, but of the operation AS AN ACT OF THE MIND, as an act of the ego—to use the language of the German philosophers—since to be conscious of the reasoning, without being conscious, at the same time, of the mind which reasons, would not only imply an absurdity—since there could be nothing of which consciousness could be predicated—but would be so completely to separate the mode from its essence, that it is impossible to conceive any way in which they could subsequently be identified. This is obvious and indisputable, from the very words which we employ, for we say, "I reason." Now, what is the "I"? It must be something different from reason. We do not merely mean reason reasons. The "I" is the mind, the self, engaged in the process or operation of reasoning, and, consequently, the very use of the term "I," implying to every one a clear idea of his consciousness of himself, designates not a reasoning faculty as something distinct from the mind, but the mind itself of which that which is called the reasoning faculty, is merely a property or mode of exhibition, which is truly the reasoning subject, and of which, therefore, it follows, that in the act of reasoning, we are necessarily conscious. In the same way, if we feel pain, it cannot be the pain or the feeling which is conscious of itself, it is

Digitized by Google

the mind which feels, and in the feeling we are not only in thus far conscious of mind, but we are conscious of the feeling as existing in that which we call *ourselves*, and which thinks, and reasons, and remembers, as well as feels; and we have here the very something which distinguishes betwixt a man in a sound unconscious sleep, from the same man awake, even when the mind is perfectly blank, in so far as ideas are concerned, which is sometimes the case, neither thinking nor feeling anything cognate to an idea, for, while awake, he is still conscious of existence, *i.e.*, not conscious, it may be, of any mental operation, or positive feeling, in respect of any idea or cognition, but conscious of his own mind absolutely existing, and of its competence to act or feel under suitable circumstances. There is probably no human being that has not thus existed, and it will be admitted that there is a material distinction betwixt such a state, and a state in which we are unconscious of existence altogether.

But, to illustrate the matter still farther—for, clear as the argument seems to be, the doctrine, from its very philosophical novelty, may appear startling—let us suppose, again, a man to reason, or to feel pain, we would ask how it could be possible for him to connect such reasoning or such feeling with his own mind, unless he had an absolute consciousness of his mind in connection with his process of reasoning, or his feeling of pain? How

Digitized by Google

could he discover that it was not another man's mind, which was reasoning or feeling? How could he know that it was a mind at all, which was reasoning or feeling? How could he, in one word, have any knowledge of self, or of his own mind, as contra-distinguished from the act or feeling, separately and *per se* existing, like the ideas and impressions of Hume? In such a case, no doubt, there would be the process of reasoning, and the state of feeling, but to connect them with any particular existence would obviously be impossible, because, however many *a priori* cognitions, or intuitive principles, we may imagine, we never can get at their connection with the mind, unless, at SOME POINT, we assume that they imply, in its consciousness of them, a consciousness also of ITSELF AS THEIR SUBJECT. In no other way can we ever, by possibility, be assured of the existence of our minds, or, of course, of the relation to them of anything whatever. We should, under any other assumption, have reason conscious of itself, but without any apprehension of its subject, or, indeed, of anything else, except in so far as any other feeling or faculty might co-exist with it, though even in that case—supposing it possible that they could be mixed together—there evidently could be no means of referring them to the same substratum, or, indeed, as has been said, of ascertaining that they had any substratum at all. Imagine them even to be conscious of one another, which is

Digitized by Google

certainly stretching imagination as far as it will go, it is still evident, that here all relation betwixt them must cease, under the very terms of the assumption—for any bond of union, in a consciousness of both appertaining to the same essence, would be entirely wanting, in respect of our being, by the assumption, supposed to be unconscious of the existence of any such essence at all.

Now, as we have already partially indicated, the supposition, that some intuition, or *a priori* cognition supplies the place of consciousness in this case, seems not only a very awkward and round-about way of explaining the phenomenon, but is altogether absurd, inasmuch, as to be of any use, it must *assume that very consciousness, the want of which it is intended to compensate,* since it is evidently impossible to discover the mind by the assumed cognition or intuition, unless it be known in its conciousness of such cognition or intuition, by being, at the same time, and in the very act and process, also conscious of itself. Of themselves, and by themselves such cognitions or intuitions might no doubt ascertain *their own existence,* SUPPOSING THEM TO BE LIVING BEINGS—but, assuredly, could, under the assumption, ascertain the existence of nothing else, as being conscious of nothing else—so that whatever intuitions and *a priori* cognitions we may suppose, unless we assume the mind to be absolutely conscious of itself, *i.e.,* conscious of itself *per se,* we are just as far from any knowledge of the existence of our own minds as we were before.

Digitized by Google

But, farther, the assumption of such a cognition or intuition, even if it were otherwise possible, is in direct opposition to that which the nature of our mental constitution compels us to believe ; for no man ever realised to himself any such cognition or intuition as that contended for, under which he was, *a priori* or indirectly, made acquainted with his own existence, nor, as we have seen, is such a thing possible. On the contrary, every one practically believes, just because he feels it, that he is not only conscious of the feelings and faculties of his own mind, but that he is conscious of his own mind itself, feeling and operating. To dispute this, as a practical fact, seems impossible. It is a universally-recognised phenomenon, and to ignore it, even, is to ignore a universally-recognised phenomenon of such importance, that, apart from it—as we have already partially seen, and as we shall subsequently shew at greater length, under another form—is substantively to open a way for an irresistible aggression of scepticism. Indeed, it is perfectly obvious, that if we be only conscious of states of mind, and not of the mind itself in those states, there never can be a possibility of so connecting the two together, as to involve a logical conclusion, or, indeed, a legitimate conclusion of any kind, that the one inheres in the other, or that they are connected with each other, or that there is, indeed, any such existence as mind at all.

In truth, if any one thing be clearer than another, it is that the mind is conscious, not merely

Digitized by Google

of its feelings and operations, but absolutely of itself IN those feelings and operations, as perceiving, remembering, reasoning, feeling, knowing, and generally of its own essence, in any state in which it can possibly exist while awake, *i.e.*, while the feeling of existence is in operation; not, however, be it understood, that we suppose human beings to have thus, through consciousness, any knowledge of the constitutive nature of the essence of mind. To be conscious of the mind existing as an essence, and to know the substantive or constitutive nature of that essence, are perfectly different things, although a singular confusion between them appears to have originated the notion that we can only be conscious of the operations or states of mind, and not of the mind itself, as operating or existing in these states. To know the substantive or constitutive essence of mind, would be to know of what it is composed, and would, therefore, evidently imply a creative knowledge, or, at all events, another mind endued with a higher nature, as competent to analyse and appreciate the very elementary substance of that mind which we actually possess; but, to be conscious of mind, merely implies that we know it to exist, be its elementary and constitutive nature what it may. It is not to know WHAT mind is, but to know THAT mind is, and that we do know this, is a doctrine which, however new to philosophers as a doctrine of science, must inevitably follow from every analysis of every state of

Digitized by Google

our consciousness, and is a doctrine that has been practically—though it may be unconsciously—received as unquestionably true by all men, in all ages, as well, indeed, by philosophers, as by the rest of the human race.

It seems absolutely necessary to understand this doctrine, in order that we may form anything like an accurate conception of the nature and origin of the will—a subject which has so much puzzled, not merely philosophers, *quâ* philosophers, but theologians, moralists, and society generally; but which, in thus far, really involves no difficulty whatever, when the true extent and character of our knowledge of mind, as a separate existence, is appreciated. For the will is no single faculty, feeling, or desire, as philosophers have imagined, as—when Dr. Reid calls it a "power," and Dr. Brown confounds it with our "wishes"—assuming every desire to be a distinct will. But the will is a SEPARATE act of the whole mind, having a view of all its feelings, faculties, desires, states, and operations together, in so far as they may bear upon the point to be determined, and thus, in an absolute form, and under its absolute right and competency, deciding and determining, by a collation of all arguments and impulses, conjoined and connected. Were the will only one faculty, feeling, property, or mode of mind operating, it would be difficult, or rather impossible, to conceive how it could be affected by the other modes of mind, or, at all

Digitized by Google

events, how, without a consciousness of mind, we could know that it was the mind that was willing; but, to the mind as a whole, all the properties of the mind are subservient, and by it all its modes must be appreciated, and in it all properties and modes are combined and identified as parts, or forms of the whole—so that the will is its ultimate determination, under a view of all the circumstances, the operation of all the faculties, and the action of all the feelings. We do not, of course, now inquire whether the mind, in the process of willing, be regulated by external motives, partially or entirely, or whether it can originate motives, and modify the reciprocating power of its own feelings, so as to strengthen one, and weaken another. This does not appertain to our present subject, and, indeed, involves considerations which, at the present stage of our progress, could not be appreciated. It is enough here to indicate where the will is truly to be found, and how it comes to sit as governor, enthroned amid its faculties and feelings, so as to direct and regulate their every determination. The subject, however, will be still farther illustrated, under the consideration of ulterior mental operations.

The same doctrine affords us the only possible mode of explaining our belief in our personal identity, and exhibits the ground of that belief, in a manner so simple and satisfactory, as in itself to assure us of its validity. In fact, any attempt at

Digitized by Google

accounting for our belief in personal identity, must evidently, apart from the assumption of our consciousness of mind absolutely and separately, be altogether futile, since every other assumption must necessarily ignore the very existence of which the identity is predicated. This is most strikingly exemplified in the theory of Locke, who, after many and most judicious observations of an incidental kind, concludes in these terms—"For, since con-"sciousness always accompanies thinking, and it is "that that makes every one to be what he calls self, "and thereby distinguishes himself from all other "thinking things; IN THIS ALONE CONSISTS PERSONAL "IDENTITY, *i.e.*, THE SAMENESS OF A RATIONAL BEING, "and as far as this consciousness can be extended "backwards to any past action or thought, so FAR "reaches the identity of that person—it is the "same self now that it was then."[a] According to this theory, "consciousness and self" are the same thing, *i.e.*, our consciousness is the same as the subject which *is* conscious. Next, "con-"sciousness and identity" are the same, *i.e.*, consciousness is not only the same as the subject or existence which *is* conscious, but it is the same as the relation which this existence bears to itself at different times. Lastly, "as far as this "consciousness can be extended backwards," he tells us, "to any past action or thought, so FAR reaches the identity of that person," from which it

[a] Human Understanding—B. 2, ch. 27, sect. 9.

Digitized by Google

follows that we are neither the same persons as we were when infants nor as we are when asleep; in other words, when we cease to be conscious, our personal identity ceases! He might, however, it will be evident, have gone even farther than this, and affirmed, according to this theory, that when we cease to be conscious our existence ceases, seeing that he merges the "self" in the "con-"sciousness." Now, the whole of this mass of contradiction and confusion originates evidently in his ignorance of the fundamental truth, that in our mental operations, and, indeed, whenever we are awake we are conscious of the mind itself. This doctrine, however, in Locke's day, had never been suggested or imagined, and indisputable as it seems to be when enunciated, we can hardly wonder, therefore, that it escaped him. Yet, Locke was very near the truth; he does not suppose consciousness to be a separate property of mind, but perceived that it must comprehend the operation of all the mental properties, otherwise there could be no means of bringing the other faculties and feelings to bear upon any given state of consciousness in the very process. For this purpose another consciousness must have been required, which would only have been postponing, instead of removing, the difficulty. Hence his confusion betwixt self and consciousness, as if consciousness were not a mere capacity of mind, but actually the mind itself, existing as cause and effect at one and the same time. It seems

Digitized by Google

quite unnecessary, however, to dwell at greater length upon a theory, which, even at the first glance, is seen to be utterly untenable.

Reid at once repudiated the theory of Locke, and exposes, with considerable success, some of the absurd consequences which it involves, though he shews greatly inferior philosophical acumen in classing consciousness among the powers of mind, while his theory of our belief in personal identity, which is substantively the same as Bishop Butler's, appears liable to little less serious objections. It is to the following effect—"The proper evidence of "all this," *i.e.*, of personal identity, says he, "is "remembrance. I remember that, twenty years "ago, I conversed with such a person. I remember "several things that passed in that conversation, &c." "If the identical person whom I call myself had "not a part in that conversation, my memory is "fallacious. It gives a distinct and positive testi- "mony of what is not true."[a] But, unless we be conscious of the existence of "the person whom I call myself," how can we discover that the remembrance appertained to that person? There is, certainly, a recollection or act of memory, and a present consciousness, for these are assumed; but how are these connected with one another, or with the same mind, or with any mind? apart from our knowledge of both acts, as acts of one mind, itself felt and known in each act, not only as mind, but

[a] Intellectual powers—Essay 3d, ch. 4.

Digitized by Google

as the SAME mind, there is evidently no link by which they can be identified. They are separate acts, which imply and can imply nothing in themselves as to their origin; for, to say that the conclusion is drawn by inference, as resulting from the maxim that identical effects must have an identical cause, would not only assume the existence of such a maxim a priori, *which itself could be referred to no cause*, but would necessarily involve farther the assumption, that a state of memory and a state of consciousness are identical effects, since two acts of memory will not serve the purpose, as they could assure nothing with regard to a *present* state—consciousness of the present being a necessary element in the belief of the identity of our past with our present existence, which evidently cannot be superseded; nor, even were such an inference possible, would it be of the slightest importance for the purpose, since, even were the phenomena to be held identical, the inference could not give us the slightest information whatever, either as to the nature of the existence in which they originated, or as to whether they originated in the same existence, or in two existences of the same kind. But farther, Dr. Reid says, and says truly, that "My personal identity implies the con-"tinued existence of that indivisible thing which I "call myself;"[a] and again, "The operations of our "minds are all successive, and have no continued

[a] Intellectual powers—Essay 3d, ch. 4.

Digitized by Google

"existence; but the thinking being has a con-
"tinued existence, and we have an invincible
"belief that it remains the same, when all its
"thoughts and operations change."[a] Now, assuming that the analysis previously given, under which our belief in personal identity is referred by him to memory in connection with consciousness, could explain the belief of Dr. Reid, that he was the same individual, and, of course, therefore, endued with the same individual mind, at the time that he was writing, as when he had held the conversation which he supposes, twenty years before—which, however, as has been said, is manifestly not the case, yet, assuming it to be the case, what comes of the intervening period? How has he his "invincible belief" in the continued identity of the soul with reference to periods, of which the incidents are entirely forgotten? How can we be assured of our personal identity during infancy, for example, and sleep? How can memory assure us that we were then the same persons as we subsequently find ourselves? It is clear, that according to this theory, when memory ceases, so does identity, or, at all events, any ground for our belief in it! We cannot think, therefore, that Dr. Reid had any material ground for triumph, in so far as this matter is concerned, over his predecessor. It was probably some half-conscious sense of the insuperable objections to his theory, as now stated,

[a] Intellectual powers—Essay 3d, ch. 4.

Digitized by Google

that induced him to attempt a faltering modification of it in these terms—"We probably at "first derive our notion of identity from that natu- "ral conviction which every man has, from the "dawn of reason, of his own identity and continued "existence."[a] But, if "at first," why not subsequently also? Does the "conviction" diminish in force? If so, we have still a more perplexing phenomenon, for how is a "conviction" to be depended on, which grows weaker as reason grows stronger? or, if it does not diminish in force, then we have this "conviction" all our lives, as an intuitive principle, in which case the primary theory is annihilated, since memory can have nothing to do with the matter. The two theories are evidently incomparable. If we have a natural or intuitive "con- "viction," this settles the question one way. If the proof result from comparing a past recollection with a present consciousness, that settles it another way. But it clearly cannot, as Dr. Reid has attempted, be settled both ways. The one is inconsistent with the other. It is farther evident, that the assumption of a "natural conviction" does not, in any measure, solve the difficulty, even were such an assumption admissible, since it just presents itself under another form, inasmuch as we have to explain how the "conviction" itself can be connected with the mind, UNLESS the mind be conscious of itself in the conviction. Under any other supposition, the convic-

[a] Intellectual powers—Essay 3d, ch. 4.

Digitized by Google

tion is an isolated act, by the very supposition existing in no subject, so far, at all events, as we have any means of ascertaining; or, if it be maintained, that, at all events, we must conclude, that it must have *some* cause, it is obvious, that the very fact of our consciousness of ourselves is assumed in the use of the word "we," which otherwise could have no meaning, and that, moreover, even if it were conceded, that the conviction has some cause or another, it would be impossible for us to discover what that cause is. Finally, as we shall presently shew more particularly, the very idea of our being intuitively acquainted with the past, except in so far as an act of memory implies an intuitive belief, is absurd and impossible. Dr. Reid, however, does not, in this case, seem to rest by any means with his usual confidence on this assumed intuition, but merely introduces it as a sort of alternative theory.

Dr. Brown, singularly enough, reverses the alternatives. Protesting, generally, against Reid's tendency to ascribe mental phenomena to intuition, he yet, in this special case, refers our belief in our personal identity to intuition, as his main explanation of the phenomenon. "If there be," he says, "as it has been already shewn that there must be, "intuitive truths, and if we are not to reject, but "only to weigh cautiously the belief which seems "to us to be intuitive, it will be difficult to find "any which has a better claim to this distinction, "than the faith which we have in our identity, as

Digitized by Google

"one continued sentient and thinking being, or "rather, to speak more accurately, as one per- "manent being, capable of many varieties of sen- "sation and thought." Yet, notwithstanding the claim which the "faith, that we have in our "identity," may have to such a "distinction," as if partially sensible that this theory, after all, was insufficient satisfactorily to explain the phenomenon—reversing Reid's alternatives, as was said—he subsequently adds, "our faith in our identity, then, as "being only another form of the faith which we "put in memory, can be questioned only by those "who deny all memory, and, with memory, all "reasoning of every kind."[a] Nor is it wonderful that Brown should have thus felt sensible of the weakness of his "intuitive" theory, since even, *ex facie*, it appears absurd to speak of an "intui- "tive" belief of that which occurred twenty years ago. We may recollect it, and recollect that THEN we intuitively believed it, but how, in any other sense, we could be said to believe it intuitively, seems altogether incomprehensible. But, still more, an "intuitive" belief in our own identity, as contra-distinguished from an absolute consciousness of our mind, as existing at one time, and a recollection of a former absolute consciousness of its having existed at a previous time, evidently involves a contradiction in terms, since the very use of the word "our," implies that it is a belief in something

[a] Brown's Lectures—Lecture xiii.

Digitized by Google

which we know as ourselves. If, however, we are not conscious of our own minds, it is clear that we do not know ourselves as a separate existence, but as something else, or rather, "we" do not know, and cannot, by possibility, know anything at all, since, by the supposition, there is no "we" that either can know, or be known. Apart, therefore, from the conscious knowledge of the essence of mind by itself, as a separate existing something, it is manifest, that an "intuitive" belief in "our" identity, if it had any meaning at all, would mean an intuitive belief, by nothing in something unknown.

Hence the absolute necessity under which both Reid and Brown felt themselves compelled to call in the supplementary assistance of memory, so as to make the belief of our personal identity consist in an identification of the facts which we remember to have been conscious of formerly, with those of which we actually are conscious at some subsequent period. But, besides, that this, as was previously mentioned, would limit our belief in our identity to those precise dates, of which we might happen to have a definite recollection, it is farther evident, that a mere act of memory, referring us to a past STATE, as compared with a present STATE, could imply no information as to "our" personal identity at all, but only as to the identity of a state of something called memory at one time, with a state of something called consciousness at another. To determine to what such states belonged, as their

Digitized by Google

subject—or, in other words, to connect them with a mind, and, still more, with "our" mind, as conditions thereof—would clearly be impossible, except on the supposition of our knowing NOW, and having known THEN, the subject or mind of which they constitute conditions, as actually and absolutely realised in our consciousness. In the act of remembering *per se*, there is simply a phenomenon remembered, or rather a phenomenon existing under a particular form, since we cannot strictly say that it is remembered, if there be no consciousness of the mind remembering, and hence the remembrance could only be an isolated phenomenon, from which we could know nothing whatever of the subject in which we can only presume, under such an assumption that it inheres—a presumption, by the way, which could never have been realised at all, did we not actually feel it realised in our consciousness. It is indeed, true, that both Reid and Brown occasionally use terms which seem to imply that the act of memory involves a consciousness of its subject, because it is impossible to speak of the phenomena at all, without occasionally being forced to use the language which our consciousness naturally and necessarily suggests; but that neither of them had any real knowledge of the explanation of our irresistible belief in personal identity is indisputable, not only from the whole character of their systems, but specially from the fact of their introducing an intuitive principle as necessary for

Digitized by Google

ascertaining such belief, *apart from our consciousness of the essence of mind*, under which it is alone possible to know anything of that thinking and feeling principle to which the notion of identity can be supposed to appertain. No doubt, the consciousness which we have of the existence of a mental essence, is in itself, in one sense, and indeed, the only true sense, an intuition, because it is the direct result of a mental capacity in a process which every one feels and understands. But, when we speak of another intuition, which Dr. Reid calls "a "natural conviction which every man has from the "dawn of reason," and Dr. Brown designates as a something "to be cautiously weighed" before we adopt "the belief" of it, "which seems to us to be "intuitive," it is evident, that, setting aside every other objection, we introduce *a tertium quid*, produced by no mental process, altogether inexplicable in its origin, and which, consequently, must be merely imaginary, and which, even were it real, as it could in no way be connected with the mind, could in no way afford us the slightest assurance of our own existence, and still less of our personal identity—a belief in which must, of course, depend on our previous conviction of such existence. It would itself be a mere isolated phenomenon, and could, therefore, assure us of nothing, not even of its own existence, since there could be no "we" to be assured.

The distinction which we have thus drawn betwixt our consciousness of the results of mental

Digitized by Google

operations, and our consciousness of the mind itself in these operations—the neglect of which has so much confused the philosophical speculations of Butler, Reid, and Brown—was equally unknown to Sir W. Hamilton, although he evidently felt that the ordinary theory as to our belief in personal identity was, somehow or other, unsatisfactory. In a note on the following passage of Reid—"Identity, "in general, I take to be a relation between a "thing which is known to exist at one time, and a "thing which is known to have existed at another "time"—Hamilton says, "Identity is a relation "between our cognitions of a thing, and not be- "tween things themselves. It would, therefore, "have been better, in this sentence, to have said, "a relation between a thing, as known to exist at "one time, and a thing as known to exist at "another time."[a] Now, what he precisely means by "Identity being a relation between our cogni- "tions" only, and not "between things them- "selves," it is difficult to understand, unless he intended to fall back on Locke's theory, to the effect that "Consciousness" and "Identity" are the same thing. Be this as it may, however, it is, at all events, indisputably proved by this passage, that he had no conception of our being conscious of mind itself, but of "cognitions" only—whether he meant by cognitions mere results of mental operations, or the mental faculties engaged in such ope-

[a] Sir W. Hamilton's edition of Reid—Essay 3d, ch. 4 —*Note.*

Digitized by Google

rations, as contra-distinguished from the subject in which such mental faculties inhere. He, no doubt, however, in so far, brings out Reid's meaning, and he gives his sanction to it.

To demonstrate that such is the case, and in order to avoid any possibility of doubt or misconception as to the theory—the subject being of such fundamental importance in the philosophy of mind—we may refer to another passage in Reid's philosophy, wherein he explicitly tells us, that he holds it for "a first principle, that the thoughts of which he "is conscious are the thoughts of a being which he "calls himself, his mind, his person,"[a] clearly indicating that the first principle, and "the consciousness of his thoughts, as *appertaining to himself*," are different things, since otherwise he would, of course, have said, that "he held it as a first principle that he was conscious of himself, or of his "own thoughts, as exhibitions or manifestations of "himself." Indeed, he never seems to have thought even of resting our belief in personal identity on consciousness of personal existence, but distinctly points to some intuitive conviction of it, as an *a priori* state of mind, of which the origin is entirely inexplicable and inconceivable. "Shall I think," he says, "that thought can stand by itself without "a thinking being? or that ideas can feel pleasure "or pain? My nature dictates to me that it is impossible."[b] Words could hardly be found which

[a] Intellectual powers—Essay 6th, ch. 5. [b] Do. do.

Digitized by Google

could more distinctly avow his perfect ignorance of any definite explanation of the phenomenon; nor, as we have seen, do the writings of Dr. Brown less distinctly assure us of his equal ignorance upon the subject; indeed, the greater part of his lecture on consciousness is occupied in proving that any precise determination of the ground of our belief in personal identity is impossible, and that we must just be content to refer it to a cause that is unknowable.[b]

Now, all this perplexity and confusion, with respect to the process under which we ascertain our personal identity, originates obviously in the assumption, not only groundless, but opposed to our continual consciousness, and even to logical possibility, that we are not conscious of our mental existence absolutely and separately, but only of our cognitions, or, at all events, of the faculties and feelings through which our cognitions are acquired, as if these were, in some way, known as properties altogether apart from mind itself, and not merely as forms or exhibitions of the essence of mind, and consequently implying, in our consciousness of them, a consciousness of that essence of which they are the developments or modes only. Hence, by excluding the essence of mind from our consciousness, we are necessarily precluded, as has been said, from the possibility of ever attaining a knowledge of our personal identity or even personal existence at all.

[b] Brown's Lectures—Lecture xi.

Digitized by Google

But, so far is this theory from being true, that not only are we conscious of the mind as a separate existence—an operating subject, in every mental process—but, even when we are conscious of no objective process, we are yet conscious of the mind absolutely in a continued succession, at all events during our waking hours, by the FEELING of its existence, and thus are assured of our mental existence and personal identity, to whatever past period of our lives memory may direct us—not, indeed, definitely, in all cases, in the form of a precise recollection, but indefinitely and generally, in so far as we know—that at all times this consciousness of our mental existence and personal identity have been felt and recognised by us. In other words, even with respect to those periods of our history, as to which the particular facts that occurred during their continuance have escaped us, we still remember, generally, that we were conscious of our own existence, by being conscious of the existence of our minds, and thus is that "continued assurance of identity" ascertained to us, which Reid has justly assumed as of the essence of the belief; for, in this general and indefinite way, our memory embraces our whole lives, and one conclusion, consequently, applies to every part of them. There is, under this view, consequently, no longer the slightest difficulty in understanding and explaining the process under which we become assured of our personal identity. We admit at once, that the belief in our own existence is an "intuitive

Digitized by Google

"conviction," or "first principle;" but we say that the word *intuitive*, in this case, as in all cases where it can properly be used, is equivalent to the word *conscious*, and that it implies no *a priori* state, feeling, or operation whatever, nor any inexplicable process or result, but that it is simply a name for the remembrance of a continuous consciousness—the mind having all along been conscious of itself, of its own essence, as existing, feeling, remembering, reasoning, &c., and thus identifying such consciousness as appertaining to the same subject, at all stages of its history. This is the only sense in which there can be such a thing as intuition—and, though the subject will be afterwards discussed at greater length, yet we desire here to mark the thing more particularly, because sometimes, though rarely, it is a sense of the word which might be attached to the language of some of the Scottish school of philosophers in treating of this very subject, but which is yet a sense, not only inconsistent with all their theories in regard to it, but which, in by far the greater number of cases, the term, as employed by them, cannot, by any possibility, be made to bear.

Now, that the doctrine which we have been propounding in this chapter is true, and that we are conscious, not merely of our mental cognitions, but of our minds themselves, is proved, not only by the demonstrative conclusion already attained, that we could otherwise have no possible knowledge either of our personal existence, or personal identity

Digitized by Google

at all, but also, by the notorious fact, that all human beings do practically believe that they are conscious of their own absolute existence, *i.e.*, not merely of certain faculties and feelings operating, but also of a distinct subject to which these faculties and feelings appertain, or rather, of which these faculties and feelings are the modes of exhibition, and from which, consequently, they cannot be separated, nor even imagined as separate, and which constitutes the mind, the person, the continuous being that we call ourselves. In fact, we know our faculties and feelings, not as something distinct from mind, nor as anything conceivable apart from mind, but as mind itself, the very essence of mind acting in different ways, and thus manifesting itself under different aspects. That we cannot know mind absolutely, because we must always know it in connection with something else known, and that, therefore, the union of both is the minimum of knowledge, is not only a pure assumption, which admits of no proof, either demonstrative or logical, but it is an assumption manifestly untrue and impossible. It is untrue, indeed, in its very foundation, for we are frequently conscious of mere existence, when there is nothing else known, and when the mind is not operating at all, nor conscious of any feeling, except that it is. It is impossible, because the assumption implies knowledge, while it leaves no subject to know, since we cannot know that the mind knows, unless we know that there

Digitized by Google

is a mind, nor can there be anything to know, whether human or divine, if the minimum of knowledge and *a fortiori* of existence be "that which "knows and that which is known." The very proposition is absurd and contradictory, in speaking of that which knows, while it assumes that there is nothing which can know. Farther, even supposing that the mind were only known itself, in the act of operating, and thereby of knowing something else, and setting aside every other objection to the assumption, it seems impossible to conceive on what ground it is maintained that the mind could not be conscious of itself as something distinct from that which affects it, or, in other words, which it knows. It is conscious of itself as the subject knowing, it appreciates that which affects it, as the object known, by an ordinary operation of reason. They are not known IN one another, as a complex idea, the one is know BY the other, as a something affecting it. The stamp on sealing wax is not the wax, but a figure stamped upon it, and the one is entirely a distinct and separate thing from the other. The hardness of the stone which affects my finger is not the finger, nor is it the perception felt by the finger, but is a totally different thing, and IS KNOWN AS A TOTALLY DIFFERENT THING. Such examples, no doubt, do not constitute perfect analogies, but they are quite sufficient to indicate the unfounded nature of the theory which does not seem even to have an *ex facie* plausibility, its very terms being so directly

Digitized by Google

opposed to our most irresistible convictions, that if possible, the very form of it only presses upon us still more definitely the assurance that we are conscious of our minds themselves whenever we are awake, and that all objects known are known, not as complex ideas IN the mind, but as external objects BY the mind. We are thus continually conscious of mind, more or less definitely, and identify it, consequently, at all times as the same subject, the same existence, which must, while it lasts, be one and the same, and which, consequently, BEING ONCE DESTROYED, NEVER COULD POSSIBLY RE-EXIST AGAIN.

This last observation suggests the answer to the only difficulty which, so far as I know, can be imagined to the doctrine which we have now endeavoured to establish; for it may be said, that, although by such a process as has been described, the grand problem of the grounds of our belief in our personal identity is, no doubt, completely solved, and a clear and precise idea of the mode of such belief is ascertained, yet, that in the case of sound sleep, when we are unconscious even of the existence of our minds, the very same objection may be urged against our conclusion, on the assumption that we are conscious of the mind absolutely as on that which supposes us only conscious of special faculties or properties—since, in either case, if consciousness alone give us a knowledge of the phenomenon, we cannot realise such knowledge

Digitized by Google

during a period when it is admitted that we are wholly unconscious of everything. The cases, however, are perfectly different, since a consciousness of the operation of a specific faculty, or the action of a specific feeling, were such consciousness possible, apart from a consciousness of the subject in which such faculty or feeling inheres, could only, at all events, ascertain the existence of such faculty or feeling, and could, in no shape or degree, ascertain the existence of the mind as the subject of them. There could be no evidence, therefore, in such a case, of AN EXISTENCE at all, but only *of a faculty or feeling;* and, in the same way, if cognitions be all that is known, *of such cognitions*—exactly identical with Hume's ideas and impressions, or Ferrier's object *mecum*—existing as phenomena, without any subject in which they inhere. Hence, when the immediate phenomenon disappeared in such cases, there could be no assurance of the continued existence, or, in other words, of the identity of such phenomenon as continuously existing. Inhering in nothing, so far as we know, its next appearance must to us, demonstratively, be a *new* phenomenon. But if we be conscious not merely of feelings and faculties, or cognitions, but also of the existence or essence which is the subject of them, we know in this very consciousness, as remembered at one time and felt at another time, that the assumption of its destruction, during the intermediate space, is impossible, whether we may

Digitized by Google

have been conscious of its existence during every instant of such space or not, inasmuch as, had it ceased at any time to exist, there must have been a new creation—and, therefore, though the new creature might be perfectly alike, it could not be, AS WE FEEL OURSELVES TO BE, identically the same being as it was before. It is in vain to say, in reply to this, that God or nature, having created new beings, may also infuse into them the recollections of the former beings, so as to deceive them into a belief of their identity therewith, because, if we are to assume that God or nature *intentionally* deceives us there is an end of all philosophy, and, indeed, of all belief of every kind. In fact, if such a mode of arguing were admissible, it might, with the very same validity, be argued that we do not exist at all—that we do not see, hear, smell, taste, nor touch—that we are a delusion altogether—that life is mockery, and reason a lie. This *a priori* and arbitrary scepticism admits of no answer; nor does it, indeed, require any, for it is pure absurdity, because we are so constituted that we *must* believe the nature which we have, and all that we can do, is to endeavour to discover the precise particulars which it teaches us. Accordingly, the surest proof of the argument now enunciated, is its accordance with the universal and irresistible convictions of all mankind. Multitudes, indeed, may not be able to put it in words, but it no less convinces them, though it may be by an

Digitized by Google

unconscious process. All feel it to be true, and consequently all human beings will maintain their perfect assurance of their personal identity, not merely while awake and actually conscious of their own existence, but even while asleep, when, at certain times, at all events, every trace of consciousness would seem to have disappeared.

Now, from all this, it seems perfectly obvious, that a most logical scepticism is necessarily generated, if we either deny or ignore our consciousness of our existence absolutely, or, in other words, of the essence of our minds—and here, indeed, we have the origin of all scepticism; for it seems the most indisputable of all axioms, that unless we be conscious of our own existence, we can be conscious of nothing else, since there can to us be no "we," of which such consciousness is predicable. In what, indeed, could it possibly inhere? There is nothing known as its subject. It would, therefore, be a consciousness which, in so far as we can discover, could inhere in nothing, since, supposing it even to inhere in something, it must be a something of which the very existence is to us, at all events, entirely unknown. To speak of "ourselves," therefore, would be to speak of an unknown existence. To say that "we" are conscious would be to say, so far as we could know anything about the matter, that "nothing" was conscious. All expressions, in fact, implying a "self," an "intelligence," a "mind," under every aspect, and, according to every

Digitized by Google

form, would involve necessarily a contradiction in terms. There may, indeed, appear to be a sort of plausibility in the hypothesis, that we are conscious merely of the faculties and feelings, and cognitions of mind, and not of mind itself, because the theory that we can know nothing of essence, originating in a confusion betwixt its composition and its existence, has been held so long and so universally by philosophers, and has thus been so completely transfused into current literature, as to have become almost an intuition of habit, if we may so speak, which, as will subsequently be shewn, exercises so powerful an influence on the human mind; but yet such plausibility cannot, even for a moment, sustain the theory, if it be considered, that in supposing a consciousness of feelings or faculties, or states apart from any consciousness of mind absolutely, it logically and manifestly contradicts itself—since, if we are not conscious of such feelings, faculties, and states, as feelings, faculties, and states of MIND, we cannot be conscious of them at all, inasmuch as there is no mind to be conscious of them, and that, consequently, under such a theory, they must be regarded as isolated phenomena, and our belief in personal identity as a delusion. Nor does there seem any possibility of doubt upon the subject, since there are not two ways in which the result can be attained. We must either be conscious of our mental states and operations, as states and operations of mind, which necessarily and de-

Digitized by Google

monstratively implies a consciousness of mind as their subject, or else these states and operations never can be connected with a subject at all, and our belief in our existence, as well as in our personal identity, must be admitted to rest on no solid foundation; for, to suppose a consciousness of our faculties, and feelings, and cognitions *per se*, or, in other words, to suppose each faculty, and feeling, and cognition, conscious of itself, is not only absurd, but would evidently imply that they neither were connected with mind, nor with one another, as phenomena of the same mind. The only possible philosophy, under such circumstances, would be the ideas and impressions of Hume, which could be referred to no subject, or the relations of his legitimate successor, Hegel, which could be referred to no absolute; nay, we go farther, and, without hesitation, maintain that Hume and Hegel, and their disciples, under various modifications and modes of stating the argument, are the only philosophers who have reached a legitimate conclusion under the assumption—common, we believe, to all philosophers—that we are not conscious of the existence of the essence of our minds. Any man who holds such a dogma, whether affirmatively or negatively, can evidently be forced, by the simplest possible logical process, to the same result. In truth, the supposition of a subject being conscious of its feelings, and faculties, and cognitions, or, in other words, of its phenomenal existence, without being conscious of

Digitized by Google

its absolute existence, implies that that which is unconscious of itself is conscious of the exhibitions or manifestations of itself—or, in other words, that that which is unfelt and unknown, yet feels and knows the properties of itself; and, from this, it still farther and indisputably follows, that the exhibitions, manifestations, and properties of a thing, are not the thing itself, but something away from it, which, assuredly, to our conceptions, is a contradiction and an absurdity. Whereas, in truth, the very fact of our assurance of the existence of our minds, and of those minds as the subjects in which our faculties and feelings inhere, puts it beyond a doubt that we know the mind, both separately in the feeling of its existence, apart from any process, and by the only other possible means under which it can be known, viz.—by being conscious of it in the very consciousness which makes known to us our faculties and feelings themselves as modes or manifestations of it.

It was just at this point where intellectual science, strictly speaking, may be said to begin, that the Kantian philosophy took a form so absolutely and fundamentally sceptical, that perhaps nothing ever equalled it in the history of scepticism, so as to render it utterly impossible to follow it forth logically without plunging into the extravagancies —though generally under the assumption, the perfectly logical extravagancies—of Fichte, Schelling, and specially Hegel; for, as Kant holds that ex-

Digitized by Google

perience is to be absolutely excluded from philosophy, in so far as implying empiricism—or, in other words, as he holds that philosophy, in the Baconian sense of the word, is unscientific, and that theories and conjectures, therefore, are the proper instruments of philosophising—so it became necessary to shew, under this assumption, how we can become acquainted with our feelings and faculties, or our existence, or our consciousness, or even our *a priori* states and cognitions themselves, apart altogether from experience—the introduction of which would, of course, scientifically vitiate the whole process. Now, this was just a necessity laid upon the sage, to shew how we could be conscious without being conscious, or know our *a priori* cognitions, without knowing them—a somewhat hopeless attempt, one would imagine, though it seems to have in no way shaken the confidence of the Konigsberg philosopher. What, however, may be his process of reasoning for the determination of this subtle question, we do not pretend to say, seeing that even the German language, flexible as it is, cannot supply words which will convey any notion of contradictory and impossible ideas. Unintelligible, indeed, as are generally the details of Kant's philosophy, we must admit that, as to this particular, he almost outdoes himself. The only conclusion, as it would seem, that he could have legitimately drawn, was the impossibility, under such an assumption, of knowing

Digitized by Google

anything; and though he has really, in practice, proceeded in this direction to a very considerable length, yet, his successors or disciples have, most logically, on his own principles, found that he might have theoretically proceeded much farther, and thus have arrived legitimately, according to the theory, at the negation of the possible knowledge of existence, since a knowledge of the play of relations merely—without any knowledge or possible knowledge of the subjects or existences in which they inhere, or from which they originate, the alone knowledge which Hegel, who has brought the system to perfection, admits—evidently involves, not merely the negation of all absolute knowledge, but the negation of everything which knows and admits nothing to exist except some vague form of transcendental dreams that float, nobody knows where, and nobody knows how.

Assuming, therefore, along with all mankind, the practical conviction—and, consequently, of course, according to our views, the philosophical fact—which we have found to explain so many phenomena hitherto deemed inexplicable, that we are conscious of our own existence, or, in other words, of our own minds absolutely, and, in that consciousness, know our own existence, and what it CAN do, it follows, that by a process which will subsequently be explained, we, in this knowledge of our existence, also know non-existence, and what it CANNOT do. We indicate this at present, because it is a fact which

Digitized by Google

will be found of the utmost importance in our subsequent arguments, but which, apart from the assurance of our consciousness of mind itself, as an absolute existence, evidently could never be realised.

But, unspeakably important as are the direct effects of this doctrine, of our absolute consciousness of mind in determining principles and explaining phenomena, which lie at the very foundation both of faith and practice, it will be found that its indirect results are of no less consequence; for, this doctrine being conceded, and we trust its truth will no longer admit even of dispute, the more objectionable form of *idealism*, under any possible aspect, falls, without the possibility of ever being raised again, since the existence, at all events, of mind, as an actual existing subject, is determined as a fact of experimental knowledge. In so far, all dispute and possible difference is at an end, and thus the greater proportion, both of ancient and modern philosophy, ceases, at all events, to be available for any mischievous purpose, and remains merely as a curious relic of what practical absurdities men may be induced to maintain, either from a perverted love of notoriety, or an over-weening confidence in their own personal acuteness, as contrasted with the practical convictions of the rest of the human race. Nor does this same doctrine strike with less power at the grosser form of *materialism;* for we are told by physiologists, as an indisputable fact, that the body, in all its parts, is completely renewed every

Digitized by Google

few years, by a continual succession. In the case of persons advanced in life, consequently, every material particle of the body, or at all events of the matter known to us, and cognisible by our senses—must have been repeatedly changed—not an atom of it remains the same as in infancy, childhood, or youth. Such, being the case, it follows, that if our minds be the same throughout all our history, *i.e.*, if the conviction of our personal identity be true, the mind must be an existence, both distinct from the matter of the body and from any effect worked out by bodily machinery; for it is to be observed, that both the body and its machinery have been completely changed, and are different existences. Hence, even supposing that either could be conceived as conscious of itself, we have here *not the same body, nor the same machinery,* so that we must suppose one body, or one machinery, conscious of a different body or a different machinery—a proposition not only *ex facie* manifestly impossible, but admittedly inconsistent with that absolute consciousness of mind—be mind what it may—under which alone we could know mind to exist, and which assures us that the mind which we have now is the very mind which we have always had, as having been identically the same persons throughout our whole history. Materialism, under this argument, therefore, must assume that our consciousness is not to be depended on, that human beings are not personally identical at different stages of their history,

Digitized by Google

and that we are, in so far different *beings* at every successive moment of our lives, and entirely different beings every successive few years, or, in other words, that elderly persons have been ten or twelve different beings since their birth. With all this, it has to account for the transmission of the consciousness of one being to another, and of the irresistible conviction of personal identity—which is a lie—from machine to machine, for eight, ten, or twelve successions, the conviction remaining as strong when the machine is ultimately about worn done, as when it existed in its primary form, and in some measure, therefore, actually and truly realised a material identity. The person who adopts materialism, under such a form, can hardly have much respect for the philosophy of Bacon. That the mind may sometimes decay, and always die with the body, is a conceivable hypothesis; but that they are different entities is evidently certain, if we be entitled to put faith in the assurances of consciousness, and the experiments of physiology. But it is the doctrine, that we are absolutely conscious of our own minds, let it be observed, which gives to this argument its irresistible force. Apart from this doctrine, the materialistic theory may, in connection with the periodical renovation of the human frame, assuredly seem absurd to common sense, but we could not demonstrate that it is logically and experimentally impossible. Did the doctrine require farther proof, it would seem to be afforded in

Digitized by Google

the fact of its crushing the opposite extremes of idealism and materialism, and that by no questionable arguments, but by processes of demonstration as rigid as the most strict mathematician could desire.

According to this view, and under these proofs, then, the mind is an existence of which we are cognisant in our consciousness of it, and which exhibits itself either absolutely, or under certain manifestations which we call faculties and feelings, as called into operation by external affections—these faculties and feelings, however, being nothing in any way different from the mind, but being the mind itself exhibited under different modes, and thus realising beliefs of various kinds, which beliefs, when direct and immediate, and not inferential, are the only true intuitions. There are, therefore, no innate, or *a priori* cognitions, nor any form of cognition, which is essentially inexplicable or mystical. Every intuition, consequently, being the result of a single and immediate act of the mind, must be at once known, in its origin, as referable to a special faculty or feeling, or, in other words, to a specific mode of mind, as in sensation or memory. Whenever the origin of any cognition, therefore, is uncertain or unknown, it is in itself a proof that it is a complex idea or state, resulting in part, at all events, from reason, and thus known, in so far, inferentially; to discover its origin, therefore, it must be analysed, nor need we fail in any one case, if our analysis be properly conducted.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VII.

ON SENSATION.

Connection of body and mind most intimate—Amount of bodily action known by the mind—Nature of *human* physical instincts—Distinction betwixt them, and what are called instincts in *animals*—Senations originating in causes external to our organic being—Mode in which we become acquainted with them—Delusion of Reid and his disciples upon this subject—Singular results of their delusion—Modification of their theory by Sir W. Hamilton—Confusion betwixt relative knowledge and knowledge of existences related to the mind or organic being—Error as to the nature of qualities—Distinction betwixt primary and secondary qualities considered—Knowledge of substance explained—How much, as to external existence, we know from consciousness, and how much from experience—Nature of general ideas of sensation explained—Errors of Reid and his disciples—Knowledge of space and time acquired in sensation—Error of Kant—Importance of these views—Relation of dreaming, delirium, and insanity, to sensation.

It has now been proved, by an apparently irresistible train of evidence, that we are conscious of mind absolutely, and every step that we take, in the farther prosecution of the science, will be found to ratify and confirm that conclusion. Accordingly, it is in this way that we become acquainted with our organic constitution, as creatures of a compound nature, in which matter is intimately combined and interwoven with our minds. We are not cognisant, however, of this organic constitution subjectively, as we are conscious of our minds, but are

Digitized by Google

only objectively conscious of it, by the action of our bodies upon our minds, under the character which they realise in and through this intimacy of union. The process by which we thus become acquainted with body as thus united to mind is called sensation, or consciousness of organic states, and in this process is involved all our direct knowledge of external things of whatsoever kind; and we say our direct knowledge, because, indirectly, we become acquainted with external things, that is to say, things external to our own minds by other processes. By sensation alone, however, are we made directly cognisant of anything external to our own minds, and consequently it is a process evidently essential to the origination of any mental operation whatsoever, since no existence can operate where there is nothing to operate upon, and excluding *a priori* cognitions, which, we trust, have been already proved impossible on general principles, and with respect to which we hope in our progress to be farther able to shew, that all the phenomena, usually referred to such a source, can be readily explained under the operation of our ordinary faculties—excluding these, we say, there is evidently nothing for the mind, in the first instance, to operate upon, apart from the knowledge which sensation primarily communicates. Hence it is that Philosophers have generally had their attention directed to this process, before determining anything as to the nature of the intelligent instrument which is engaged in the process, and thus usually

Digitized by Google

get into perplexity as to the mode under which external existence can come into contact with that instrument, so as to be apprehended by it—a perplexity from which, in consequence of its resulting from confusion as to the elementary character of mental action, they find it extremely difficult to disentangle themselves.

This process is carried on through the body acting on the mind interwoven with it, and which, from the nature of the combination, is experimentally found to have the capability of being affected by such action. And we say, the capability of being affected, because, in the first instance, at all events, there is evidently no action of the mind itself, which merely receives impressions from an external cause, or, in other words, is made conscious of the action or existence of such cause. At the same time, it is not to be supposed that the mind is cognisant of all bodily action; on the contrary, as there are many mental operations which do not appear to affect the body, so the body acts in many cases, and is even acted upon, without the cognisance of the mind. In the action of the spleen, for example—the bile and the kidneys—the mind is perfectly unconscious. No degree of attention or observation even, will give us the least consciousness of these processes. In winking, again, and inspiration, and respiration, and in the action of the heart, we are conscious of nothing directly. Indirectly, indeed, and by observation, we can cognise

Digitized by Google

these processes, but only very generally, and without any accurate discrimination of the parts of the processes. We know them, in fact, solely by observation, and not by any act of direct and immediate consciousness. In such processes, again, as that of an infant, where emptiness, producing a certain state of the stomach, acts through the nervous system on the muscles of the throat and mouth, so as to produce an involuntary drawing in of the breath and compression of the lips, we have an instinctive operation of which the infant is probably only partially conscious. When, however, it has discovered that by such a process its wants are made known, and its uneasiness alleviated—in other words, when it has had experience of the means of remedying the painful sensation involved in the emptiness of its stomach, it is most curious to trace the progress of the mental process, under which the involuntary and instinctive gradually changes into a voluntary and intelligent operation, frequently exhibited in a very marked way, when there can be very little cause for it in any real uneasiness felt. The process, in fact, is converted into a mode, not of alleviating pain, but of realising a pleasure, until gradually, through habit, the instinctive operation ceases. It is, as it were, absorbed in the experimental and intelligent apprehension, and soon is even resisted as the infant advances in life, as a useless and disagreeable action, for which other means of attaining the object,

Digitized by Google

which it has now begun to discover, constitute suitable substitutes. The means now used for the purpose are intentional instead of instinctive—they imply the action of an intelligent being, and not merely of a living machine. In an infinite number of cases, farther, the body not only acts, but is acted upon, and it may even be by a considerable force, and yet the mind is not conscious of it. We all know, that in standing, sitting, lying, &c., we are, for the most part, perfectly unconscious of the pressure of the substances on which, in such cases, the various parts of our bodies rest, and sometimes even considerable mental attention will not realise to us such consciousness. In the same way, sounds, smells, objects of vision, are and must be perpetually exhibited to our senses, of which we are perfectly unconscious. No doubt some of them re-appear, under the operation of memory, by a process to be afterwards explained; but, of others, there is a positive certainty that we never could have been conscious at all.

From all this, it seems very clear, that the body, *per se,* is a mere material machine which might act, and, for aught we can tell, might in a certain sense live, even supposing it unconnected with any mental intelligence. The two thus, again, are found to be perfectly separate existences, endued with qualities of a totally different and almost opposite charecter. As, however, the manifestation of consciousness in the human being implies necessarily that intelli-

Digitized by Google

gence is present as part of its constitution, so it would appear that this intelligence must be the grand guiding principle of the material machine, and that it had been combined with it for this purpose; and accordingly we find, that they are so intimately connected and interwoven, that, by a greater or less effort of attention, all those bodily states and actions, over which the mind can usefully preside, may be known to, and regulated by it.

These bodily processes, which operate apart from intuition, which have no mental relation or results, and which depend on purely mechanical causes, such as the action of the heart, the lungs, and the like, seem to indicate the existence of a species of animal life altogether apart from intelligence. This, however, is a subject which, although most interesting, is yet away from intellectual philosophy, strictly speaking, and on the consideration of which, consequently, we do not conceive ourselves entitled to enter. It is enough to say, therefore, in regard to these, that they have no general name, unless we were to call them involuntary functions of body, and that they indirectly affect our mental states, in their greater or less disorganisation, under which our mental feelings may, to a certain extent, be modified. There are other material processes, however, that take place in the human body, which operate also without intuition, but of which we are perfectly conscious, and which have both men-

Digitized by Google

tal relations and mental results. These are termed instincts, and are only occasional in their action, as originating in certain forms of uneasiness, which can be removed, as in the process previously mentioned, which impels an infant to suck, and which indicate, more or less directly, the remedy which nature, in each case, has provided. In this way, the very character of the instinct, directs intelligence to the discovery of the means of gratifying the uneasiness.

These physical instincts, as thus limited, may be comprehended under hunger, thirst, and the venereal sensation, of which the two former manifest themselves from birth, the latter only at an ulterior stage in the progress of our lives. These do not arise in causes external to the body, but in the constitution of the body itself as a living machine, and we are made conscious of them in the action of the living machine on its nervous system as united with our minds. But this consciousness of these bodily processes is of an entirely different character from our consciousness of *mind absolutely*. We are conscious of bodily processes, not as something *existing per se*, but as *actions* on the mind. We know that they are not the mind, and this so indisputably, that there never was a human being who ever confused them with mental existence. All men, learned and unlearned, would practically ridicule the idea of hunger being regarded as the mind itself, or even as a something which we could

Digitized by Google

have any difficulty in discriminating from the mind. So utterly untenable, indeed, is the idea that the thinking and feeling being cannot be distinguished from the objects of his thoughts and feelings, that it is, on the contrary, ABSOLUTELY IMPOSSIBLE, AS MATTER OF FACT, TO CONFUSE THEM. Hence we not only are conscious of these processes as discriminated from mind, but we are conscious of them as organic operations existing in distinct and definite localities of the body. Were this not the case, it would evidently be impossible that experience could ever teach us the determination of such localities—a point which will be made to appear under a still more general form afterwards. There is thus an obvious difference betwixt our consciousness of purely mental feelings—wheresoever originating—and our consciousness of organic feelings; the former, as in the cases of anger, sorrow, benevolence, &c., we are conscious of—not indeed as mind itself, from which our consciousness discriminates them, but as modes of its existence, or, in other words, as affections of its absolute nature, which, therefore, have no locality out of the mind itself; the latter, on the contrary, we are conscious of as organic states, and not states of the pure mental being, affecting the mind, therefore, indirectly, and determined to special localities, when brought into contact with mind under the special properties of human organisation. In these instinctive sensations we have, consequently, the primary exhibition

Digitized by Google

of the mode, under which we become conscious of external existence, and which it is most singular, that intellectual philosophers have so much overlooked, as they tend to throw light on a large number of most important phenomena. Reid has, indeed, incidentally alluded to hunger, as illustrative of his supposed distinction betwixt sensation and perception; but these instincts demand a more particular attention than can be realised in any mere incidental allusion, because, as has been said, their action implies results having an important bearing on other and ulterior phenomena, since, although strictly physical in their action in the first instance, there can be no doubt that all of them, and specially, that sexual impulse is connected with our mental feelings, and that it is modified even in its mere physical character by the influence of purely mental considerations. Of the primary physical causes of these sensations we know nothing whatever, except that they imply an action by contraction or pressure on the nerves, involving a phenomenon in so far analogous to, or rather identical with, the sensation of touch—the difference of the effect from that produced by ordinary touch being, no doubt, a result of the character and constitution of the special nerves affected. Hence, although Dr. Reid has attempted—as we have already mentioned—to illustrate his distinction betwixt sensation and perception by a reference to hunger, he has not only failed, but failed by the singular mis-

Digitized by Google

conception of confusing a supposed instinctive process with what in reality is a result of intelligence. "The appetite of hunger," he says, "includes an "uneasy sensation and a desire for food,"[a] evidently imagining that "the appetite of hunger" is a simple state, whereas it is indisputably compound, constituted by the painful feeling arising from emptiness of the stomach, which is purely organic, with a desire to be relieved from that painful feeling, which can be the result of intelligence only; nay, the appetite of hunger even as thus constituted, it will, according to the indisputable analysis now given, be obvious, does *not* include "a desire for food." That is an ulterior state, generated by experience, which teaches us that food is the suitable means for removing the uneasy feeling. If, indeed, it indicated a desire for food, it must obviously be of some particular kind of food—as of milk, for example, vegetables, meat, &c.; since a general notion of food, apart from the notion of any particular kind of food, is absurd, inasmuch as a general notion, however loosely the term may be employed, must embrace some kind of particular, else it would mean nothing at all. To know food, generally, therefore, without knowing any particular kind of food, is evidently a contradiction in terms. Yet, to suppose that we *do* know particular kinds of food—that we know milk, for example, vegetables, meat, &c., without having been made ac-

[a] Intellectual powers—Essay 2d, ch. 16.

Digitized by Google

quainted with them by experience, is not only equally absurd and contradictory, but so notoriously false, as matter of fact, that we presume no one would pretend in precise terms to affirm it. The truth is, that our only desire in hunger, as in all similar cases, is to be relieved from the uneasy feeling, and, as has been said, this is not a physical state, but the beginning of a mental operation—the mind, as an intelligent existence, necessarily believing that, as suffering is not its natural state, therefore, there must be some means of relieving it. To suppose otherwise, indeed, would be to contradict our natures. Hence, knowing that the uneasiness is removeable, whether it can find the means to remove it or not, the intelligent desire of its removal must of necessity be involved in the sense of the uneasiness. But while intelligence thus necessarily implies a desire to be relieved from the uneasy feeling involved in hunger, by suitable means, it can obviously, in the first instance, give us no information as to what those means are. A knowledge of this can only be derived from experience, but the knowledge thus derived from experience is no part of the original state of hunger. That is a complex state, of which the one part is a physical feeling of pain, appertaining to the vivified machine, the other an intelligent impulse appertaining to the mental agent. Hence, the possibility which Reid supposes, in the clause immediately succeeding that previously quoted, when he says, that "the uneasi-

Digitized by Google

"ness and the desire may, perhaps, be sometimes "separated in reality"—*i.e.*, that sometimes we may feel hungry without a desire of the uneasiness implied in such hunger being relieved—is so evidently impossible in the case of an intelligent being as to shew how carefully we must examine and re-examine mental analyses, even in cases of a comparatively simple character, ere we can be assured of their thorough accuracy. Indeed, we should never be satisfied till the conclusion be so clear as at once to carry conviction to every ordinary reader, as indisputably confirmed by his own experience. No doubt, a logical, or rather a verbal, distinction may be taken betwixt "the uneasy sensation," and "our "desire to be relieved from it," not because we can conceive them separate in an intelligent being, but because the former being the physical, and the latter the intellectual part of the one state, we can thus regard it under different aspects, directing our attention, as we may choose, more particularly to the bodily state in the one case, and to its necessary mental adjunct in the other. But his idea, that the mere appetite still farther "implies a desire for "food," it will now be obvious, is not only inconsistent with his previous doctrine, but involves an entire misconception of the process; for, though "a desire for relief" from the uneasy feeling be involved in the sensation of hunger, yet *even this* is a result of the necessary action of intelligence, while the "desire for food" cannot possibly

Digitized by Google

even be an *immediate* result of the relation of intelligence with the physical feeling, but is a subsequent result, altogether consequent upon experience. Having once had the uneasy feeling removed by the instrumentality of food, we then "desire food," *i.e.*, either the very food of which we have participated, or something else analogous to it, and, as intelligent beings, must do so; but it is by the lesson of experience that we have been taught even the existence of food in any particular form. The very same observations apply to the other instinctive processes, of which it is only, under this view, necessary farther to remark, that our desires, in the first instance, are only for relief from uneasiness, not the realisation of enjoyment. That such relief may involve enjoyment cannot be, and we all know, as matter of fact, is not, discoverable *a priori*, but is known by experience only.

Hence, it is very clear, that in respect of such instinctive or organic sensations, which are all uneasy feelings, in the first instance, we are not only conscious of an organic cause, but we are intelligently assured of the existence of some external remedy or other for such uneasy feelings, the precise nature of which, again, is subsequently to be ascertained by experience. This is a phenomenon of the most unspeakable importance, for we have in it the first traces of a species of relative knowledge, which we shall subsequently find goes to explain many of what have been supposed the most

Digitized by Google

unaccountable phenomena of the mind, and, as unaccountable, have consequently been referred to *a priori* cognitions, as if their origin were wholly undiscoverable by any references to the character and tendencies of the human mind. But it is not so, since that state which we call desire, as we have seen, is simply, in the first instance, an intelligent sense of something wanting to remedy an uneasiness, in so far artificial, as generated by an extraneous cause—and we call it desire, because there is involved in it an irresistible tendency to seek for that which nature has constituted the suitable means for relieving the pain, or craving, which distresses or annoys us. The very same process takes place in the case of super-induced pain, or bodily suffering, which is an analogous species of sensation.

That which we call uneasiness or pain, therefore, in the sensation, is the feeling absolutely regarded. That which we call desire is the intelligent conviction—that, by external means, such uneasiness may be removed, and the intelligent tendency therefrom resulting—which impels us to seek the means of its removal, necessarily implies a farther belief that such means are attainable, else would our intelligence be a false guide, as indicating the possibility of that which, IN THE NATURE OF THINGS, is impossible. In fact, the tendency to seek that which we do not believe attainable, would imply a self-contradiction in the constitution of our natures.

Digitized by Google

In the very fact of intelligence urging us to seek a remedy, we have involved the belief of its possibility, and the hope of its realisation. The desire being a consequence of intelligence, involves the belief as the necessary result of such desire, the one being merely the co-relative of the other. Thus, there is here, in addition to the direct knowledge acquired, an assurance, indirectly, of an ulterior something, capable of removing our uneasiness. We do not, indeed, in the first instance, know precisely what the something is—for this would imply an *a priori* cognition to realise it; we only feel assured that there is such a thing, if we could only attain it. This originates, evidently, in the apprehension of the desire by our intelligent natures, though the determination of the mental process, under which such apprehension is ascertained, belongs to an ulterior portion of our inquiry. In these co-relations to our primary desires, therefore —and, indeed, to all our desires—we have the indications of, and direction to, a new species of knowledge, which may be called a relative, or rather co-relative knowledge, to be determined precisely in its particular form, by an appeal to experience. This knowledge consists in our intelligent assurance of co-relations to our desires, apart from which, indeed, it is evident that we could have no precise idea of the nature of our desires themselves, which would only be a sort of half-states, from which we should know that something was

Digitized by Google

wanting, but have no knowledge that the something wanting could be supplied. But this knowledge, though vague and general, yet leaves us in no such imperfect state; it clearly indicates the existence of co-relations in the reality of things, or else it would imply an absurdity to suppose, that we should ever make an effort to realise them; and so entirely does experience sanction this conclusion, that when the precise co-relations are discovered, the mere thinking on them, especially in the case of voluptuous desire, actually will originate, or stimulate, the organic uneasiness, by a sort of reflex action. The knowledge, therefore, thus implied, is clearly connected with our mental states, and thus introduces us to another class of feelings, and another species of cognitions, entirely overlooked in systems of philosophy, but which will be found to involve considerations of the highest possible importance—the full development of which, however, appertains to another branch of our subject; and we have only introduced these remarks here, because the fact of our desires, implying co-relations, is a phenomenon essentially necessary to be observed, in order thoroughly to understand the precise import of the organic sensations, and, farther, because we are thus enabled to trace, from the very beginning, the close and intimate union which subsists among our various faculties and feelings, and to ascertain their mutual bearings and relations. Hence, the very same principles will be

Digitized by Google

found equally to apply in the explanation of those desires which are strictly spiritual, as when we are uneasy, from a sense of inferiority, dependence, injury, and the like. But it may farther be observed, in passing, that there are also secondary desires resulting from circumstances, or generated by habit—as in the case of bodily disease, when we desire to get rid of the pain and inconveniences involved in it, and of avarice, which originates in the deficiencies that money enables us to supply. The origin of the desire, in the former case, and the mental process in its generation, is obvious; but the growth of the love of money, as developed in avarice, implies more complicated considerations, since the desire, in this case, has no *direct* relation to the uneasiness, and, singularly enough, ends in having no ultimate object at all—the desire being both the uneasiness itself, and the tendency urging to its gratification! The explanation of the phenomenon, however—which is exceedingly simple, as, indeed, may almost already be perceived—belongs also to an ulterior branch of the subject, of which, however, the analysis that has been now given constitutes the ground-work, and implies the principle.

It must, however, be carefully observed, that these organic sensations which we have called instincts, as tending by an involuntary process to a definite end, differ altogether from what is usually called instinct in the lower animals. No doubt, they too feel what we have thus called the human

Digitized by Google

instincts of hunger, thirst, and the sexual impulse, as well as bodily pleasure and pain; but in them, that which is usually called instinct, differs not only from those organic sensations, but also from those sudden acts of an imperfect intelligence—such as closing the eyes from a flash of light, springing backwards from an anticipated injury, and the like—which are also frequently termed instincts in man. These latter, as we have said, are genuine acts of an imperfect intelligence, but the former are mere bodily affections, originating wholly in physical action. Their causes are, therefore, mechanical and direct, and also perfectly intelligible, if we admit—as, of course, common reason compels us to do—that body and mind are so united, that action in the physical system of the organic being is felt as pleasurable or painful, respectively, by the mind. But the effects of what is usually called instinct in the inferior animals, are not only not, in many instances, referable to any direct and immediate physical action, but involve an arrangement and a purpose, evidently the result of a perfect and prospective reason. It has, indeed, been attempted to explain them by physical impulse, but the attempt has utterly failed. To illustrate the phenomenon, let us take the best known and simplest examples:—Each species of bird, then, builds its nest from the same materials, apparently the most suitable for its purpose in each case—in the same shape, apparently the most suitable for

Digitized by Google

their various forms—and the kinds of their eggs, and in similar places, apparently the most suitable for their respective habits, and ultimate ends. Suppose, then, that a physical feeling in the generation of the egg caused an uneasy sensation, the only co-relative, as in the instincts of man, would be a desire to get quit of such feeling. But how could this teach birds to build nests, and suitable nests, and of the most suitable materials, and in the places most suitable for quiet and safety? How could such a feeling be possibly co-relative to building nests at all? Why should they not lay their eggs anywhere, and without any reference to an ultimate end? Why should they guard them with the most unremitting care? sit on them? turn them at the proper times? feed and watch over their offspring? train up their young ones carefully to the proper age, and then leave them altogether—their whole tenderness apparently vanishing with the need of it? To attempt explaining all this by physical impulse is absurd. To explain it by assuming birds to possess prospective reason seems impossible, seeing that the very creatures having this instinct most strong, seem in all other cases to exhibit the least approach to any power of combination, arrangement, or foresight, and never manifest the least tendency to improvement—the youngest birds which have had no experience, and which, consequently, are without the means of exercising reason, going through with

Digitized by Google

facility and excellence the whole process, just as well as those who have been habituated to it for years. Again, bees leave their hives, collect wax for their cells, which they build thereof with mathematical precision, go forth again and gather honey to be stored in those cells, which are adjusted so as to be most perfectly prepared to receive it. Over all this work, a leader, selected by themselves, has presided, while—at the season when the means of providing honey has passed away, and the necessity is apparent of preserving all the store with the utmost economy for the winter—the drones, comparatively few in number, are killed by the more numerous stinged masses, under an evident mutual understanding and combination. Now, suppose some uneasy sensation to drive them from their cells, and the smell of the flowers to attract them to the receptacles of wax and honey, what bodily uneasiness could induce them to load their bodies therewith? and to carry the wax and honey back to their hives? Suppose the shape of their bodies led to the philosophically accurate formation of their cells, what bodily impulse could lead them to form cells at all? why not lay aside their wax and honey anywhere, especially when wearied with the burden of bearing it? What bodily impulse could lead them to select a queen? or, with such pertinacious and combined bitterness, to assail their unarmed companions, just at the time that experience would have taught them that the means of

Digitized by Google

sustenance might prove insufficient? Th.
or physical impulse will not explain these thi.
evident. That the reason of the insect will .
explain them is equally so, seeing that reason is a universal faculty applying not in one case, but in all cases of a similar kind, while in no other particular do these insects seem to possess it, at least with reference to prospective results. Experience, in fact, in no measure improves them. Although, therefore, the arrangement and purpose manifested in their processes seem necessarily referable to reason, it evidently cannot be their own reason. How the reason of another should operate on them, and through them, we cannot thoroughly explain, although the source of that reason, and the power by which it is applied, may be made perfectly manifest. This, however, constitutes no part of our present subject, and we have merely introduced these remarks as to the nature of animal instinct here, in order to make it understood, that it is quite a different thing from that which we have called human instinct, and with which it is sometimes most erroneously confused. Human instincts are either merely imperfect manifestations of reason, or else are purely physical operations originating a sense of uneasiness or pleasure in the organic being, and thus generating intelligent desires for their removal or continuance respectively—the precise means through which this may be done being determinable by experience.

Digitized by Google

These observations, as to what may be called the interior senses, will open a way for the consideration of our external sensations, through which we acquire a knowledge of the world without, as a subject which has been supposed to involve insuperable difficulties, and with respect to which the various forms of attempted analysis have assuredly been most unsatisfactory during the whole history of intellectual philosophy. The chief of these difficulties—which regards the mode in which we become assured of external existence, though previously known and felt—was first brought out in its fulness by Berkeley, in his theory of vision, and other works, wherein he proves, that, under the assumption then more or less definitely admitted, there was no good ground for believing in an external world at all. That assumption implied that ideas were something that came to the mind, distinct from the states of mind themselves, and that consequently our ideas of external existence were some *tertium quid* through which external existence is cognisable by the mind, and through which alone, therefore, external existence could become known to it. Under such an assumption it is clear that the mind never could get beyond the ideas of which it is alone supposed to be conscious, so as to connect them with an external world, and could never, therefore, logically get at an external world at all. This is an obvious demonstration, which, under the assumption there is no possibility of either denying or evading. Of course, Hume

Digitized by Google

consequently adopted it, and extended the application of the argument to internal as well as external existence; for, if we have only *ideas* of internal existence—if, in other words, mind is only known to us by the intervention of something else, whatever that something may be—it is clear that we cannot know mind itself, and, consequently, nothing absolute, *even as to its existence,* can be predicated of it. This came to be ideas knowing themselves—there was nothing else for it. The system was, in truth, the most perfect scepticism, and, as such, was contested by two eminent writers about the same time, in very different quarters of the world. Kant, in Germany, in endeavouring to subvert its conclusion, unwarily adopted its principles in even a still more objectionable form, and thus rendered his own converse conclusion a positive contradiction in terms—for Hume's argument, as we have seen, admitting his principles, is manifestly incontrovertible. Accordingly, the chief disciples of the German philosopher have logically followed forth the principles of their master, only repudiating his conclusion, and thus necessarily brought us back to the very scepticism from which he desired to relieve us. Reid, in Scotland, on the other hand, desired *to repudiate the principles* of Berkeley and Hume, and, in attempting to shew how this was to be done, he divided the process under which we become acquainted with external existence into two parts, which he called, respectively, sensation and percep-

Digitized by Google

tion. "Sensation," he says, "is a name given by "philosophers to an act of mind, which may be dis- "tinguished from all others by this, that it hath no "object distinct from the act itself;"[a] and, to illustrate this, he goes on to say—"Pain of every kind "is an uneasy sensation: when I am pained, I can- "not say that the pain I feel is one thing, and "that my feeling it is another thing."[b] Now, whether this be true or not, the assumption might, at all events, have led Dr. Reid to the important conclusion that he was conscious of the mind feeling, as well as the pain felt—a conclusion which would have at once relieved him from many embarrassments. But his illustration is utterly useless for the object which he has in view; for, although the pain and the feeling of pain were not distinguishable, the pain and the desire to be relieved from it, which is its real object, not only can readily be distinguished, but, in so far, must be logically distinguished, if we are at all to understand the phenomenon. In truth, the very idea of pleasure or pain being felt without involving an object, seems *ex facie* absurd, since pleasure, which did not, in an intelligent being, imply a desire for its continuance, and pain, a desire for its removal, as their objects would, in the case of such a being, neither be the one nor the other, in the sense in which we understand the terms. Yet, though the illustration given by Dr. Reid be thus

[a] Intellectual powers—Essay 6th, ch. 1—Sec. 12. [b] Do. do.

Digitized by Google

unfounded and inapplicable, there is no doubt that ordinary sensations—neither involving pleasure nor pain, if there be any such—could have no objects; but this is, under the same circumstances, equally true of many other states of mind. A recollection, for example, neither implying pleasure nor pain, if this were possible, could have no object. A conclusion in an argument, in the same way, considered absolutely, could have no object. The same thing holds true in any number of cases; but, though it be thus manifest that Dr. Reid's test for the discrimination of sensation from other acts of mind be erroneous, yet we can easily enough understand that his purpose is to represent sensation as a mental state, which originates, indeed, in the action of some external quality on our senses, but is viewed as apart from its origin, and regarded merely as a mental feeling. According to him, therefore, that portion of the process which realises the mental state, and which he calls sensation, neither recognises nor implies any external cause, which he supposes to be done by another mental act which he calls perception. "In a word," he says, "perception is most properly ap-"plied to the evidence which we have of external "objects of our senses."[a] And again, after repeating what he means by sensation, he proceeds—"Perception has always an external object, and "the object of my perception in the case supposed,

[a] Intellectual powers—Essay 1st, ch. 1, sec. 6.

Digitized by Google

"is that quality in the rose which I discover by "the sense of smell. Observing that the agreeable "sensation is raised when the rose is near, and "ceases when it is removed, I am led by my nature "to conclude some quality to be in the rose which "is the cause of this sensation. This quality in "the rose is the object perceived; and that act of "my mind, by which I have the conviction and be- "lief of this quality, is what, in this case, I call "perception."[a] This distinction betwixt sensation and perception is regarded by Dr. Reid himself, and most of his followers, as one of his most important discoveries. "It was chiefly in consequence "of the sceptical conclusions which Bishop Berke- "ley and Mr. Hume had deduced from the ancient "theories of perception," says Mr. D. Stewart, "that Dr. Reid was led to call them in question: "and he appears to me to have shewn, in the most "satisfactory manner, not only that they are per- "fectly hypothetical, but that the suppositions they "involve are absurd and impossible. His reason- "ings, on this part of our constitution, undoubtedly "form the most important accession which the "philosophy of the human mind has received since "the time of Mr. Locke."[b] Yet, in point of fact, so far are these reasonings from effecting their intended purpose, that, supposing them to be all conceded, they do not really meet the sceptical

[a] Intellectual powers—Essay 2d, ch. 16.

[b] Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind, ch. 1st. sec. 3.

Digitized by Google

argument at all, since it is quite a mistake to suppose that that argument is necessarily dependent on the peculiar theory of ideas which Berkeley and Hume assumed as universally recognised in their own age, it being equally valid under any theory which recognises mediate or representative knowledge of external existence, one form of which theory was indisputably held by Reid himself, as is manifest from the tenor of his whole writings, and is, indeed, formally avowed in the following passage, where he says—"It is likewise a law of our nature "that we perceive not external objects, unless cer- "tain impressions be made by the object upon the "organ, and by means of the organ upon the nerves "and brain; but of the nature of these impressions "we are perfectly ignorant, and, though they are "conjoined with perception by the will of our "Maker, YET IT DOES NOT APPEAR THAT THEY HAVE "ANY NECESSARY CONNECTION WITH IT IN THEIR OWN "NATURE, FAR LESS THAT THEY CAN BE THE PROPER "EFFICIENT CAUSE OF IT. We perceive, because "God has given us the power of perceiving, and "NOT BECAUSE WE HAVE IMPRESSIONS FROM OBJECTS. "We perceive nothing without these impressions, "because our Maker has limited and circumscribed "our powers of perception by such laws of nature "as to his wisdom seemed meet, and such as suited "our rank in his creation."[a] Sensation and perception, and perception and the impressions made

[a] Intellectual powers—Essay 2d, ch. 4.

Digitized by Google

by objects upon the organs, being thus separated so as to have no necessary connection with one another, but being conjoined merely by intuitive, innate, or *a priori* cognitions implanted in us by "the will of our Creator," it follows as a matter of demonstration, that these cognitions, and not external existence, is all that can be really known to us. The knowledge is a representative and mediate knowledge, so that the sceptical argument applies to it in full force, and the theory would, therefore, have suited Berkeley and Hume just as well as that which they adopted, involving as it does the only point on which the validity of their reasoning depends; for, if instead of knowing external objects themselves—as every one believes that he does, and as even Reid admits elsewhere that we do—it be conceded that this belief is not true, how are we to have any dependence on any other belief, however universal or irresistible it may be? Berkeley and Hume never maintained that men practically had no reason to believe in an external world, whether that belief is to be referred to intuition or any other cause; on the contrary, they assumed the fact as true, under the universal convictions of mankind, and admitted it in thus far to be true—they only denied to such belief any logical validity—they maintained it to be an error, however universal and irresistable—and thence Hume, at all events, argued, and logically argued, that the very inconsistency betwixt the irresistible belief, and the

Digitized by Google

rational conclusion was the surest proof in favour of scepticism, seeing that it necessarily called into question the veracity of God. And so far is Reid from answering this—nay, so far is he even from understanding it—that he actually attributes to the direct will of God a belief which that same God, according to his own admission, deceives us into the irresistible conviction of being our own and immediate; thus, in so far as we can see, actually sanctioning, in the strongest terms, Hume's conclusion, without actually drawing it,—nay, in truth, Reid's theory is more absurd and untenable than Hume's, since, if the "impressions made by external objects" have nothing to do with our "perceptions," then, from whence do these "perceptions" come? And, if again these "perceptions" have nothing necessarily to do with our "sensations," then, once again, from whence do these "sensations" come? The sensations, it is clear, must be merely intuitive feelings too—not acts of consciousness, be it observed, but strictly cognitions *a priori*, purely mental and arbitrary states of mind, which start up when certain external objects, of which we know nothing, are placed in certain circumstances, of which we know nothing, but having no "necessary connec-"tion," nor, indeed, any connection at all with such objects, the concurrence of the two together being merely a manifestation of "the will of our Maker." If it were not for this arbitrary appointment of God, who "has thus limited and circumscribed our

Digitized by Google

"powers of perception," there seems no reason, according to Dr. Reid, in the nature of the case, why we might not perceive without any sensation, or have sensations when there was nothing to perceive. Hence the absurdities which we find in a passage previously quoted, where he says—"Observing that "the agreeable sensation is raised when the rose is "near, and ceases when it is removed, I am led "by my nature to conclude some quality to be in "the rose which is the cause of this sensation. This "quality in the rose is the object perceived."[a] Now, if he had said—"the quality out of the rose" is "the object perceived," it would have been a proposition sufficiently erroneous, under the sense which he attaches to the word quality; but yet it would have been in so far an approximation to the truth, since it is assuredly nothing "*in* the rose" that we sense by smell, but something that comes "*out*" of it, and acts directly on the olfactory nerves. But farther, it is evident that in this passage he indicates the same thing, both as cause and object, or, in other words, as cause and consequence. He evidently regards the quality as the cause of the sensation and the object of the perception; but, if it be the cause of the sensation, surely it must have acted on the mind, or else we have a cause which does not operate upon the subject in connection with which it produces the effect, and, if it has acted on the mind, then it must have been felt, or,

[a] Intellectual powers—Essay 2d, ch. 16.

Digitized by Google

in other words, we must have been conscious of it. This, however, having been the case, it must necessarily have been perceived, for the process necessarily makes feeling and perception the same thing, or, at all events, involved in one another. Hence, therefore, it must have been the cause, and not the object of perception, unless, indeed, we suppose perception to have no cause, but to be an *a priori* or rather a miraculous cognition indicating a certain particular object, having itself no connection with mind whatever—under which supposition every thing falls into utter confusion, and all human history is reduced to a series of supernatural phenomena in the realisation of a system which ends in substantive pantheism. We shall subsequently find that something like this theory, extraordinary as it may appear, is actually proposed by Dr. Reid, in explanation of another and very important mental process. But, farther, when Dr. Reid says—"Ob- "serving that the agreeable sensation is raised "when the rose is near, and ceases when it is re- "moved, I am led, &c.," he forgets, that, if there be no "necessary connection" betwixt "the percep- "tion" and the "external impression on the "organs," it is impossible that he can, in any case, discover whether the rose be near or far off? He does not perceive the rose in reality, be it observed; for, between the "impression on the organs" and the "perception," there is no "necessary connec- "tion." It is a purely arbitrary connection, resulting

Digitized by Google

from the direct act of the Creator; in other words, the connection of the two is not a "necessary," but an "arbitrary" belief. He only knows, therefore, that some external thing causes the sensation, so that it seems impossible to connect the sensation with any *special* object, there being, indeed, to us, no special object, nor objects of any kind—as we shall presently shew more particularly—under which we can be enabled either to distinguish a rose from anything else, or its nearness from its distance. Our determination of distance we know to be a result of experience; but, under this theory, experience is impossible, unless we hold that a direct act of God's power intervenes miraculously in each case, to connect sensations with their special objects. But, besides that this would imply, in its ultimate results, the worst of all scepticism, as matter of fact, the reference which we make of our sensations to external objects is frequently wrong. We refer them to the wrong objects, so that—assuming the possibility of an intuition, or direct supernatural cognition, which would teach us the precise object to which each sensation applied—it is clear, that it would be an intuition which could not be confided in, and a super-human cognition which FREQUENTLY DECEIVES US. But, to sum up the almost unlimited extent of absurdity and inconsistency to which this theory necessarily leads, it is obvious that it would imply our reference of our sensations to external objects, not one of which, by the very nature of the theory

Digitized by Google

itself, could we see, hear, touch, taste, or smell—since, if we could thus identify any one of them, we would, in the very act, identify sensation and perception also. If we saw, or heard, or touched the thing itself, and were conscious of the operation, then there could be no use, and no possibility of a representative intuition or supernatural cognition, or any *tertium quid* whatever, in order to recognise it. The sensation and perception would become one in the act of consciousness, and the act would, consequently, be direct and immediate. Any species of intuition or cognition, apart from consciousness, might, indeed, give us a perfect conception of an object *a priori*, but could not, possibly, make known to us the object itself in itself. It follows, consequently, under this theory, that we cannot become acquainted with any external object, or with the actual existence of an external world at all. The belief of our actually perceiving external objects must, therefore, be a perfect delusion. Unless we be conscious of them as existence, we cannot, it is evident, by possibility perceive them. All other intuitions or cognitions are, for this purpose, indisputably unavailing. The theory, consequently, resolves itself into this, that perception identifies existences, which we do not perceive, with sensations which have no "necessary "connection" with them, and discriminates existences from one another, of none of which we are conscious, and with which, in themselves, we are

Digitized by Google

altogether unacquainted. Such being the demonstrative result of his fundamental theory of perception, we need hardly wonder that Reid's philosophy has failed to explain the processes of the human mind, and has nailed down the science to all his followers, as a series of dogmatic assumptions for which there is no proof, and a series of dogmatic intuitions which preclude all attempts at farther analysis of the phenomena. It is, indeed, quite true—and this must be carefully observed, or Dr. Reid's theory can never be understood at all—that he sometimes speaks of our belief in external existence as immediate; but, in such cases, he does not mean that we are *conscious* of external existence—which, as we have already seen, is in direct opposition to his theory, and is, indeed, an assumption which he never seems even to have contemplated—but that we have an intuitive belief in it, and not a belief in any way depending ON REASON,—nay, he may sometimes even appear to indicate that, in the intuition, by some unaccountable process, we actually perceive the object; but this is merely an inconsistency into which the very error of his theory irresistibly, though unconsciously, forces him. It implies, indeed, a proposition positively contradictory and impossible; for, though it is perfectly possible that an intuition or cognition might give us an accurate conception of an external object, yet it is impossible that such conception could be a perception of the actual existing object in itself, EXCEPT

Digitized by Google

WE WERE CONSCIOUS OF IT IN THE SENSATION, since, by the very supposition, it is known only, and not felt. But he falls into the inconsistency—as has been said, from being forced, in opposition to his theory, into an indirect recognition of the practical truth—that we know external existence directly by consciousness, and not through any intuitive or representative medium; and consequently it would follow, were this recognition realised in its legitimate conclusion, that sensation and perception are not two processes, but that in the sensation we feel the external object itself, and are conscious of it, apart from the intervention of any medium whatever.

Dr. Brown—professedly, at all events—repudiated Reid's theory of a double process, in attaining our knowledge of external existence. He, in the first instance, refers our belief in external existence to what he terms "the suggesting or associating "principle,"[a] by which, in so far as in this case it has any meaning, we must suppose that he means reason. In so far, therefore, no doubt he has got quit of Reid's error, but it is by falling into errors, equally untenable, of his own. In truth, this reference of the origin of our belief in an external world to "suggestion" seems perfectly absurd, as evading altogether the very point of difficulty, and thus giving us no explanation of the matter at all. He says—"when the fragrance of a rose, therefore,

[a] Brown's Lectures—Lecture xxv.

Digitized by Google

"has been frequently accompanied with the sensa-
"tions of vision that arise when the rose is before
"us, or with the muscular and tactual sensations
"that arise on handling it, the mere fragrance of
"itself will afterwards suggest those sensations, and
"this suggestion is all which, in the case of smell
"instanced by Dr. Reid, is termed the perception
"as distinguished from the sensation."[a] But this, it is manifest, takes the whole question for granted. We instantly ask, from whence we got the knowledge of that "fragrance of the rose" which "has been frequently accompanied with the sensations of vision?" According to this theory, in order to realise external existence, we must know certain perceptions coming from without, by a reference to other perceptions coming from the same thing, and PREVIOUSLY KNOWN; but supposing the theory possible in other respects, which it is not, it gives us not the least notion of the real point which we desire to know, viz.:—how we got at the perceptions "previously known." From whence had we the sensations of vision, or the muscular and tactual sensations that he speaks of? Unless some one of these, at all events, can be referred to a different principle, so as to constitute a foundation for discovering the rest, it is clear that his explanation is a complete circle, and consequently, that as he explains our reference of the odour of a rose to a rose, by appealing to our

[a] Brown's Lectures—Lecture XXV.

Digitized by Google

previous knowledge of the rose by vision, so he must explain our reference of the colour of a rose to a rose, by appealing to our previous knowledge of the rose, from smell. Yet, so far is he from laying such a foundation that, on the contrary, he formally maintains our reference of all sensations to external objects, as explicable on the same principle. "It is only in a single class of sensations, "therefore," he says—"that which Reid ascribes to "touch—that perception which he regards as a "peculiar faculty, extending to all our sensations, "can be said to have any *primary* operation, even "though we should agree with him in supposing "that our belief of extended resistance is not re- "ducible, by analysis, to any more general princi- "ples. If, however, my analysis of the complex "notion of matter be just, *perception, in its relation "to our original sensations of touch, as much as in its "relation to the immediate feelings which we derive "from smell, taste, light, and hearing, is only one of "the many operations of the suggesting or associating "principle.*"[a] Whether, however, Dr. Brown more or less consciously felt, that this circulating proof was somewhat of a weak ground on which to rest our belief of an external world, or from whatever cause, certain it is, that without, in the first instance at all events, admitting a double process, he subsequently falls back, after all, for an explanation of the phenomenon, as a single process, on Reid's

[a] Brown's Lectures—Lecture xxv.

Digitized by Google

ground of an *a priori* cognition, which he had previously altogether repudiated, or, in other words, he explains it by referring it to the arbitrary will of God. "That the connection of the feeling of "extension," he says, "with a corporeal substance "really existing without, depends on the *arbitrary* "arrangement made by the Diety; and *that all of* "*which we are conscious might, therefore, have ex-* "*isted, as at present, though no external cause had* "*been*—Dr. Reid, who ascribes to an intuitive "principle our belief of an external universe, virtu- "ally allows; and this very admission surely im- "plies that the notion DOES NOT DIRECTLY AND "NECESSARILY INVOLVE THE EXISTENCE OF ANY PARTI- "CULAR CAUSE, whatever it may be in itself, by which "the Deity has thought proper to produce the "corresponding feeling of our mind."[a] From which it follows, that Dr. Brown holds our belief in external existence to be merely an intuitive conviction or super-human cognition, having no real and absolute connection with the external world, but by some unaccountable process, deluding us into an assurance that we really perceive external objects and are conscious of them—though how a mental intuition, or even super-human cognition, could direct us to a special external object—and Dr. Brown must assume this, since he is no sceptic in the usual sense of the word—or how it could assure us of that which we suppose we perceive, when, in

[a] Brown's Lectures—Lecture xxvi.

Digitized by Google

reality, we do not perceive it—or how this should happen in the first process of perception and not in all subsequent processes, for it seems to be limited by him in this way, under his theory of suggestion—or how such a series of delusions and deceptions can be reconciled with an assumption of the veracity of our irresistible beliefs and the truth of God—he not only does not inform us, but it is evident that no such information could be given. Between Brown's theory, thus supplemented, and Reid's, there is, therefore, no substantive difference; but, in so far, Dr. Brown does more than his predecessor, in venturing to tell the reason under which this strange theory has been adopted, for he says —"In the series of states in which the mind has "existed from the first moment of our life to the "present hour, the feelings of extension, resistance, "joy, sorrow, fragrance, colour, hope, fear, heat, "cold, admiration, resentment, have often had "place; and some of these feelings it has been "impossible for us not to ascribe to a direct ex- "ternal cause; but there have *not* been in the "mental series—*which is all of which we can be con-* "*scious*—both that feeling of the mind, which we "term the perception of extension, and also body "itself, as the cause of this feeling; *for body,* "*as an actual substance, cannot be a part of the* "*consciousness of the mind which is a different sub-* "*stance.* It is sufficient for us to believe that there "are external causes of this feeling of the mind,

Digitized by Google

"permanent and independent of it, which produce, "in regular series, all those phenomena that are "found by us in the physical events of the universe, "and with the continuance of which, therefore, our "perceptions also will continue. We cannot truly "suppose more *without conceiving our very notion* "*of extension, a mental state, to be itself a body ex-* "*tended, which we have as little reason to suppose* "*as that our sensation of fragrance, another mental* "*state, is itself a fragrant body.*"[a] His notion, therefore, is, that to suppose us conscious of external existence, would be to suppose "body as an "actual substance, a part of the consciousness of "the mind," and "our notion of extension, a men- "tal state, to be itself a body extended." That such a theory had long existed in the philosophical world, and that Brown had, therefore, the sanction of all ages to this assumption, is perfectly true, though how it took its rise, or upon what ground it is maintained, it seems perfectly impossible to discover. Assuredly, it has no appearance even of foundation in fact. Consciousness, meaning realised consciousness, is simply a species of feeling or knowledge, so that if the proposition have any sense at all, it must be that that which we feel or know becomes itself absolutely a portion of the mental feeling or faculty which feels or knows it. Now, setting aside for a moment, the utter groundlessness of such a notion, we should like to

[a] Brown's Lectures—Lecture xxvi

Digitized by Google

ask those who repudiate scepticism, and yet maintain such a theory, what distinction, in respect to this matter, they draw betwixt consciousness and intuition? If conscious knowledge imply that the external existence of which we are conscious is a part of consciousness, why should not intuitive knowledge imply that the external existence which we intuite is a part of the intuition? In truth, the assumption is not only groundless, but absurd. Consciousness does not take the objects of which we are conscious into itself, so as to make such objects part of itself, or, in their essence, parts of a mental state, but realises them only as objects of knowledge WITHOUT ITSELF. The mind does not know the substantive composition of the external object even, but only the POWER OF that composition, whatever it may be in its action upon itself. Consciousness is not, therefore, a receptacle—as Kant has supposed, and as is, in some sense, adopted in this theory—which receives external things of any kind into itself, but a capacity or competency to know the POWER of that which is external in relation to itself. Hence, when Dr. Brown says, that "sensation "may exist without reference to an external cause, "in the same manner as we may look at a picture "without thinking of the painter,"[a]—a conclusion which evidently follows from his premises—it is manifest that he not only confuses SENSATION with THE RECOLLECTION OF A SENSATION, but he seems so

[a] Brown's Lectures—Lecture xxv.

Digitized by Google

close on Reid's distinction betwixt sensation and perception, that there is hardly a difference in their views discoverable. He, indeed, in words, avoids the double intuition of Reid, but it is by giving to his own intuition a sort of double operation. He supposes that it gives us a sensation on the one hand, and, on the other, directs us, when we attend to it, to the external existence which is, according to him, the OCCASION, but NOT the CAUSE, of the existence of such sensation. We need hardly say that this theory, under whatever aspect it be regarded, leads as directly and as indisputably to scepticism as Reid's, in so far as it thus introduces an intuition distinct from consciousness, and that of a very complicated character, betwixt the object and the sensation—since, if there really be such an intuition, then it is manifest and indisputable that we cannot know those external objects which our natures irresistibly compel us to believe that we do know, but only the intuition which is the medium that is assumed as existing between them, or rather as giving to the mind an indirect assurance that some external object corresponding to the sensation exists.

Sir W. Hamilton was the first who hinted the doctrine of attributing our belief in external existence to consciousness. The process by which he arrived at this conclusion was somewhat singular. Brown had maintained that Dr. Reid "assumed "the existence of an external world beyond the

Digitized by Google

"sphere of consciousness, exclusively on the ground "of our irresistible belief in its unknown reality." In this he was undoubtedly right—for Reid has distinctly told us that our perceptions inform us of external existence, not "from any necessary con- "nection subsisting between them, *i.e.*, between "the external bodies and the perception, but merely "from the arrangement which the Deity in his "wisdom has chosen to make of their mutual phe- "nomena."[a] And, indeed, his theory of the double process of sensation and perception precludes even the possibility under that theory of our being conscious of external existence. Hamilton, however, overlooking this in the vehemence of his argument, and mistaking, as we have already seen, the sense in which Reid uses the word "imme- "diate," affirms, in opposition to Dr. Brown, that Reid, in some way or other—which he does not, and, indeed, could not have explained under the sensation and perception process—had held the doctrine of immediate or actual consciousness of external existence. It is no great wonder, therefore, that under such circumstances he had no very clear idea either of Reid's meaning, or of the mode under which his own explanation of it could be realised; accordingly he manifests this in the most striking manner, in supposing that we are only conscious of the QUALITIES of external existence, as of something, whatever it be, distinct from external existence it-

[a] Brown's Lectures—Lecture XXV.

Digitized by Google

self. That we must be conscious of external existence somehow or other, and that there can be no representation or medium betwixt us and it, or else that it never can be known at all, Hamilton has made perfectly clear, so as thoroughly to satisfy every one who thinks on the subject, which, indeed, only requires to be definitely stated in order to carry full conviction to every one possessed of ordinary intelligence, since we feel that the explanation harmonises with our irresistible feelings, and consequently we cannot, even if we were willing, withhold our practical assent from it. But, in saying that qualities as *contra-distinguished* from external existence itself, are the objects of our consciousness, he not only falls into error, but into the very same error from which he appeared to have escaped, and into the very same absurdity which he had exposed. Distracted by a variety of verbal distinctions—such as "absolute and total, relative "and partial, vicarious and representative, presen- "tative and intuitive," he has confused betwixt the possibility of our knowing the composition, or, if we may so speak, the entity of essence, and the possibility of our knowing essence itself as a something existing in relation to our minds. To understand clearly how this should have been the case, we must remember, that the ancient philosophers, as was formerly mentioned, were mainly desirous of discovering the absolute nature, composition, or entity of essences. They wanted to understand

Digitized by Google

how things come to be what they are. The same notion, as was also observed, continued during the middle ages, and it was only when physical science began to assume something like form and shape, that the absurdity of such attempts became recognised. In developing this conclusion, however, as usual on such occasions, when the actual process was very imperfectly understood, language of an extremely inaccurate and vague character was employed in regard to it. It came to be said, that we could only know qualities and not essences, and this seems even to have been thought by many to be a proposition implying a very great and fundamental truth, and, indeed, such is the general impression up to the present day; but yet, so far is it from being true, that, on the contrary, it is a proposition absolutely impossible and contradictory, and, as assumed, has seriously retarded the progress of philosophical science. For, however startling it may, at first sight, appear, we maintain as indisputable, that essence and its qualities are the same thing, viewed under different aspects, and in relation to different circumstances; in other words, we speak of essences, when we speak of existences absolutely; we call those same essences—or at least what we know of them—qualities when we speak of the forms under which we know them, and these qualities, again, we call powers, when we speak of them in relation to their action on other things. When, for example, we speak of matter absolutely, we call

Digitized by Google

it an essence; but, when we speak of THAT SAME MATTER as known to us, we say that it has the quality of hardness; and, when we farther speak of it in its capacity of acting on our organism, we say that it has the power of affecting us with the sensation of hardness. This quality or power of hardness, however, is evidently nothing distinct from matter, but merely a name expressive of certain relations which matter has to us as sentient beings. It is matter itself, in fact, in relation to one of our senses, or to some other existence. While, therefore, we do not and cannot, by touch, know the absolute nature, or composition, or entity of matter, we do assuredly know by it the essence of matter, *in so far as matter stands in a certain relation to our sentient being.* But, it must be carefully observed—for here the imperfection of language renders us specially liable to error—that the knowledge which we thus have of essence, though undoubtedly the knowledge of a relation betwixt matter and our minds, is not, therefore, a RELATIVE knowledge. These two propositions, though perpetually confused together by philosophers, and the source of much of their misconception on the subject, are utterly different, and imply totally different things. To have a knowledge of the relation of one thing to another, is to have an absolute knowledge of it, so far as it goes. It is to know, absolutely, how the two stand connected with each other, and how they operate on each other. To have a relative

Digitized by Google

knowledge of a thing, again, if the expression have any meaning, is to know it by a representative or symbol; in other words, it is not to know the thing absolutely and directly, but, somehow or other, indirectly. In this way, though our knowledge of hardness be the knowledge of matter in relation to our minds, it is not a relative knowledge attained by the intervention of something called a quality—such a supposition would just be to fall back again on the old *tertium quid*, for, in such a case, assuming that we could be assured of the quality, this is evidently all that we could know. There could be no possible means of connecting the QUALITY with the ESSENCE. In fact, this just converts qualities into the images which were assumed by Hume and his predecessors, coming from bodies to the human mind, as the medium of communication between them—so that, under such a theory, again, we must end in scepticism.

But it may be said, that, although this identification of essence with quality may, indeed, be obvious enough in the case of hardness, yet it does not follow that the same thing can be proved with respect to the other senses. Here, indeed, undoubtedly, was the origin of the confusion, and yet we cannot help thinking, that under the views that we have now been developing, the matter is exceedingly clear. In every instance it will be found that it is of essence IN quality, and not of some quality coming betwixt us and essence, that we are con-

Digitized by Google

scious. When, for example, we taste, it is surely the food which we taste itself. It will not be maintained that it is something which we call a quality that we taste, distinct and different from the food. Taste, a flavour, is, indeed, merely the action of *certain particles of the food itself* on our palates, and is effected by touch; and, although the essence thus affecting the palate, acts upon different nerves, and, therefore, thus far, with a different result, yet it could act, no doubt, on the ordinary organ of touch, in the ordinary way, supposing it brought to bear thereon with sufficient force. In the same way, when we hear, for example, the sound of a bell, it is not, strictly speaking, the object itself, *i.e.*, the bell, which we hear, but the strokes of the air set in motion by it, and acting by touch on the drum of the ear, so as to affect certain other nerves suitable for producing the sensation which we call sound. In this case, the action of the external matter on our ordinary organ of touch is perfectly apparent, and it would, no doubt, be felt and appreciated as touch, were the force a little greater, or, at all events, did it affect a portion of our bodies more sensible to touch. In smell, again, it is not a quality as distinguished from essential matter that we smell, but certain particles of matter itself coming from an oderiferous substance, and affecting by touch our olfactory nerves. It is not, in other words, the distant body that we smell, but the particles thrown off by it which actually come into contact with the olfactory

Digitized by Google

nerves, and in them affect the mind. Lastly, in sight, in like manner, it is not the distant object that we really see, but the rays of light which it gives forth, or which are reflected from it. This is the essential matter which directly acts upon the optic nerve and produces vision. There is no quality as a *tertium quid* betwixt the material essence of light and the optic nerve. It is the matter itself that acts—it is the essence which affects us, and which we know in its touching and affecting the nerve suitable for the production of the result. In all these instances, in fact, it is a species of touch which gives us our sensations, though the effect of such touch be modified by the character of the various nerves on which it operates; and, though the various kinds of matter may, for aught we can tell, in so far, be different kinds of physical essence, and thence, in either case, necessarily originating different consequences. The introduction of qualities, as different from the essences of which they are qualities, involves, therefore, it is obvious, just as certainly a sceptical conclusion as the introduction of images, or any other *tertium quid*, betwixt the external object and the mind, or rather is that very identical theory in different words and under a different form. Hence it is clearly, in each case, the essence of matter that we know, and not something coming between it and our minds, and which, directly acting upon our nervous system by touch, makes us conscious of itself absolutely in its rela-

Digitized by Google

tion to our organic being as a compound of body and mind; for it is evident, that somehow or other the mind is present in the whole nervous system, feeling and operating through it. Now, all this, which seems so obvious as to be beyond dispute, Sir W. Hamilton completely misconceives. He—as well, indeed, as all philosophers, so far as we know, that preceded him—imagines qualities to be something quite distinct from the essences of which they are qualities, instead of regarding them as mere modes in which such essences act on our different nerves, and thus introduces a medium or *tertium quid* into the process of sensation, which practically leaves the difficulties that had previously been found to encompass the subject very much in the state in which they were before. This is manifest from his writings generally, in so far as they bear upon the question; but nowhere, perhaps, is his theory more explicitly enunciated than in a note which he appends to Reid's chapter on "matter and space," in his edition of the works of that philosopher. Reid had said—"From this it is evident that our "notion of body or matter, as DISTINGUISHED FROM "ITS QUALITIES, is a relative notion, and, I am "afraid, it must always be obscure, until men have "other faculties." To this passage, Sir W. attaches the following note—"That is, our notion "of absolute body is relative. This is incorrectly "expressed. Our knowledge of qualities or phenomena is necessarily relative, for these exist only as

Digitized by Google

"they exist in relation to our faculties. The know-
"ledge, or even the conception of a substance in it-
"self, and apart from any qualities in relation to, and
"therefore cognisable or conceivable by, our minds
"involves a contradiction—of such we can form only
"a negative notion, *i.e.*, we can merely conceive it
"as inconceivable. But to call this negative notion
"a relative notion, is wrong; 1st, BECAUSE ALL OUR
"(POSITIVE) NOTIONS ARE RELATIVE, and 2nd, be-
"cause this is itself a negative notion, *i.e.*, no notion
"at all, simply because there is no relation."[a] We have here, not merely a misconception of qualities, which are spoken of as phenomena, and as something distinct from the substance of which they are qualities—of which we are told that we can have only "a negative notion, *i.e.*, no notion at all"—but we have a most striking manifestation of the usual confusion betwixt "relative knowledge" and "knowledge in relation to our minds," as well as of the absurd results which such a confusion necessarily generates; for, while he tells us that the proposition—"our notion of absolute body is re-
"lative"—is an incorrect expression, he concludes the paragraph by telling us that "all our (positive)
"notions are relative," which is identically the same thing, with the synonymous word "positive," substituted for "absolute"—and, in telling us that all we can know of substance is its "qualities," and that all our knowledge of qualities is "relative,"

[a] Dr. Reid on the intellectual powers, Essay 2d, ch. 19—Hamilton's Edition.

Digitized by Google

he just tells us that we cannot know substance at all, even to the extent of knowing its existence, and that we can have no absolute knowledge of any kind whatever—the only objects of our knowledge being "necessarily relative." This theory of Sir W. Hamilton's, it is, therefore, manifest, is substantively Hegel's, for, "if we can know, if we "can conceive only, what is relative," then, assuredly to us, there can be nothing but relations either known or conceived, without the possibility of either knowing or conceiving anything real or absolute of which they are relations. The error evidently originates primarily in the assumption that, somehow or other, we know qualities as a *tertium quid*, as a medium of communication betwixt external existence and our minds; for, as these qualities can be symbols only, as not being the things themselves which our senses cognise; and farther, as these qualities are known by a mind of which also our knowledge is only relative, it follows manifestly enough, that a knowledge of external existence can only be attained by a species of double relation, though what it is and what does attain it, seeing that the very mind itself is only relatively known, or what it is which thus relatively knows, is obviously inexplicable and inconceivable. It is precisely the same character of error as that previously mentioned, under which philosophers have been induced to regard the attributes, faculties, and feelings of mind as something different from the

Digitized by Google

mind itself—an error which we here find that Sir W. Hamilton fully adopts. In both cases, however, the assumption is not only untrue, but destructive of all truth, and it only requires the proposition to be enunciated, in order to carry conviction to the instinctive reason of all mankind. As the capacities, faculties, and feelings of mind, therefore, are not something different from mind, but mind itself exhibited under different aspects, so the capacities, powers, properties, or qualities, of matter are not something different from matter, but matter itself developed under different aspects, and exhibited in action on different classes of objects. The supposition of qualities, indeed, in any sense, however subtle, being something different from substance or matter, is just as we have indicated, the old doctrine of images coming from the external body to the mind, and representing it there, put into other words, so that we seem to have at length arrived at the very source of that theory, which, as perfected by Hegel, has ended in the supersession of everything real and absolute, and the substitution of mere relations, without, so far as we can discover, anything to be related, and this, it must be admitted, by a most logical process of reasoning.

The assumption of this metaphysic of substance called qualities, however, evidently itself originates in the confusion betwixt "relative knowledge," and "the knowledge of external existence in relation to

Digitized by Google

"a conscious subject"—things which, as we have seen, are totally different from each other. "Know-"ledge of existence in relation to, or by, a con-"scious subject is absolute or positive knowledge." "Relative," on the other hand, as offered to "abso-"lute" knowledge, can only mean indirect know-ledge of some kind or other—knowledge through a medium—knowledge by representation. Now it is obvious, that unless we have some means of know-ing the representation to be a representation, and of knowing what it is that it represents, such know-ledge is a delusion, and, except in so far as regards the mere representation, is no knowledge at all. If, for example, we see a word which, by other means, we know to represent a certain object, and if we knew that object before, the representative word immediately gives the idea which it repre-sents; but, if we see the same word in an unknown language, we know the representative word, indeed, as an object of vision, but it gives us no knowledge whatever of any idea, and it is the same, if we see a word even in a known language, but the word is new to us, so that we have no means of connecting it with the idea which it represents. In the very same way, if we were conscious of a quality as a representative, without the means of connecting it with the object which it represents, or, still more, if that object be unknown to us, as confessedly must be the case, if qualities be representative merely, we should, indeed, be conscious of the quality as

Digitized by Google

felt, supposing it possible that there could be a "we," unless we be conscious of our minds absolutely, but of the external object which it might represent, or whether it did represent any external object, we could know nothing, nor could any medium, whether of image, intuition, or quality, ever make it known to us. But, as has been said, "the knowledge of an existence in relation to, or "by the human mind, as a conscious subject," is quite a different thing. In this case, our knowledge is not indirect, mediate, representative, or relative, but direct, immediate, presentative, and absolute. It is quite true, that existence or essence, considered *per se*, is only known in relation to our minds, *i.e.*, in so far as it causes consciousness in our minds; but, in so far as it does this—*i.e.*, in so far as it acts or operates on our minds—it is known absolutely, and in itself. We are, in other words, conscious of it, as a something acting or operating on the mind, in and through our organic nature. In thus far, the very existence or essence itself is KNOWN to us, AS A PART OF OUR PERCEPTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS, just in the same way as any organic affection, such as hunger, is known to us as a part of our perceptive consciousness. When we press our hands upon the table, the ACTION of the substance of the table on our nervous system, manifestly, itself, becomes an essential portion of our organic state, just as much as bodily pain of any kind, originating with the body itself, is a part of the

Digitized by Google

organic state, and we are as certainly conscious of the one as of the other, and that, be it observed, not as of a quality in any way distinguishable from the table as an essence, but with the very essence itself, of the nature of the table, as in a peculiar way affecting our organic being. Of course it will be understood, that when we speak of the essential nature of an existence becoming a part of our consciousness, we do not mean of the capacity of consciousness, as if the existence itself became a part of the mind, but of objective consciousness, as the something KNOWN by the mind. In other words, we are conscious of the essential nature of the existence itself, AS PORTION OF A MENTAL STATE, or, rather, as portion of a state of our organic nature. In operating on the body, it, in the very same act, operates on the mind existing in the body—a doctrine, which, of course, assumes that the consciousness of the mind extends throughout the whole nervous system in some form or another, and that, consequently, every sensation is felt, with greater or less precision, according to the degree of the realisation of the union in the particular nerve or nerves, affected by it. This, indeed, we believe, is now the universal opinion, and is obviously and experimentally true. Were the operation of mind strictly limited to the brain, it would, of course, be impossible to tell whether pain or any other sensation were in the foot or the hand, or any where else. As matter of fact, we feel each sensation more or

Digitized by Google

less precisely in the nerve or nerves acted upon, and in these nerves consequently we must hold mind to exist in some form, and through them to operate and feel. Now, all this seems so plain and so conformable to the irresistible conclusions of our instinctive natures, that it is difficult to imagine how it could be disputed. Such a conclusion in physical science would be deemed satisfactory, nor, indeed, has physical science any other or different grounds on which its legitimate conclusions can be rested. And it is just to the same species of assurance, which is admitted as legitimate and alone legitimate in physical science, that we desire to bring our conclusions in respect of intellectual science; and it is certainly satisfactory to find that they not only thoroughly explain the phenomena, but at once supersede every form of scepticism, since, if we be actually and absolutely conscious of external essence, the existence to us at all events, of an external world, will admit of no farther dispute nor difference; while, on the contrary, if we are not conscious of external essence actually and absolutely, it is manifest now in the very form of the proposition, that we can have no means of knowing its existence at all, and that thus both the beliefs of man and the veracity of God must to us not only be impaired, but must logically be held unworthy of the slightest confidence. Of course, however, we do not object merely to the use of terms. We do not object to the expression,

Digitized by Google

"conscious of qualities," provided it merely mean that we are conscious of external essence in those forms under which it operates upon the human organism; but it must carefully be kept in view, that it is in such a case the essence as possessing certain qualities inhering, or rather the essence as standing in a certain relation to the human organism, and not any quality as in any way distinct from essence, that is understood by us.

This view of the nature of sensation is still farther illustrated by the distinction which has been taken betwixt the primary and secondary qualities of matter—a distinction which has been also misconceived by philosophers, in so far as they have confused the modes of the existence of matter with the qualities of matter, as well as misapprehended the real nature of the difference which they have assumed, in so far as regards the causes on which it depends. This will readily be understood by attending to their speculations on the subject.

Locke seems to have taken the existing theory, with respect to this distinction, very much as he found it. The primary qualities of matter he determines to be "solidity, extension, figure, motion "or rest, and number."[a] They are somewhat differently stated by Reid, as "extension, divisibility, "figure, motion, solidity, hardness, softness, and fluidity."[b] But it is at once obvious, that "exten-

[a] Human understanding—Book 2d, ch. 8, Sec. 9.
[b] Intellectual powers—Essay 2d, ch. 17.

Digitized by Google

"sion and figure" mean precisely the same thing, figure being merely a form of extension—and, in like manner, that "solidity, hardness, softness, and fluidity" are the same thing, inasmuch as "hard-"ness, softness, and fluidity" are merely different forms or degrees of "solidity." But these lists demonstrate specially the confusion which must have perplexed both of these eminent men with regard to the true nature of qualities, since it is farther obvious that "extension and divisibility, "and number and motion, or rest" are not qualities of bodies at all, but RELATIONS of body to space or time, or of the parts of bodies among one another, for they are not of the essence of body, though some of them may be essential to the existence of body—another distinction usually overlooked, though perfectly manifest when enunciated. The table before me, for instance, is not "extension," nor "divisibility," nor "motion," nor "rest," though, no doubt, it must exist in those states, but they are none of them, nor all of them in any measure or degree the substance or essence of the table, and therefore cannot be qualities of it. The notion, therefore, that "extension, divisibility, motion, or "rest," are qualities of body, evidently originates in ignorance of the only legitimate meaning of the word quality, and thence the more or less unconscious assumption, that qualities are, or may be, something distinct from the essences of which they are qualities. Nothing, however, can be more

Digitized by Google

manifest than that "extension or figure," and "mo-"tion or rest," are not qualities of bodies, but modes under which bodies exist in space. No doubt, of these modes we are conscious along with our consciousness of body. We know, because we feel, that the rays from a square pane of glass, for example, affect a square portion of the optic nerve, and that the oblong figure of a snuff-box affects an oblong portion of the nerves which press on it, but this precisely proves the proposition which we have enunciated, inasmuch as our very consciousness by which alone we know such modes, testifies to their modal character. In the same way, "divisibility "and number," which are phenomena in so far identical with each other, are not qualities of bodies, but relations of the parts of bodies amongst one another—numbers always giving a species of identity to the objects to which they are applied—as being in so far as the numbers apply to them, parts of one whole. No doubt, our reason gives us a knowledge of these relations along with our consciousness of body. It teaches us, from our knowledge of the nature of space and our experience of the constitution of matter, that bodies are divisible—it teaches, from our knowledge of space and time, and our comparison of different localities and moments, that numbers exist and may be multiplied beyond any limits that we can conceive; but this again precisely proves the proposition which we have enunciated, inasmuch as our very reason, by

Digitized by Google

which alone we can thoroughly know such relations, testifies to their relational character. The proposition, therefore, that "extension, divisibility, "number, motion, and rest," are not qualities of bodies, but either modes of their existence in space and time, or relations of their parts among or to one another, when fairly stated, seems neither to admit of doubt nor difference. Every one who understands the terms in which it is expressed must assent to it. Solidity, therefore, or the power of impelling and resisting impulse, is the only quality of those called primary that remains, and it is very evident, even on the slightest consideration, that this is no quality in any way distinct from the essence of matter itself, being only termed a quality, when, as an essence, it is spoken of as affecting our sense of touch, or in any other way operating as a solid substance in producing results conformable to its essential character. The solidity which thus operates, therefore, is the very body, the very essence itself. Hence, Reid is perfectly right when he says, "that our senses give us a direct "and a distinct notion of this primary quality, and "inform us what it is in itself." His instinctive feeling seems, for the moment, to have got the better of his theory, and, accordingly, we need not wonder at Sir W. Hamilton's note on the passage, when he says—"by the expression, *what they are* "*in themselves*, in reference to primary qualities, "Reid cannot mean that they are known to us

Digitized by Google

"absolutely in themselves, that is, out of relation "to our cognitive faculties, for he elsewhere ad- "mits that all our knowledge is relative."* According to Sir W. Hamilton's theory, the proposition was, indeed, absurd, but yet it is most certainly true, that "all our knowledge is *not* relative," else the conclusion is irresistible, that there neither can be a "we," nor any "knowledge at all." No doubt, our knowledge of the nature, composition, or entity of the external object affecting us is relative, and, therefore, as Sir W. Hamilton has elsewhere not merely said, but proved, is, strictly speaking, "no knowledge at all;" but our knowledge of that external object, in so far as it, as an essence, acts or operates by its inherent power on our combined mental and physical organisation, is not relative, but direct and absolute, and consequently, in thus far, we have a "direct and distinct notion" of it, and our sensation, therefore, "informs us "what it is in-itself," in respect of its capacity to produce in us a certain sensation. When, therefore, Sir W. Hamilton says, in continuation of his note—"Farther, if our senses give us a direct and "distinct notion of the primary qualities, and in- "form us what they are in themselves, these "qualities, as known, must resemble, or be identi- "cal with these qualities as existing," he enunciates an indisputable and important truth in the very act of ignoring it. For, Sir W. being entirely

* Reid on the intellectual powers—Essay 2d, ch. 17—Hamilton's Edition.

Digitized by Google

ignorant of the difference betwixt "relative" knowledge, and "knowledge of existence in its relation "to, or bearing on, our minds," and imagining quality to be something different from essence, naturally enough concluded, that "if our senses "give us a direct and distinct notion of the primary "qualities, and inform us what they are in themselves," then the *very entity* of those "qualities "as known, must resemble, or be identical with, "those qualities as existing;" but, as quality in the case supposed is, in fact, merely the power of an essence to operate upon the mind as part of our organic consciousness, and as, consequently, we do know that power in itself, in the direct consciousness of the mind, so, of course, such power, which is all that the word quality means, is necessarily, "as known," identical with itself "as existing." It is the very power of the essence, or the very quality of the essence which we know. It is not, therefore, as Sir W. Hamilton supposes, an external entity called a quality which is IN the mind, but the power of an external essence acting on our minds AS PART OF AN ORGANIC PHENOMENON that is known to the mind in its so acting. We know it as "it exists," because we are directly and absolutely conscious of it, not in its entity, but in its operating power.

But, whilst it is thus indisputable, under whatever aspect the subject be regarded, that we are conscious of external essence in touch, there seems

Digitized by Google

no good ground for believing, as Reid supposes, that we know it intuitively, or even through our consciousness, to be external to our *organic being*, and this probably explains much of the confusion which has perplexed the subject. We have no difficulty in distinguishing betwixt mind and the organic functions. No one ever believed that physical pain was a part of the mind, or even a purely mental state. We feel it in consciousness to be caused by something originating out of mind, and merely known to, and felt by mind, as an object operating upon it. We can thus at once distinguish betwixt mental pain, as in sorrow; and bodily pain, as in toothache, or from a wound. In the same way, no one ever mistook the cause of a sensation of any kind for a part of the mind or itself for a purely mental state. We feel it in consciousness, as in the former case, to be something originating out of mind, and its cause to be something known to, and felt by mind, as an object operating upon it. But it is an entirely different thing as regards our organic consciousness. If we feel pain in the finger, for example, it would be impossible to say *a priori*, *i.e.*, from consciousness, whether such pain proceeded from some physical disorganisation of the nerves of the finger, or from the prick of a pin, or some other external cause of a similar kind. Consciousness, indeed, could never prove to us the existence of a world external to our organic being even in a measure, and the reason is perfectly obvious.

Digitized by Google

We are conscious of external existence solely in its action by powers on our organic being, and consequently, as involved in, and a part of, an organic change. No doubt, the mind in the nerve, in each case, is actually conscious of the external power operating, but it is impossible that the mind can be conscious of it, *as external to the organic being*, because consciousness does not extend beyond the organic being, and cannot, therefore, embrace a knowledge of anything out of it. But it is obvious, that if consciousness were not only conscious of power external to the organic being—*as a portion of organic affection originating in the action of such external power on the nervous system in which organic being exists*, but were also conscious of existence external to such organic being, *as external*—then it would necessarily embrace the knowledge of objects out of the individual altogether—an assumption, which it is hardly necessary to say, that we know to be untrue, and impossible. It is, therefore, experience only that can assure us of an existence external to our organic being, and the process is easily understod. If I lay my hand upon the table, I have a certain sensation, and such sensation may either originate from without the organic being, or from a modification of itself, in so far as consciousness teaches. But if I remove my hand, the sensation ceases. If, again, I re-place my hand, the sensation is renewed. Thus, by experience, we necessarily come

Digitized by Google

to discover the externality of the cause, which always is renewed and always ceases under the same circumstances, and under an exhibition of the same phenomena. The motion of the hand, and the sensation of a special colour, figure, &c., are always essential to the realization of the result. In this process we ascertain, consequently, by *reason*, that sensation is NOT from within, and that it IS from without. Just in the same way, and by the same process, we are made acquainted with the internality of the cause in respect of our organic being, in the case of pain generated by bodily disease, where the pain continues notwithstanding our changes of locality or position. Reason thus assures us, that it originates from within, and not from without, although, in either case, the experience comes to act so rapidly by habit, as almost to assume the form of an instinctive or conscious operation. There are instances, however, in which, from want of definite experience, it is difficult, or even impossible, to discover whether the origin of a sensation originates in the action of the physical machinery of the body, or in some external cause. There is probably no one who has not felt this illustrated, in attempting to discover whether a slight pain and inflammation of the eye, was owing to the state of the blood, or to the action of some minute particle of extrinsic matter, that had insinuated itself betwixt the eye and the eye-lid. While, therefore, we are conscious of external existence, it is thus evidently certain

Digitized by Google

that we are conscious of it only in its action on our organic being, AND AS PART OF OUR ORGANIC STATES. Its externality to the organic nature being discoverable solely through reason or experience.

These observations readily explain, on the other hand, the distinctive character of what, in contradistinction to solidity, have been called secondary qualities, which Reid comprehends under "sound, "colour, taste, smell, and heat, or cold,"[a] and which, farther, he calls "occult qualities,"[b] evidently supposing them to be some mysterious species of existences, altogether separate from the essences to which they belong, and to afford a kind of knowledge altogether different from that constituted by touch. The result of these notions is exhibited in a theory, probably the most unsatisfactory and contradictory to be found in any part of Reid's writings; for, after telling us that "a relative notion "of a thing is, strictly speaking, *no notion of the "thing at all*, but only of some relation which it "bears to something else,"[c] in which he is evidently perfectly right, he goes on to say, that "of the "secondary qualities our notion is only a relative "notion, which must, because it is only relative, be "obscure;" and no wonder that it should be obscure, considering that he had just told us that "a "relative notion of a thing is, strictly speaking, no "notion of the thing at all!" On this extraordinary passage Sir W. Hamilton has an extraordi-

[a] Intellectual powers—Essay 2d, ch. 17. [b] Do. [c] Do.

Digitized by Google

nary note, and a very long one, but what it means we honestly confess ourselves altogether unable to explain. The fact seems to be, that his misconception as to the true nature of qualities having necessarily perplexed his attempt at discriminating the grounds of the distinction of primary and secondary qualities, he allowed himself to be hurried away into those verbal subtleties with which philosophers have so frequently deluded themselves, so as to imagine that he was writing something profound, when, in truth, he was only writing something that was unintelligible. Hence, were the explanations of our mental states necessarily of so metaphysical a character as that which distinguishes Sir W. Hamilton's dissertation on the "distinction "of the primary and secondary qualities of body," there are few who would be likely to trouble themselves on the subject; for, indeed, it would be pretty clear that any hope of explaining them, so as to serve any practical purpose, would be vain. Those who desire to examine his opinions minutely for themselves may turn to the note in question. To a large number of inquirers, probably, the following extracts may be sufficient:—"On this "ground, as apprehensions or immediate cogni- "tions through sense, the primary are distinguished "as objective, not subjective, as percepts proper, "not sensations proper; the *secundo*-primary as "objective and subjective, as percepts proper, and "sensations proper; the secondary as subjective

Digitized by Google

"not objective cognitions, as sensations proper, "not percepts proper." Again, "For solidity, "even with the ephithet physical, and Impenetra- "bility, and Extreity are vague and equivocal. "We might call it, as we have said, ultimate or "absolute incompressibility. It would be better, "however, to have a positive expression to denote "a positive notion, and we might accordingly adopt, "as a technical term, Autantitypy. This is pre- "ferable to Antitypy, a word in Greek applied "not only to this absolute and essential resistance "of matter *qua* matter, but also to the relative "and accidental resistances from cohesion, inertia, "and gravity."[a]

Yet, notwithstanding this singular confusion into which men of such distinguished ability have fallen, we repeat, that the moment qualities are regarded not as something separate from essence, but as essence itself, considered as capable of exhibiting itself under various forms, and to various objects, the nature of the distinction becomes perfectly manifest. In this view, solidity may properly enough be called a primary quality, not because we have a more direct and absolute knowledge of it than of other qualities or capabilities of essence, but because it seems to be the basis of the others as belonging to all matter, and which must, therefore, accompany all other qualities which exist not in *all*

[a] Reid's Works. Hamilton's Edition—Supplementary dissertations—Note D., Sec. 2d.

Digitized by Google

matter, but only in *some* matter in addition to solidity; for, as has been already said, it is by impulse, which can only be predicated of solidity, so far as we can discover, that all our senses are affected. Other qualities and powers, therefore, are mere manifestations of different species of essences; but solidity is of the generic essence, so far as our experience teaches us, and consequently common to them all.

But, although solidity be thus, as we are instructed by all our senses, the generic basis, if we may so speak, of matter, yet it by no means follows that we only know the other qualities of matter, or rather the essence of matter exhibited under other forms, and to other parts of our nervous system "relatively," which, as Reid most truly says, would be "not to know them at all," or less directly in any measure, than we know solidity; for we are just as conscious of a cause of vision as of a cause of tactual feeling, and it is not improbable that we have even a sense of tactuality, if we may so speak, in the secondary sensations.

Secondary qualities, therefore, are merely certain forms of essence capable, under certain circumstances, of affecting special portions of our nervous system, but all inhering in solidity as a basis, or rather being mere forms of solidity, which, consequently, to this extent, and in this sense, may be called a primary quality and in no other sense. We, however, equally know them all as forms of

Digitized by Google

essence, or, in other words, as absolute existences, acting on different portions of our nervous system. This, of course, implies that in each case it is still a species of solidity that actually operates upon us, though in different ways; and this is farther assured to us by the consideration, that as we know of no existence external to ourselves, but solidity of some kind or other, so to assume that we are acted upon by any supposed existence of another kind, would be, so far as we are concerned, to suppose that we are not acted upon at all. The assumption, moreover, that the phenomena, in all cases of secondary sensation, are produced by the impulse of solid existence, is the only possible means of explaining them, and does thoroughly explain them—a truth which, as matter of physical and experimental fact, is becoming every day more perfectly ascertained and more universally admitted.

Under the very same principles do we readily and obviously explain that idea of substance with which philosophers have been so long perplexed. Nothing could more clearly exhibit both the difficulty and the origin of it than the following passages of Dr. Reid's philosophy:—"The objects of "sense," he says, "we have hitherto considered, "are qualities; but qualities must have a subject. "We give the names of matter, material substance, "and body, to the subject of sensible qualities," and he subsequently proceeds—"as to the nature

Digitized by Google

"of this something, I am afraid we can give little "account of it, but that it has the qualities which "our senses discover. But how do we know that "they are qualities, and cannot exist without a "subject? I confess I cannot explain how we "know that they cannot exist without a subject "any more than I can explain how we know that "they exist. We have the information of nature "for their existence, and I THINK we have the in- "formation of nature that they are qualities."[a] Sir W. Hamilton makes no remark on this passage, thereby, of course, tacitly adopting it as expressive of his own opinion, which, indeed, substantively it does express, though it is somewhat astonishing that, thus broadly stated, it did not excite farther inquiry on the part of one who felt so strongly, that any form of the representative hypothesis must necessarily open a door for the entrance of scepticism. We cannot, at all events, be astonished at Dr. Reid's difficulty in connecting qualities with their substance or essence, if qualities are to be assumed, IN ANY SENSE, as something different from substance or essence itself, as a medium, in fact, of whatsoever kind betwixt such substance or essence and the mind—for, under such an assumption, the difficulty is insuperable. We could, in such case, know the qualities indeed, supposing us conscious of our minds; but to connect them with anything else as a subject, would evidently be impossible.

[a] Intellectual powers—Essay 2d, ch. 19.

Digitized by Google

We could know nothing but qualities. The idea of any basis or substratum, or, in other words, of an external world, would be a mere imagination, which logic could never recognise. Bishop Berkeley and Mr. Hume, therefore, most logically, under the theory, maintained "body to be nothing but a "collection of what we call sensible qualities," and consequently it is not to be wondered at, that under such a theory Dr. Reid could give no reasons for his conviction, and the cause why he could give no reasons for his conviction was simply that he had adopted an erroneous theory. He could have given a reason for it easily enough, had it only occurred to him that qualities and their subject are the same thing--qualities being no name of anything absolutely, but of essences AS CAPABLE OF ACTING ON OTHER ESSENCES, and, in the particular case, of essences or an essence as capable of acting on our sentient being. They cannot, consequently, "exist without a subject," just because they are merely the forms which subjects realise in operating on other things. In every sensation we are conscious of some existence operating on our organic natures, and this existence is just what we mean by substance. It is, indeed, true that some philosophers appear to confuse substance with *extended* substance, but this evidently originates in a confusion of ideas. That any substance which acts must have some extension, is, no doubt, true; but its extension has nothing to do with its substantiality.

Digitized by Google

At the same time it is certain that we acquire a knowledge of extension and figure through sensation. If I lay my hand on the table, I have assuredly a different sensation from that which I feel in touching it with my finger, and the difference consists in a different consciousness of extension and figure, for the sensation, *quâ* sensation, is evidently the same.[a] No doubt, Dr. Brown may be, and probably is, perfectly right in supposing, that in certain cases our knowledge of figure can only be realised by muscular action, since the rolling of a ball, for instance, on the open palm, could not give us the notion of a circle. To attain this notion thoroughly, we must grasp it, and this can only be done through muscular action; but, in so far as mental philosophy is concerned, this does not seem to be a matter of any importance. It is still by touch that we acquire the knowledge of figure, whether realised in muscular action or by any other means; indeed, our knowledge of muscular action itself seems to be acquired by touch, *i.e.*, by the action of one part of our physical organs upon other parts. There seems no difficulty in the matter whatever; every particular is consistent, and harmonises with the rest. Motion, again, is appreciated by sensation, memory, and reason

[a] In our sensations of extended substance, all that is embraced under one act, whether of vision or touch, constitutes only ONE sensation In sight, indeed, only one nerve is affected; but, though various nerves be affected in touch, so entirely are they united in the organic system that the mind is conscious, not of many points, but of one whole.

Digitized by Google

combined, under a process so evident that it would be a waste of time to explain it formally. Divisibility we become acquainted with, partly from experience, partly from our knowledge of the nature of space, which, as we shall presently shew, itself in a great measure originates in the process of sensation.

From these views and analyses, it will now, we trust, be obvious, that though in all our sensations, strictly so called, we are conscious of external existence, yet, our knowledge of the fact, that certain portions of our sensations originate in causes external to our organic being is a result of experience. If, as has been said, I lay my hand on the table, I am conscious of a certain sensation; but whether the cause of it be internal or external to the body, or, in other words, to the nervous system, the mere sensation itself could never assure me. This I discover by experience—I remove my hand, and the sensation disappears; I lay my hand in the same place, and it re-appears. By a more or less continuous repetition of this process, I necessarily connect the sensation with a cause external to my hand, and generally to my organic being; and its cause, under an exactly similar process, I subsequently connect with a brownish colour, an oblong form, and so on—all of these being made known to me by other sensations, and, thereafter, by experience connected with the same locality. To this combination of the forms of essence in the

Digitized by Google

same locality again, I subsequently am informed that the name of a mahogany table is given. Now, this same combination of the forms of essence in the same external locality, is usually in a looser and more extended sense called substance; but, for our knowledge of substance strictly, no such combination is necessary. As we have seen, every one of our sensations gives us a notion of substance in our consciousness of it, though consciousness does not tell us that it is external substance of which we are conscious—the consciousness merely applying to an organic state, and the cause of that organic state being afterwards discovered by experience. Hence, of course, we entirely repudiate the assumption that we have or can have any *a priori* knowledge of substance. Were it so, indeed, it must be either of some particular substance, or of the entity of substance. That we do not know the entity of substance, or, in other words, that which constitutes substance, all will admit; that we cannot know any particular kind of it, before having experience thereof—that we cannot know mahogany, for example, or the colour of an orange, or the smell of a rose, or the taste of an omelette, or the sound of a drum, before having had experience of each of them respectively, is equally certain; yet, unless we do know these things, it needs hardly be said that we cannot know substance at all, because these are the only possible modes of cognising it.

From all this, again, it is evident that our sen-

Digitized by Google

sations, simply *quâ* sensations, give us in so far general, and not merely particular, ideas—a conclusion which, in a great measure, settles another of the most disputed points connected with mental philosophy; for, although we be conscious of external existence in each sensation, it is, as we have already shewn, only by experience that we discover so much of the sensation to have been external to our organic being. The relationship, therefore, of the external body to our organic beings is really a portion of our organic states. We know it as a part of our consciousness, just as much as if the external object had been merely an idea of memory. Hence, sensation, *quâ* sensation, is a simple state, having, *per se*, no reference to time, place, or circumstance, but being a mere condition of the mind, and consequently including every possible manifestation of the object causing it, as known in that state, whatever form it may assume, or under whatever circumstances it may be exhibited. While, therefore, every sensation is particular as regards the temporary feeling, it is evidently general, or rather universal, as regards our knowledge of the object causing it. That sensation *per se* would not give us any knowledge of the universality of its application is quite true, because each sensation *per se* is felt in connection with a certain duration of time, and is limited thereby so as to give it in that very limitation its character of particularity; but the knowledge which intelligence realises of each sen-

Digitized by Google

sation is no less general upon that account, because intelligence at once discriminates betwixt the sensation and the time in which it was felt, which was all that was particular about it. Take the idea of time away from it, therefore, and the sensation becomes simply a mental state, and the knowledge of it simply the knowledge of an organic state operating on the mind as productive of such mental feeling. It becomes perfectly general, therefore, as constituting the knowledge of every identical organic state, and of every cause involved therein. Thus, in the sensation which we call redness, we have the knowledge of a certain state of our organisation which applies to the action of every red object whatever, as causative thereof. In other words, the cause of such organic state must always be the same, else different causes would produce identical effects. It is true that we also call the power of the existence which causes this sensation redness, because, from the poverty and inaccuracy of language, we have only one word to express both the cause and the effect. The ray which causes in us the sensation of redness is not, therefore, to be held as resembling or identical with the effect which it produces, any more than the wind which shakes the trees is to be held identical with the motion of the trees which it causes; in other words, the ray does not resemble, still less can it be considered as identical with, the sensation—the sensation being merely the effect which the action

Digitized by Google

of the ray on the optic nerve produces on our organisation. It is the form of our consciousness of the action of such ray on our organic being. We do not, consequently, know thereby anything of the entity or primary constitution of such ray. We merely know it in its action on ourselves. We know that it is an existence, and what that existence is, IN SO FAR AS IT AFFECTS US, but no farther. It is not, therefore, merely a relative, but an absolute knowledge of the ray that we acquire, only the extent of such absolute knowledge is limited by the extent of its action on our organic being. In thus far we are absolutely and directly conscious of it. In the same way, our sensation of hardness, or solidity, though giving us a direct and absolute consciousness of the particular solidity causing it, gives us a knowledge of that solidity, not merely with reference to the special case, but in all cases as being *quâ* sensation, particular, merely from its combination with present time, since our reference of it to an object external to our organism is not an act either of sensation or consciousness, but of experience, so that the sensation, *quâ* sensation, is simply a state of mind realising an organic state, and consequently must constitute a general idea, in so far as it is felt by intelligence to be applicable to every solid object causative of the sensation, or, in other words, to matter universally, in so far as it can be felt. This word hardness, therefore, expresses an organic sensation, or, at all events, we have no other word to express

Digitized by Google

it, although it be usually applied also, from the imperfection of language, to designate the power of the essence, which, under a particular form of its action, causes such sensation. We are no more, however, than, in the former case, to suppose, on this account, that the cause and the effect are identical; for the sensation is merely a feeling of the change which the action of solidity produces on our tactual organisation. Though, therefore, we thus know solidity directly and absolutely in our consciousness, yet, it is not the entity of solidity that we know in its primary and constitutive nature, but that entity, in so far as it operates upon our organic being, and, in such operation, is felt by and known in our consciousness. Hence, the errors, and irremediable confusion, which have flowed from supposing some process of abstraction or classification in forming general ideas of sensation. To imagine, indeed, that we have first an idea of substance, as constituted somehow of various qualities, and then that we abstract the particular qualities, in order to attain a knowledge of each—as Reid supposes—is, as will now be obvious, precisely to reverse the whole process: he says that the first operation of the understanding, by which we are enabled to form general conceptions, is "the resolving or analysing "a subject into its known attributes, and giving a "name to each attribute, which name shall signify "that attribute, and nothing more."[a] Now, this supposes necessarily, that we have some faculty or

[a] Intellectual powers—Essay 5th, ch. 3.

Digitized by Google

intuition by which we first know substance, and then resolve the substance thus known, into its attributes; whereas we first acquire by our sensations a knowledge of each quality, or attribute separately, as a distinct form of essence, and then, by an operation of reason, discovering the attributes to exist in one locality, we constitute our idea of what, in this more extended sense, is called substance. We do not, consequently, for example, first know snow as a substance—for it has already been proved that this is impossible—and then, by this pretended faculty of abstraction, become acquainted with whiteness, softness, coldness, &c., but we become acquainted with each of these qualities separately and *per se*, either by different senses, or different tendencies of the same sense, and then by experience, referring them to one locality, we have the mixed sensational, and rational or experimental, idea of snow, and so in all cases. How Reid could possibly have reconciled this theory with his doctrine, that we cannot "know substance at all," is to me inconceivable, as well as how he could have overlooked the contradiction betwixt them. The character of this error, however, will be still more thoroughly appreciated, by attending to what Reid calls the second operation of the understanding in the formation of general conceptions, and which, he says, is "the observing one or more such attributes "to be common to many subjects,"[a] and, as he has

[a] Intellectual powers—Essay 5th, ch. 3.

Digitized by Google

called the former process "abstraction," so he calls this second process "generalising." According to this process, then, we first form particular ideas by abstraction, and then we observe "one or more of "them to be common to many subjects," which constitutes them general ideas. But, so far is this from being the case, that, on the contrary, the first time we are distinctly conscious of any quality—say of whiteness for example, or hardness, or smell, or any other —we have a notion of such quality as general, and as universally applicable, as after having been conscious of it any number of times, and, as existing in any number of substances. Reid's error here again originated in his inaccurate notion of the meaning of the word quality, as is evident from his saying, that "the generality is in the subject conceived, "and not in the act of the mind by which it is con- "ceived;"* whereas the generality is not in the object perceived, but first in the act of the mind, and next, of course, also, in the power or relation of the object or essence perceived, to our organic nature. The immediate object perceived is evidently particular, because it is limited by time to the specific case. But the power or relation which it bears to our minds, apart from its connection with time, is as evidently general, because the power, nature, or relation of an essence is nothing particular to one of a class, but appertains necessarily to the whole of the class. Thus, if I be conscious of red-

* Intellectual powers—Essay 5th, ch. 5.

Digitized by Google

ness, I call the red ray the *cause* of the sensation, or the "subject conceived," when sensation is limited to a definite time—but I call its power of affecting my organic nature redness, which implies a general idea, and the mental affection consequent thereon I must also call redness, because there is no other word for expressing the idea, and both ideas are general, *i.e.*, they are universally applicable at all times, and under all circumstances. As to the distinction which some have attempted to draw betwixt abstract ideas and general ideas, I say nothing, because I really do not understand it, except in so far as abstract ideas may be intended to express simple general ideas, while the term general may be applied to those complex ideas, which have reference to extended substance. The latter, in other words, may express general ideas formed more or less by reason—the former, those of sensation only.* Every sensation, therefore, apart from its combination with time—and, indeed, every feeling or idea of whatever kind, apart from its combination with time, or some equivalent particularising relation—is a general idea, as being applicable to whole classes—nor can any amount of farther experience make it more general. Hence, all we have to do, in order subsequently to particularise a sensation, or an idea derived from sensa-

* Abstract words may mean words expressive of classes, though this is an improper name for them, and general words, several ideas, or many ideas, expressed by one word, or one phrase.

Digitized by Google

tion—or, indeed, as we shall subsequently more particularly shew, any other idea—is just to combine it with a special time, or a special relation, in which case it instantly becomes particular in the only sense in which it is possible for an idea to be particular. The particularity, therefore, of ideas, is in the notion of time, or some other special relationship connected or interwoven with them, so as to limit them to special cases, and not in any thing in ideas themselves, as expressive either of organic or mental states. Now, it will be readily obvious how this analysis simplifies the subject, and how entirely and clearly it enables us to understand both—what is the meaning of general ideas—so far, at all events, as sensation is concerned—and what it is consequently that general words actually and precisely express. The confusion that pervades philosophical works upon this subject we can now, therefore, at once perceive to be attributable to their authors, supposing that the "generality is in "the subject conceived." From this assumption—as it is impossible that one "subject conceived" could give a GENERAL idea—they were necessarily forced to assume also that the "generality" was discoverable by a comparison of two or more such subjects, the generality becoming more extended in proportion to the number of subjects compared. That to have a general notion of whiteness, for example, we require to have experience of, and compare a number of white substances, and that by clas-

Digitized by Google

sification we thus acquire a knowledge of the something common to them all, to which something, when thus acquired, we give the name of whiteness. Whereas, we never could thus know whiteness as a universal, for whiteness being in this sense merely the name of a relation of essence to our organic being, or, in other words, being the name of the character of an essence not absolutely, but as felt in its action on our organic being, and as modified thereby, must be applicable to every white substance, WHETHER WE HAVE HAD EXPERIENCE OF IT OR NOT; for no one will dispute that we know what whiteness means, as well as every other general term, even if used in reference to a special existence which we never saw; but this could not be the case if we only knew the meaning of the general term, IN SO FAR AS WE HAD CLASSIFIED SUBJECTS UNDER IT. It is, indeed, obvious, and on the grounds already stated, that the first time we have been conscious of whiteness, we have as general a notion of it as it ever is possible to acquire, and that consequently the "generality" cannot be in the "sub-"ject conceived," but in the relation of that subject to the organic nature of the mind conceiving it. Hence, all the various forms of realism, nominalism, and conceptualism, at once and entirely vanish. They originate in the false theory—that, in order to have general ideas, we must compare the external subjects under the action of which such ideas are constituted; whereas, there is no

Digitized by Google

such comparison. One instance gives us the general idea, and this we affirm, not as a theory, not as a probability, but as a certainty, to which every one will assent capable of understanding ordinary language. And now, farther, we can readily understand the cause of those singular contradictions into which philosophers have fallen upon this subject, as, for example, when Dr. Reid says—"The "conception of whiteness implies no existence; it "would remain the same, though everything in "the universe that is white were annihilated."[a] And yet he tells us, almost in the same breath, that "the generality is in the subject conceived"[b]—so that this "generality," it seems, would remain, though all that is general were annihilated! Yet, the assertion is true, just because the "generality is "NOT in the subject conceived." Hence, if the mind have once cognised the sensation, then the conception, as a state of mind or a relation of the organic being, would undoubtedly remain, because it is in such state or relation, *i.e.*, in the mental discrimination of the speciality, that the generality exists. The whole subject, under this view, seems so manifest and precise, as to render it unnecessary to dwell upon it at greater length, or notice those multifarious difficulties with respect to it which have perplexed and baffled philosophers, simply because they have misconceived it. No difficulties,

[a] Intellectual powers—Essay 5th, ch. 3.
[b] Intellectual powers—Essay 5th, ch 5.

Digitized by Google

indeed, so far as I know, can be suggested, which will, in any measure, puzzle even the most ordinary thinker. We would only remark that care must be taken not to confuse knowledge acquired by sensation with knowledge derived from other sources, and of which the nature can only be explained by ulterior considerations, inasmuch as it is only knowledge derived from sensation that we can image to the mind.

We are now in a position still farther to analyse and determine the nature of another species of knowledge originating in perception, which has also given rise to much discussion, and which certainly depends on principles more recondite and complicated than any of the particulars to which we have previously adverted. These are so plain, that where they are proposed in precise terms, it is hardly possible to doubt the process under which we cognise them ; but it is otherwise with our ideas of space and time, which evidently, though discoverable by sensation, cannot be referred to any *direct* act of sensation. Kant has maintained, in conformity with his general principle, that because our ideas of space and time are necessary, therefore they must be *a priori* and subjective, *i.e.*, not realities external to ourselves, but assumptions merely that are internal, and of the essence of our conceptions. But were it so, there could evidently be not only no assurance, but no possibility of external, nor, indeed—in so far as we are concerned—of any

Digitized by Google

existence at all, since that which we do not know as existing in time and space, in reality to us, does *not* exist. The theory, however, although many of his disciples seem to regard it as his most glorious discovery, was really proposed long anterior to the age of Kant; and, indeed, almost all philosophers took it for granted, that our belief of the necessity of existence constituted, at all events, one test of *a priori* cognition. In the case under consideration, however, it is, at all events, applied without any ground. Our belief in the necessary existence of space and time, is, as we shall afterwards endeavour to shew, a result of rational deduction. At all events, there can be no doubt, that we know both by experience, and that experience expressly declares them to be external, and not internal. We are, in truth, conscious of living in the one, and during the other. To deny it, would be to contradict our natural and irresistible convictions, and consequently, neither Kant's theory, nor any other theory, directly or indirectly ignoring it, ever had, or ever will have, or ever could have, a single practical believer. To appreciate the process, however, under which we attain our conclusion in so far as space is concerned, it must be observed, that the power of mind extends over the whole bodily frame. In what portion of the body the mind may mainly and essentially take up its abode, is of no consequence whatever, since it indisputably extends its influence through the nerves in every member of the

Digitized by Google

body. We thus know that the breast is not in the same locality as the head, nor the hands as the feet. The difficulty in explaining the process at this point seems to have arisen from our having no sense giving us a direct knowledge of space. The reason of this is just that it was not necessary, because space is not a substance. We are not conscious, therefore, of feeling it as a substance or existence, but of existing in it as non-substance, which is evidently the only consciousness of it that is possible. Hence, when we move either the whole body, or a portion of it, as an arm or a limb, we are conscious of motion in space, though, to realise thoroughly the idea, memory is also requisite. The process, however, is obvious. The phenomenon cannot possibly occur to an intelligent being without giving him at once experience of space, as that in which his organic being is capable of moving. Our knowledge of space by vision, again, is derived from this process, apart from which vision could probably, or rather certainly, give us no knowledge of space at all, since the rays acting on the optic nerve are, in reality, all that we see in vision. Space, as known by vision, is, therefore, only inferentially known. To appreciate fully our knowledge of space, however, we must anticipate somewhat in observing that it is impossible, from the very nature of the rational faculty, to know anything, without knowing also its opposite. If we know truth, we must also know falsehood; if we know wisdom,

Digitized by Google

we must also know folly; if we know hardness, we must also know non-hardness; if we know substance, we must also know non-substance. Hence space is, strictly speaking, known to us also rationally in our knowledge of substance, as non-substance—these two obviously comprehending everything which we can conceive, either of existence or mode. Non-substance, consequently, becomes farther known to us as the receptacle of substance, inasmuch as our sensational knowledge of substance, as solidity, teach us that substance cannot exist in substance, and, therefore, we must necessarily conclude that it exists in non-substance. With the anterior knowledge thus derived from these sources, it is easy to understand how we inferentially acquire a far more extended and grander notion of space by vision; for, we thus learn to measure distances by perspective, and the perception thus acquired of suns and systems, floating through that space which is thus appreciated at inconceivable distances, seems almost to realise to us an apprehension of the Infinite. Thus we reach all that can be directly known of it. That we cannot conceive it annihilated, or away, is simply a rational result of our knowledge of substance, which implies that, where *it* is not, there must be non-substance as its opposite. It is, indeed, of the very essence of reason to know, in regard to every subject, that that which is, and that which is not, constitute the only possible possibilities. To say,

Digitized by Google

therefore, that there could be anything else, would imply the very same absurdity as to say that there might be two lines neither equal nor unequal to each other.

If, then, we thus acquire a precise notion of the process under which we become acquainted with the nature of space, in the same manner may we acquire an equally precise notion of the process under which we are made acquainted with the nature of time. We are conscious that we exist during time. Every breath we draw, every feeling we realise, make us as intelligent beings, conscious of our living during time. Nor can we conceive it annihilated, for we know, in our experience, that it is that during which space exists. To say that space does not exist in time, would be to say that space was not; for, to our conceptions, non-time implies non-duration, and non-duration is merely another word for non-being. Space, therefore, which does not exist during time, to us does not exist at all, and consequently, if we cannot conceive the possibility of that which is neither substance nor non-substance, neither can we conceive the existence of space apart from time. The one, to our conceptions, must be eternal and infinite as well as the other. No doubt, at this point, the whole subject becomes incomprehensible; but we are not endeavouring, be it observed, to explain the nature of space and time, but only the proofs under which we form our conceptions of them, which, in so far, is perfectly simple,

Digitized by Google

though not entirely complete—our farther notion of time depending on the operation of memory, and to this particular we shall accordingly again direct our attention when we come to determine the nature and amount of knowledge which that faculty affords.

Now, these principles enable us at once to explain a variety of other truths with regard to matter, which have usually been regarded as *a priori* or intuitive. Thus, the proposition that "it is im-"possible that two bodies can occupy the same "space at the same time," we believe and know, just from our knowledge of body and space as derived from experience. If two bodies could occupy the same space, then body would not be what we mean by body. The belief of the impossibility of such a phenomenon, therefore, is not to be found in any *a priori* or intuitive knowledge of the nature of body, which would necessarily imply that we knew *a priori* or intuitively the constitution of the very entity of body, still less is it to be found in some kind of magical assurance, that something, we do not know what, cannot exist in something else, we do not know what, which is really the form that the supposed intuition on the subject takes in many philosophical writings, but in our knowledge of body and space, as experimentally ascertained, under processes already described and determined. In the very same way is also explained our belief in the proposition, "that the same body cannot be in "different places at the same time;" and the propo-

Digitized by Google

sition, "that a body cannot be moved from one "place to another without passing through the in- "termediate spaces," which Reid calls necessary truths—meaning thereby truths of which the evidence is inscrutable, and the processes by which we attain them undiscoverable—whereas they are necessary truths to us, just because the evidence or grounds of belief in each case *can* be explained, and because the process in each case *can* be analysed and known, and we maintain that if the evidence could not be explained, and the process could not be analysed and discovered, *i.e.*, if our belief *really* rested on some sort of magical intuition, they would to us not only be no necessary truths, but they could be no truths, properly speaking, at all, since such magical intuition is not only inconsistent with all belief conformable to the constitution of intelligent beings, but it could have no possible application or co-relation to any one thing more than to any other, so as to admit of its being understood, unless indeed it were to the constitution of entities, a particular of the nature of which all parties agree that we have and can have no knowledge whatever. We believe these truths, not in any way as *a priori* or intuitive, but simply because we know them experimentally as matter of fact. We know, in so far, what body is, and we know, in so far, what space is, and it is just this knowledge which is embodied in the propositions. To suppose them untrue, therefore,

Digitized by Google

would just be to suppose that body is not what we mean by body, nor space that which we mean by space. If, indeed, we be asked to define what body and space are, we at once admit that it is impossible, because they imply simple states—and, definition being merely the enumeration of the simple elements constituting a compound state, is, therefore, in so far as simple states are concerned, absurd and impossible, because they involve no simple elements, being themselves simple and one. But our notions of them, so far as they go, are in no degree less precise on that account, nor have we any difficulty by arbitrary signs descriptive of their results, in communicating what we mean by them to others who are conscious of their nature as well as we are ourselves. We need hardly add that, in the same way, all our knowledge of truths in regard to body and space, whatever they may be, are realised.

It will, therefore, be obvious, that in the knowledge thus acquired, there is nothing intuitive or *a priori*, except the existence of our sensations themselves, or, in other words, the existence of our mental and organic natures as known through consciousness, if a belief in these can properly be called intuition. At all events, it can only be called intuition, in so far as we cannot explain how we are so constituted as to have such consciousness for being so constituted, that we must believe our own consciousness, seems an identical proposition. Hence, perhaps, the belief in our consciousness, and ge-

Digitized by Google

nerally in our faculties, may be more properly called mental instinct than intuition, though it signifies little what name we give to the belief, if it be understood that we can know no absolute facts except through immediate consciousness, and no propositions except under the conscious exercise of intelligence and reason. In sensation, therefore, the mind, having experience of certain facts through our senses, knows them in consciousness. Not, be it observed, that the consciousness of sensation is anything different from the consciousness of the mind itself. It is the mind merely existing in a particular relation, and acted upon by a particular cause. Thus, in the act of sensation we are conscious of the mind subjectively, and *quâ* mind, as in every other mental operation; but we are, at the same time, also conscious of this consciousness being caused by the action of something external to the mind, though intimately conjoined with it. Under this view, the whole process of sensation becomes at once precise and intelligible. In describing it, we feel that we are merely describing our own felt and experienced consciousness in a well-known operation, and thus a solid foundation seems to be laid, on which to rest the superstructure of intellectual science, for the last remnants of idealism vanish, as well as of philosophical scepticism. If we be absolutely conscious both of mind and matter, all doubts upon those particulars are at an end. Nor is there any

Digitized by Google

other possible mode of meeting philosophical scepticism, since every existence of which we are not absolutely conscious, either subjectively or objectively, must be known mediately or representatively; and as there is no possible mode of proving that in such a case, that which we call the medium or representation IS REALLY A MEDIUM OR REPRESENTATION, it becomes demonstrative that the primary existence, in so far as we are concerned, is a mere conjecture, and cannot logically be assumed to exist at all.

There is, however, beyond all this, a very interesting inquiry which suggests itself as to the cause why our visions, in certain cases of dreaming, delirium, and insanity, give us a belief in their reality as sensations. The philosophy of this singular phenomenon appears to develope itself in the fact already proved, to the effect, that our consciousness does not make known to us the existence of the external causes of our organic states, *as external* to those states; but that we are only conscious of such external causes as *parts* of our organic states—their *absolute* externality being afterwards ascertained by experience. It follows from this, that if the organic being realise in itself, in any way a state identical with that which a known external cause usually produces, we must, from the very nature of experience, believe that such external cause is in operation, unless the error be rectified by the information of other and unconnected agencies.

Digitized by Google

This will be farther illustrated by keeping in view the nature of our simple sensations, as already explained, which are general and not particular—our particular sensations being compounded of the simple feeling combined with the idea of time or some other relation. Hence, when a man's foot, for example, is exposed during sleep in a cold night, he has merely the general sensation of cold in that member, and consequently that sensation, combining with his dreams, or suggesting them, will give him the particular idea of snow, or any other particular idea, according to the state of his mental or organic tendencies at the time. Nothing could remedy this error, except the observation of our other senses under the guidance of reason, which, being all for the time inoperative, the origin of the false belief becomes, in so far, sufficiently obvious. In the same way it seems probable, that in delirium and insanity certain portions of the brain or nerves are so inflamed as to produce irresistible feelings of various kinds in the mind connected with them. That physical action on the nerves produces mental passions seems indisputable in the operation of some of the ordinary instincts, and hence, if such physical action on the brain produces mental passions, as we are almost positively assured is the case, then we can easily suppose, that a certain amount of such action would so entirely withdraw our thoughts from the operation of our senses, and so interfere with the opera-

Digitized by Google

tion of reason in discriminating differences, as to give to the organic state all the precision, and indeed all the certainty of actual sensation. The fact that our consciousness of perceptions at all, depends on the degree of interest that we feel in each respectively, and that our observation of all other realities is diminished in proportion to the intensity of such interest, indicates that, in so far, at all events, this theory is true, but our facts are yet too few to justify anything like assurance upon the subject. It is, indeed, wonderful that they have not been more abundantly and carefully observed, considering that the result has so direct a relation, not merely to mental but to medical science; for, as the body indisputably acts upon the mind, so does the mind as indisputably act upon the body; and, indeed, we have the most unquestionable evidence that the irritability in the brain, causative of insanity, is frequently, if not generally, the result of strong feeling acting on the greater, or less susceptibility of the organs. It is not at all impossible, therefore, that a due regard to mental states might have the most important bearing on the treatment of cases of delirium and insanity; and, although this is now unquestionably recognised, to a certain extent, by all respectable practitioners, yet we neither believe that it is in any case sufficiently recognised, nor that practitioners have, generally speaking, such an acquaintance with the psychology as connected with the

Digitized by Google

physiology of the subject, as renders them capable of regulating, with any degree of efficiency, or, indeed, beyond the application of the broadest and coarsest rules, the true psychogical principles of cure in the control and neutralisation of the passions, and the determination of their possible tendencies. We are persuaded that the organic affection, in such cases, is rarely confined to the brain, but extends from the brain through other parts of the nervous system which thus participate in the cerebral uneasiness. The particular notion which the general sensation of uneasiness thus generated by the organic irritability may assume, will, of course, depend upon any one or more of an infinity of circumstances which may combine with such sensation to limit and direct it. It would be extremely difficult in most cases, therefore, for any other person to trace its cause, and probably even the patient himself, in the event of his recovery, could only do it very imperfectly. We do not know, however, if it has ever been *sufficiently* tried, and, therefore, cannot pretend to determine anything in regard to it with certainty. Of course, all that has been said on this point we would desire to be understood as suggestive rather than anything else. We shall afterwards, however, have an opportunity of recurring to the subject in discussing the operation of other faculties.

We may just allude, in conclusion, to the possible improvement and intensification of our

Digitized by Google

sensations, as illustrated in the precision of touch, acquired by the blind, the distinctness of vision acquired by seamen, and the like, which is by no means the result of any mere physical process only, but necessarily follows from the power habitually realised of concentrating attention upon a given species of object, and which, indeed, is more or less felt by every one in incidental cases, when special circumstances for the time give to a particular object so vivid an interest as to produce the effect which habit constitutes in the instances alluded to.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VIII.

ON MEMORY.

Connection of the faculties and feelings of the human mind—Nature of memory as contra-distinguished from other states—Memory a distinct faculty—Error of Dr. Brown thereanent—Theory of Dr. Reid as to memory examined—Mode in which we ascertain our notions of time, duration, personal identity, of space and motion—How we come to recollect more easily, and sustain the recollection more permanently, of some thoughts and events, than of others—Mode in which we come to remember symbols—Artificial memory explained—How we come to recollect mere sounds, or other arbitrary and meaningless sensations—Explanation of certain singular and extraordinary phenomena of memory—Phenomena of memory in dreaming, day-dreaming, fever, delirium, and insanity—General remarks on memory—Conclusion.

It is obvious, from our analysis of sensation, that there is no possibility of determining the character of any one portion or state of the human mind, without in so far implying a knowledge of the others, and this becomes still more manifest as we advance in the study of the science. In this way we can readily understand the difficulty of determining the precise order of the mental processes, according to the dates, if we may so speak, of their practical manifestation, not only because they are so intimately interwoven with each other, but because on this very account, the order of the series must depend so much on the circumstances of each individual. Yet, that memory is justly to be con-

Digitized by Google

sidered as the second form under which the human mind developes itself, may fairly be assumed, inasmuch as, apart from its operation, no process except sensation can well be conceived as possible, assuming farther, as the foundation of our argument—what we trust is now becoming more and more evidently indisputable—that the mind cannot originate any state of itself, apart from some feeling or thought calling it into operation.

Memory, then, is the reference of a present consciousness to a past consciousness in which the state that it constitutes was primarily realised. There is, however, this distinction betwixt the character of the two states of consciousness, that in the primary state we had actually a consciousness of an operating cause, combined with its cognate feeling, and it may be some other feeling or feelings incidentally connected with it; whereas, in the second state, we have only an assurance that such a cause did then operate, and that such cognate feeling co-existed with it, and not any present sense of the actual operation of the one, or co-existence of the other. This description, however, must be understood as limited merely to the feeling immediately and actually cognate to the operating cause, and essential to the consciousness of it, as, for example, to the sensational feeling cognate to the action of oderiferous particles on the olfactory nerves in smell, since incidental and co-relative mental feelings may be, and, indeed, must be com-

Digitized by Google

bined with secondary as well as with primary consciousness. Except this, then, which may be called a consciousness of the immediate action of a cause, there is no other difference betwixt the consciousness of memory and the anterior consciousness which it recalls, save the mere reference of the one to the other as having existed in a past time. In all this, however, there is clearly a peculiar power of the mind exhibited, under which it retains its states, so that at any future time they may be resubmitted to consideration. Hence, is manifest the singular error into which Dr. Brown has fallen, in saying "that memory is not a distinct intel-"lectual faculty, but is merely conception or sug-"gestion, combined with the feelings of a particular "relation."[a] For, no doubt, an idea of memory is merely a "conception;" but, in the same sense, so is an idea of sensation, and so is every idea resulting from any state of mind. The question is, how that particular kind of "conception" comes to "combine" with the "particular relation" of time, which he supposes to constitute memory? It is the something which combines them, and relates the one to the other, that, in so far, constitutes the "distinct intellectual faculty," and which assures us, that certain particulars which do not exist now, did exist at a former period. To explain the phenomenon by referring it to "suggestion," as he attempts to do, is merely to argue in a circle,

[a] Brown's Lectures—Lecture xli.

Digitized by Google

since the question at once recurs, how can the consciousness of one time "suggest" the consciousness of another time, as that in which the phenomenon that it involves was primarily realised? To this no answer can possibly be given, except by supposing that it originates in a primary power of the human mind, or, in other words, that it is a power of the essence of our mental constitution.* The power, consequently, is nothing separate from the mind any more than the capacity of perceiving in sensation. It is a power of the mind, and in its exercise, therefore, necessarily calls the mind, *i.e.*, the essence of mind, into operation. All we mean to say is, that it is not referable to, or embraced under, any other mental power, and that consequently, when Brown refers it to "suggestion," he gives us a fact, instead of a principle, by telling us THAT it is, instead of telling us HOW it is; for "suggestion" merely means indication of some kind or other, but in no measure explains the nature or cause of such indication. Every one knows, as a matter of fact, that ideas of memory are "suggested," but we desire to know farther how, when they are "suggested," we should come to connect them with ideas of which we were pre-

* It is not, however, to be supposed that the retention of ideas or feelings in the memory is a power We only mean that the mind has a power of re-calling such ideas to its own consciousness. Otherwise memory is merely a *capacity* of retaining ideas. The power is distinguished from the capacity, as not being a state merely of the mind, but a concentrated effort of the mind in a particular direction, and for a particular purpose.

Digitized by Google

viously conscious, for this is the province of memory, and we need hardly say that Dr. Brown's theory has really no bearing whatever on the subject which he desires to explain. It was in consequence of this most unaccountable notion, that, to say an idea was "suggested," was to explain the process of its generation, that we find Brown attempting to explain almost every mental phenomena by this "suggestion," without giving us the slightest information as to the specialities by which the infinite varieties of forms of "suggestion" are to be distinguished from each other, or apparently being aware even that such information was necessary. Accordingly, we admit, that "every conception of memory is a suggestion," *i.e.*, it is, somehow or other, suggested to our minds, but it is an explanation of the nature and source of this particular kind of "suggestion" that we desire to receive, but of which Dr. Brown tells us nothing. His very theory of suggestion, indeed, which is almost ludicrously simple, actually precluded all need of analysis; for it at once applied to every case, and superseded every difficulty, without, however, explaining anything whatever. Memory, therefore, there can be no doubt, is an original and "distinct intellectual faculty," as testified by our consciousness, by which past mental states are re-called; nor is there probably a fact of any kind which human beings more universally and thoroughly recognise.

We have thus, in the first instance, in so far

Digitized by Google

noticed Brown's theory, because, in thus far, it implies an error altogether different from that of Reid, and his more devoted followers, who regard the conceptions of memory as somehow or other distinct from states of the mind itself. They seem to imagine that ideas of memory are ideas of perception, stored up in some receptacle of the mind, which are taken out and examined as often as convenient. For such a theory there seems no ground whatever. It is absolutely impossible and absurd, indeed, to suppose an idea existing *per se*, and separate from the mind conceiving it. Ideas are merely the objects of our consciousness, or, in other words, are objectively known to the mind, as consciously felt at the very time in which we are also consciously cognisant of the mind itself as their subject, and must consequently continue to appertain to the mind in the same form, and TO BE SO REMEMBERED, or else the connection, as actually constituted betwixt the recollection and the perception, becomes impossible, since, as will presently appear, the element of duration linking them, must necessarily have disappeared in the process.

The origin of the misconception may be traced to that very same doctrine concerning ideas, which has generated so many mistakes with regard to sensation. They were supposed, as we have seen, to be some species of demi-spiritual entities or qualities coming from external bodies to the mind, and there constituting representatives of such external

Digitized by Google

existences, from which, somehow or other, they had emanated. Now, Dr. Reid, no doubt, repudiated this theory, in the mode under which it had been previously recognised, but fell into an error of precisely the same character, by nearly inverting the process, in the distinction which he attempted to draw betwixt sensation and perception, seeing that he has left the mode under which perceptions reach the mind altogether unexplained, except under the supposition that they are separate entities not external to the mind, but pre-existing in the mind, for the purpose of directing our attention to some assumed external existences which they are supposed to represent. Hence, he necessarily recognises spiritual entities in the mind, not produced by the operation of the mind itself, but arbitrarily and creatively pre-existing there, which he calls first principles, intuitions, and the like, altogether apart from the mere states of the mind to which they appertain, and not generated by any of its faculties. Among these, although he does not seem to have been aware of it himself, perceptions must necessarily be included, in as much as there is no other possible source from whence they would be legitimately derived. Hence, we at once appreciate the difficulty of discovering how those pre-existing entities—those thoughts, ideas, intuitions, or by whatever name they may be called—could be identified with certain external existences on the one hand, and certain faculties of the mind on the

Digitized by Google

other. There seems no link to connect and combine them with one another. Now, it is these separate perceptions, whatever they may be, which Reid and his followers regard as the objects of memory. "Memory must have an object," says Reid, "Every man who remembers, must remember something, and that which he remembers is "called the object of his remembrance. In this "memory agrees with perception, but differs from "sensation, which has no object but the feeling "itself."[a] This evidently confuses the indirect reference made by memory to a past cause or primary consciousness, with the direct consciousness which is the feeling itself, the state of mind itself, and evidently can be nothing else. Hence, a new series of difficulties; for, if we recollect *not the mind itself* existing in a past state as conscious of an object, but some object distinct from the mind, some isolated spiritual entity existing somehow in the mind, it seems not only difficult to conceive how it could be connected with the mind at all, but absolutely impossible to imagine how even an approximating notion would be formed as TO THE TIME WHEN IT HAD BEEN ORIGINALLY GENERATED THERE. It might have been a day, or a year, or a thousand years before. If we merely remember objects or phenomena, and not the mind which realises them, it would obviously be impossible to connect them with any particular time in which our

[a] Intellectual powers—Essay 3rd, ch. 1.

Digitized by Google

minds were conscious of them, inasmuch as by the very supposition, we never were conscious of our minds at all. That we could possibly, therefore, recognise a time when ideas became to us connected with a mind, of which we never knew anything at all, and of the existence of which we were never conscious, is evidently absurd and contradictory; and it is in vain to say that we measure time by a reference to external facts, such as the rising or setting of the sun, or by the progress of months and years, because either the ideas of these must be themselves states of mind, *i.e.*, of which we are conscious objectively, along with our consciousness of our minds subjectively, or else they would be mere phenomena apart from any consciousness of mind, and existing as isolated facts; so that such ideas, the moment they were past, being in no way connected with our consciousness of mind, could convey no idea of duration, which, if not felt by the mind AS A MODE OF ITS OWN EXISTENCE, evidently could never be realised at all. Duration can only be appreciated, in the first instance, by a remembrance of the time during which we have been conscious of our own existence, *i.e.*, of our own minds existing, and thus it is that we have our ideas of the comparative longitude of the various periods into which time has been more or less artificially divided. Our minds, while we are awake, progress in a continuous course of thinking and feeling, realising at each successive stage their

Digitized by Google

various objects of consciousness—each state becoming latent in giving way to an ulterior state, until re-called to recollection by an operation of memory —when, however, we have *not the former state absolutely* re-produced, but a new state which, though not the former state, yet recognises the former state, and in an obvious sense, identifies it with itself, under a process which necessarily implies a cognition more or less precise, of the length of conscious existence which has intervened between them. We thus, by memory, in connection with continuous consciousness of existence, use the phenomena of our objective consciousness, as measures of duration, and thus, in so far, can compare times generally altogether apart from any artificial measurement, which is, indeed, a modification of this process, and can be only understood in its philosophy by a reference to it. Hence, our artificial measurements of time can give us no natural or primary knowledge of duration. These are a mere result of reason and experience, limiting and determining into parts our general knowledge of duration attained by the consciousness of the mind itself, and thus giving us inferential conclusions, which become practically available for defining and comparing the precise periods at which various ideas occurred, and the length of time during which various ideas continued. Of course these conclusions, again, are indirectly applicable to external existences as generative of such ideas, being,

Digitized by Google

indeed, the form under which time is usually regarded, and thus it is that, by habit, we are led to connect our ideas of time with such external existences, as if it were these that we directly remember; whereas our knowledge of these can only be indirect, in so far as we know certain particulars of our consciousness to be derived from them, the real objects of consciousness being the states of mind in which such external objects undoubtedly, in so far, are involved, though not their entities or constitutive natures, which we only discover to be external to our minds by the operation of experience.

But, even supposing that we had some means of connecting such objects or phenomena with our minds at such periods as they respectively began to exist there (which, however, if we are not conscious of our minds, is evidently impossible), yet, supposing such to be the case, how could we form any idea of the duration of those vast portions of our lives during which we have no distinct recollection of any external event at all? It is manifest, that unless there were in our remembrance a remembrance of the consciousness of our own existence during those periods, however vague it may be, or, at all events, an assurance that we have in all past time, had a continuous remembrance of such consciousness, we could have no kind of idea of the length of time intervening betwixt any two events that might be remembered. If we had no recollection of the consciousness of the mind itself

Digitized by Google

during such period, it would be perfectly impossible for us to determine whether the interval betwixt such events had been ten minutes or ten years.

But, without dwelling upon a matter so obvious, we may take it for granted, under such circumstances, that no one will maintain our knowledge of duration to be derived from any external cause exclusively, which is the great point of practical importance. It will not be maintained that there is nothing in the processes of our minds which could enable us to distinguish betwixt a day and a year, except the observation of the solar and lunar phenomena; nor betwixt five minutes and five hours, except our perceptions of the motions of a watch, or the shades of a sun-dial. So far, indeed, are the phenomena from warranting such a conclusion that, on the contrary, we have in every act of recollection, an immediate assurance of a state of mind as having occurred at some past period of our history of which the date is fixed in each instance more or less precisely, by a sense of the continued duration of the mind itself, as conscious of a series of subsequent states. We are in no degree conscious of any double process under which the recollection of such anterior consciouness is, by a separate operation, connected with our minds, and a determination of the date of its occurrence thence elicited. We are not, indeed, conscious of any spiritual entities or ideas whatever distinct from our states of mind themselves 'nor is there any ground for supposing

Digitized by Google

the existence of such spiritual entites, nor are they, indeed, possible, as we trust is now obvious under the considerations which have thus been suggested. If, indeed, we can be assured of anything, it is that in memory we can directly remember only the states of our own minds, or, in other words, our minds themselves existing in certain states—and this extends to the recollection, generally, of our minds absolutely as existing even during the times that we remember nothing of their special operations. We have a general recollection that, all along, during our waking hours we have been conscious of our own existence, as well as of the time during which we have thus been conscious of such existence continuously flowing onwards, so as to give us the notion of duration. That we cannot measure duration in the same way during sleep, is just because our consciousness of existence has been more or less dormant, though, when we awake, the feelings of our organic state, as more or less refreshed, vigorous, &c., will indicate more or less, through experience, the duration of our slumbers. It is not, therefore, any external facts that memory *directly* recognises, nor isolated spiritual entities existing in the mind, whether under the name of images, ideas, intuitions, cognitions, or anything else—such words, when correctly employed, being mere names for different forms of mental consciousness—but it is the mind itself which the mind remembers as existing in different

Digitized by Google

states and operating in different phenomena. In this way, in memory the whole character and frame of mind, as thinking, desiring, feeling, and so on at any former time, is represented to us. It is not anything isolated or apart, but the precise state in which we existed at some former period, in proportion to the clearness of our recollection in each case, which is imaged before us, and this—by a process which will afterwards be explained—in connection with those other states, which preceded or followed such recollection, *in so far as it may have been modified or coloured thereby.* No doubt the error to which we have now been adverting has partially resulted from the tendency of philosophers to regard the faculties of the mind in some subtle and metaphysical way, as something distinct from the mind itself, as if sensation, memory, reason, &c., were not modes merely under which the mind exhibits itself, but qualities existing somehow away from the mind, and each operating separately and *per se.* Now, it would be just as reasonable to suppose that the eye, the ear, the nose, the palate, were things separate from the organic system and operating *per se,* or were merely in an arbitrary manner connected with it, as to suppose that the mental qualities are so with regard to the mind. They are, as qualities are of the mind, just parts of the organic system, or powers of it—which, as we now use the terms, is the same thing—and of the very essence of it, else would it be impossible to

Digitized by Google

connect them with the organic system at all, and they would evidently exist as independent and merely isolated phenomena.

Now, there is no particular with respect to which the importance of this practical development of the nature of memory is more strikingly manifested than in explaining the grounds of our belief in personal identity—a subject which has already in so far been discussed; but it is a phenomenon, which, simple as it appears, has generated so much doubt and difficulty, approximating almost to scepticism, that it seems desirable again to recur to it—since, under the views that have now been given, our argument may be more thoroughly understood—especially considering that it necessarily lies at the foundation of all science, and that there can be no certainty of any philosophical conclusion, so long as our faith in, and conception of this conviction remains unsettled. Nor need the perplexities which have distracted all philosophers in regard to the grounds of our belief in personal identity surprise us, considering the almost universal error to which we have recently been directing our attention, under which our recollections are assumed to be the remembrance of certain thoughts, ideas, feelings, or objects of some kind or other existing in the mind, instead of the remembrance of the mind itself realising such thoughts or objects. Under that assumption, indeed, any satisfactory explanation of our belief in personal identity, as will

Digitized by Google

now be clearly perceived, is perfectly impossible—since, if it be thoughts or objects in the mind, and not the mind itself realising such thoughts or objects that we remember, it would be impossible to say either that such objects existed in our minds, or even that the mind in which these objects formerly existed was the same mind in which representations of them subsequently were found, or even if at either of these times they existed in a mind at all, or were anything else than isolated ideas or singular relations, existing indeed, but when, where, or how, it would be out of the question even to attempt logically to determine.

Nothing, accordingly, can be more unsatisfactory than the views generally of philosophers upon this subject. Locke has confounded consciousness with memory, and personal identity itself with the grounds of our belief in it. He says—"For since consci-"ousness always accompanies thinking, and it is "that that makes every one what he calls self; and "thereby distinguishes him from all other think-"ing beings; in this alone consists personal "identity, *i.e.*, the sameness of the rational being; "and as far as this consciousness can be calculated "backwards, to any past action or thought, so FAR "REACHES THE IDENTITY OF THE PERSON; it is the "same self now, as it was then; and it is by the "same self with this present one, that the action "was done."[a] In other words, consciousness is not

[a] Human understanding—Book 2d, ch. 25th, Sec. 9.

Digitized by Google

a state which realises our thoughts, but it is a something which "accompanies thinking;" and it is not the ground of our belief in personal identity, but "in "this alone consists personal identity;" and hence whatever portions of our lives we are not conscious of, we must abstract from the duration of our personal identity. But we are and can only be conscious of the present moment, and, therefore, under this theory there could be no such thing as personal identity at all. Assuming, however, that in this Locke had, somehow, unwittingly confused consciousness with memory, it would still follow, that personal identity could only be predicated of times with reference to which we recollected some "past action or thought," which would limit our assurance of personal identity to a very small portion of our lives, with large gaps at intervals, during which it would utterly disappear. Indeed, under any view, it is certain that this theory annihilates personal identity altogether; for, though there might be identity of consciousness, identity of the mind would be impossible, since the mind itself is never supposed to be known in any part of the process. Reid, however, has so fully and fairly criticised this theory of Locke's, that nothing further need be said on the subject, although after all, his own hypothesis can hardly be regarded as much more satisfactory. For he calls "Identity a relation "between a thing which is *known* to exist at "one time, and a thing which is *known* to have

Digitized by Google

"existed at another time."[a] Whereas identity, whatever it may be, may certainly exist whether it be *known* or not, for surely the same thing may or rather must be, the same thing, even supposing the relation entirely unknown. The sameness does not depend upon its being known; but is and must be an actual fact, whether known or unknown. It is manifest, from this definition, that Reid, notwithstanding the sharpness of his criticism, had by no means thoroughly disembarassed himself of Locke's theory of "consciousness" being "identity." Probably he was partly aware of the confusion of his ideas on the subject, for, almost immediately afterwards, he says, "If you ask a definition of identity, "I confess that I cannot give one! It is too "simple a notion to admit of logical definition."[b] Now this is perfectly true, and it had been well that Reid had kept it in view, when he attempted such a definition. The only objection to the remark is, that it had nothing to do with the particular point which he desired to determine. There is no need of a definition in such a case, for all human beings know what personal identity means, and the only question is, how they come to be assured of their own personal identity. In one passage, Reid ascribes it to "remembrance." He says, "I remember that, twenty years ago, I con- "versed with such a person: my memory testifies "not only that this was done, but that it was done

[a] Intellectual powers—Essay 3d, ch. 4. [b] Do.

Digitized by Google

"by ME, who now remember it."* Now, this would be perfectly just, in so far as it goes, provided Reid's system admitted that the "me" could be remembered, but for this purpose, it is obvious that we must have been conscious of the "me," *i.e.*, of the soul itself, in order that we could, by possibility, remember it, since it is obviously impossible to remember that which we never knew. But Reid's system admits of no such consciousness, for he limits consciousness to the faculties and feelings, *i.e.*, in other words, either to something away from the mind, and intermediate betwixt the mind and the object, or to the mere operations of mind. Hence he was necessarily driven to another theory, to the effect that our belief in our own identity is a principle taken for granted as depending nearly on the same intuitive or instinctive conviction, as assures us of the existence of memory itself or any other mental power. "I take it for granted," he says, "that all the thoughts I am conscious of or "remember, are the thoughts of one and the same "thinking principle which I call myself or my mind. "Every man has an immediate and irresistible con- "viction, not only of his present existence, but of "his continued existence and identity so far back "*as he can remember;*" and a few sentences afterwards, he adds—"Every man of a sound mind "finds himself under a necessity of believing his "own identity. The conviction of this is immediate

* Intellectual powers—Essay 3rd, ch. 4.

Digitized by Google

"and irresistible."[a] It is clear, therefore, that in referring our belief in personal identity to "Re-"membrance," Dr. Reid must have had some idea of some indirect action of memory forced upon him by the evident consideration, that unless the mind itself was in some way or other involved in the process, it could not be possible to have any evidence whatever of its identity. This notion, however, was altogether vague, and accordingly he falls back again on his primary theory of intuition in express and unqualified terms, as alone in any measure satisfactorily explanatory of the phenomenon, in the words which *immediately* follow the analysis previously given. "We probably, at "first," he says, "derive our notion of identity "from that natural conviction which every man has "from the dawn of reason of his own identity and "continued existence. The operations of our minds "are all successive, and have no continued exis-"tence." There, accordingly, was his difficulty. Memory could not evolve the phenomenon, for, supposing that we are conscious only of the faculties or operations of mind, and not of the very essence of mind itself, it was impossible to conceive how "the "memory testified not only that the acts done "twenty years before were done, but that they "were done by ME;" and, accordingly, it is with a view of accounting for this part of the phenomenon, that he goes on again as formerly to refer it to in-

[a] Intellectual powers—Essay 1st, ch. 2.

Digitized by Google

tuition, in these words, "but the thinking being "has a continued existence, and we have an "*invincible belief* that it remains the same, when "all its thoughts and operations change."[a] Hence, it follows, that according to Reid, memory is not directly, but only indirectly the cause of our belief in personal identity, as being the OCCASION merely which originates the conviction of our previous existence, by enabling us to compare a former fact with a present phenomenon, and therefore requiring the supplement of an "invincible belief," in order to assure us of our continuous identity; which invincible belief, however, being left wholly unexplained, and, as an isolated phenomenon, being, indeed, wholly inexplicable, as having no foundation in fact—all logical grounds of belief in our personal identity, necessarily fail.

The views of Brown upon this subject, are, as has been said, substantively the very same as Reid's, and therefore, of course, liable to the same objections. In one place he says, "there is to be found "in it (*i.e.* our belief in personal identity) every "circumstance which can be required to substan- "tiate it as a law of intuitive belief,"[b] and again, "the belief of our mental identity, then, we may "safely conclude, is founded on an essential princi- "ple of our constitution."[c] But, in the very same Lecture we are informed, "our faith in our iden-

[a] Intellectual powers—Essay 3rd, ch. 4.
[b] Brown's Lectures—Lecture xiii. [c] Do.

Digitized by Google

"tity then, as being only another form of the faith "which we put in memory, can be questioned only "by those who deny all memory,"[a] which can only mean, that we remember our personal identity as a matter of fact, whereas belief in personal identity under the very terms of the expression, implies a sense of present existence in relation to our whole past lives. The confusion, both in the cases of Brown and Reid, manifestly originates in their conviction that memory had assuredly something to do with the matter, combined with their inability to explain what that something actually is; while this inability again, was owing to their idea that we are conscious only of the operations of mind, and not of mind itself. Hence, while they connect memory in some way with the phenomenon, they do not even attempt to explain what part memory performs in realising it. They content themselves with cutting the knot, by referring the result to some inexplicable intuition.

Now, all this contradiction and confusion at once and entirely disappears, when we regard memory as recalling not merely certain spiritual entities or operations which have existed in the mind, but the MIND ITSELF, as formerly existing in certain states; and the cause of the phenomenon is brought out in its fulness, when we farther keep in view what every one knows to be fact, that we are not only conscious of our minds when engaged in formal

[a] Brown's Lectures—Lecture xiii.

Digitized by Google

processes, but that we are conscious of their existence at all times, at least while we are awake, although, perhaps, in a less marked and precise form, and that this continuous consciousness is, of course, a subject of memory. Not, indeed, that we actually remember every instant of our existence, *quâ* existence, any more than we remember every mental process, but we remember, that all our lives we have had the same remembrance of our continued identity, or in other words, that there never was a period of our lives in which we doubted it, so that by a comparison of our present consciousness with our past remembrance, the assurance of our personal identity thus extends backwards, through every period of our history, up to the time when we began to have any feelings at all. It is not, therefore, the remembrance of our mental operations, states, or ideas, that gives us the assurance of our personal identity, but the remembrance of our minds themselves as existing in all our varied states, and the more we think of it, it becomes the more obvious, that except by this remembrance of our minds themselves, we could never have any proof of our personal identity at all. In this there is no difficulty nor subtilty. The fact, as stated, not only simply and thoroughly explains the phenomenon, but the explanation is felt to be true to our consciousness, the moment that we clearly understand it.

That the consciousness of our own existence, and consequently the recollection of it, may, in so far, be

Digitized by Google

interrupted by sleep, is true, yet, when we awake from such sleep, we are under the very same operation of memory assured, that we are the same identical persons as when we fell asleep. We are not, however, prepared, if such expression may be used, dogmatically to admit that human beings (setting aside dreams) are altogether unconscious of existence even during sleep. Assuredly we have an impression more or less distinct and precise, even after sound sleep, as to the comparative length of time during which it has continued. At all events, as has been already proved, and we need not repeat the argument, we know by memory that we are the same persons as when we fell asleep, and no possible objection can be taken to the conclusion, except on the inadmissible assumption that our natures deceive us, and that our memories testify a lie.

In so far memory, too, is necessary for the constitution of our knowledge of space, *i.e.*, not of space as discoverable by any single sensation—for this is known as a whole, at once and directly, by consciousness—but of that knowledge of space which we acquire by successive acts of consciousness under which such knowledge is amplified. In the same way memory is necessary for the constitution of our idea of motion. The process in each case, however, is so obvious, that it is sufficient merely to indicate the share which this faculty or capacity has in the realisation of those phenomena.

We now come to a particular in regard to me-

Digitized by Google

mory of the very greatest practical importance, and which is necessarily suggested by the tenor of the argument in which we have been engaged, for it was therein indicated that it is only a portion, and a small portion, of the operations and states or ideas of which we have been conscious that we continue to remember, and which thus serve as fixed points, by means of which a more precise determination of the longitude of the various portions of our lives may be ascertained. Hence we are naturally led to inquire how this should be? and how it should happen that some things are easily remembered and long remembered, whilst others are difficult to remember, and quickly forgotten. In explaining this, it may, in the first instance, be remarked generally, that no doubt the character and compass of the memory in different individuals depends in so far on their respective mental constitutions. One man has, we find, a better memory than another; and one man has a better memory in respect of one species of phenomena, and another in respect of another. This, to a certain extent is, no doubt, referable to nature, and in thus far we can no more explain such differences than we can explain the essential constitution of memory itself. Except in so far as they directly act on us or are felt by us, the nature of entities is beyond our discovery. We believe, however, that in regard to these apparent differences of memory, much more is usually assigned to nature than belongs to nature,

Digitized by Google

and that many particulars usually referred to primary constitution, are really explicable by other causes, and we have no doubt will sometime be so explained to an extent at present, perhaps, hardly conceivable.

The point, however, to which we now specially desire to direct our attention, does not regard the differences of memory amongst different individuals, whether attributable to original constitution or not, but to the difference in the various kinds of phenomena under which the same person recollects some particulars and forgets others, even though they be of the same date—nay, sometimes continues to remember those which had occurred long before others which he has entirely forgotten. Mr. Stewart, in so far truly attributes to attention the greater or less ease with which we commit to memory, but most erroneously, according to the usage of his school, supposes attention to be a primary principle,[a] whereas "attention" is merely the name of a more or less voluntary direction of the mind to a particular object, and, therefore, can in no measure explain this cognate phenomenon. It is, however, very easily explained as being merely the result of the greater or less interest that we feel in the object, from whatever cause, and whether voluntary or involuntary. In truth, it is on the interest involved in a subject, either directly or indirectly,

[a] Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind, ch. 2nd and ch. 6th, sec. 1, and Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind, ch. 2nd, sec. 1.

Digitized by Google

that attention itself depends; for to attend to that to which we are perfectly indifferent, *under any aspect*, is impossible, or rather it is impossible that we should even attempt to attend to it. On the same principle, a stronger feeling or passion coming into operation with respect to some other particular, will immediately distract our attention from that in which we had been previously engaged. We have here, therefore, the true cause of one particular being more easily remembered, and of being more firmly fixed in the mind, than another. Whatever involves the strongest passion, the deepest interest, will be the most easily acquired and the most permanently remembered; and, accordingly, those events which occur when our passions are strongest, are *cæteris paribus* the most deeply fixed in the memory. This is precisely the reason that old people frequently remember the events of their youth, when they have forgotten those which appear to be equally or more important, that had occurred only a short time before. Their passions in old age are weaker—the events of life are therefore, less interesting, and in the same measure are they stamped less deeply upon the memory. Nay, in some instances in this way we have a more precise and lasting recollection of events to which we had given no attention at all, understanding attention in the sense which Stewart rightly attributes to it, of a voluntary direction of the mind. Thus a sudden accident or unexpected misfortune,

Digitized by Google

to which we had not voluntarily directed our thoughts at all, will be longer remembered and more accurately remembered than facts of less interest, to which for weeks, or even years, our thoughts had been as anxiously directed as our voluntary agency was capable of enforcing. It is on this account that we find it necessary to interest children in anything which we wish them to learn. The more we interest them the more intense will be their instinctive application, and, of course, the greater their success. We can force voluntary application by the fear of punishment, but this is the least effective mode of attaining the end. We try, therefore, to give them an instinctive, though still an indirect interest in the hope of reward, whether immediate or prospective; but the most effective mode results from the interest which they may actually take in any study itself for its own sake. This implies not only an instinctive, but a direct interest; and when it can be realised, the results will be both more rapid and more permanent.

This appears still more manifest from the consideration, that except in so far as desires or passions are combined with any idea, it can never recur to our remembrance at all. That which we feel no interest in, of any kind, it is impossible that we can think of. We do not seem even to be conscious of sensations which are neither accompanied by feelings of pain nor of pleasure; for those sensations which we observe only by attention, are evidently

Digitized by Google

observed through the operation of those feelings which originate such attention, and therefore, obviously must imply desire of some kind or other. In the same way, we cannot be conscious of any thought previously known to the mind, nor could such thought suggest itself, unless directly or indirectly some feeling called our attention to it. Hence, it would seem that the mass of our thoughts are latent in the mind, just because they are not cognate to any existing feeling, or in other words, suitable for its gratification; and consequently, it follows, as indeed is the fact, that ideas or thoughts cease to be latent, and are remembered just as their respective cognate feelings, *i.e.*, the feelings which more or less directly can be gratified through their instrumentality, successively exhibit themselves. In this way, it may be doubted whether any large proportion of our thoughts are ever lost, or whether they would not be remembered again, could we only re-exist in the same or a cognate state of feeling. Certain it is, that long-forgotten events do suddenly rise up in our minds—sometimes during dreams, or under an entire change of circumstances—such, as in a measure, to bring back tendencies and feelings, which, from lapse of years, had been much impaired, or in a great measure, even to all appearance, annihilated. Thus, again, it is manifest, that as any idea ceases to be connected with the feeling which originally made it known to our consciousness, it must, in the same propor-

Digitized by Google

tion, become obscure and gradually die away and be forgotten. Its connection with the consciousness in such a case, diminishes and disappears. If an event be recollected at all, therefore, it must be by some greater or less interest, still attached to the feeling with which it was primarily connected, or to that feeling being revivified and renewed. As there must be a feeling before we can realise a sensation therefore, so must there be a feeling before we can realise a recollection: without this, it is impossible that the mind can have any attraction to it, so as to bring it within the scope of its apprehension. This intimate relationship of feeling to the consciousness both of sensation and recollection, will be farther illustrated when we come to speak of the association of ideas; but it is most wonderful, considering the interest involved in it, and its practical importance, that the phenomenon has been so little attended to.

In connection with this subject arises an inquiry into the manner in which we remember symbols, such as mere words, or the like, which have in themselves no meaning, and consequently can in so far involve no feeling, but which acquire a meaning, and imply a feeling, merely as representatives of events or objects with which they are arbitrarily identified. That we could remember a word which has no meaning, and which we connect with no feeling nor any purpose—for in this case obviously a feeling would necessarily be involved—

Digitized by Google

is under the analysis which we have already completed, indisputably impossible. Our remembrance of words, consequently, and all symbols, *quâ* symbols, must necessarily depend upon their representative character, and is conceivable in no other way. Now, in order to explain this phenomenon, we must in so far anticipate by appealing to a result which can only be attainable under a process not yet investigated, but which, as we all know, enables us to ascertain identities and differences, and all manner of relations, and to the desire of ascertaining such particulars through which the suitable faculty for the purpose of ascertaining them is called into operation. Accordingly, under the operation of this faculty we first learn to connect natural sounds with their causes, and subsequently learn to identify all the artificial symbols by which our fellow-creatures express the various thoughts or indicate the various events and objects which they desire to communicate, or to which they desire to direct the attention of each other. The felt utility of such an identification, and its evident tendency to realise our wishes, constitute probably the primary feeling which urges us to its attainment. And in that attainment we necessarily, in each case, come to identify also the feeling which each thought, event, or object, involves, with the symbol which now is employed to represent it. No doubt the feeling involved in many ideas, especially when exceedingly complex, may be vague and general, as being not merely

Digitized by Google

absolute, but still more distinctive; yet, that some such feeling must combine with representative symbols is certain, otherwise they could not be symbols, and would instantly be forgotten. That the feeling must frequently be vague and distinctive rather than absolute, is, however, clear from attending to this circumstance, which seems to have been almost entirely overlooked—that words, such, for example, as "history," not merely symbolise single ideas, but books and volumes. When, accordingly, we speak of "history," we cannot mean all history, but that something which distinguishes and discriminates the composition called history from philosophy, medicine, &c. It is the feeling cognate with the rational distinction and discrimination, therefore, which cognises to us the idea which the word represents. Yet this feeling may obviously be of a very complicated kind, comprehending more or less an immense mass of feelings, all more or less related to the multitude of ideas or events which it symbolises, and thus, as we shall presently shew more particularly, may recall and represent any one of them to our remembrance. In this way it is obvious enough how symbols will come gradually, by habit, to take the place of the events or objects which they were intended merely to represent, and we thus come to imagine that we understand a subject when we have merely realised the vague feelings attached to its representative symbols. This developes the first main cause of that confusion

Digitized by Google

and indefiniteness of thought which characterises the great majority of mankind—a subject which we can merely indicate here, but which will constitute a portion, and a most important portion, of our subsequent investigations.

From these considerations it will be easily seen, that artificial memory, as it is called, is not, as some suppose, a mere delusion—for artificial memory is just the invention of new symbols, which, if thoroughly identified with feelings cognate to the ideas which they represent, will necessarily recall them, and the more readily, that the identification of these ideas and their symbols is a separate and isolated act, which, accordingly, can be mixed up with no other considerations, and therefore is impressed on the mind with a precision and definiteness which could not have been otherwise ascertained. Hence appears, farther, also, the importance to memory of frequently recalling our knowledge, and especially our symbolical knowledge, in order that we may thereby not only acquire a more full and accurate assurance of the meaning of the symbols, but may also identify more entirely the feelings which appertain to the things represented with their representative symbols, so as that the same feelings being common to, may equally suggest, both. From this it will be obvious that every resolution to recollect an event at some future time must be accompanied by some symbolical arrangement, which, being likely to be brought under our notice when

Digitized by Google

the idea is to be recalled, may thus be made to act as a monitor.

But whilst it is clear, that our remembrance of symbols must necessarily depend upon their representative character, and their union thereby with the feelings which appertain to the originals or subjects which they represent, so long as we regard them *quâ* symbols, it is undoubtedly true, also, that we may remember sounds or any other symbols apart from any *rational* meaning attached to them after frequent repetition, under a different process. This is very strikingly illustrated in the case of musical sounds, when the recollection seems to depend on the feeling implied in relations of harmony by which former sensations are recalled, and which, in so far, at all events, would seem to be organic, in as far as the nerves, and through them the muscles, naturally assume consecutive and accordant vibrations, so that a sudden and irregular stop in the music gives a sort of shock to the system. In the same way, in repeating poetry there seems to be a sense of the same species of harmony as realised in numbers, and which seems organically to suggest to us, without any effort, the successive words to which we had been accustomed. The same cause, in a modified form, probably explains the effect, also, of very frequent repetition of words, whatever be the nature of their arrangement. Assuredly, we come to repeat them, without any reference to the sense, and this is, no doubt,

Digitized by Google

from habit having gradually given them a sort of measured harmony to ourselves unconsciously, so that each antecedent word, as it were, modulates the physical organisation for the pronunciation of that which succeeds it; and this seems proved by the universally-known fact, that if at any point the stream of repetition ceases, we cannot proceed again from the same point in the same way, but must either recall the sense, in order to commence the subsequent repetition, or else return again on our steps, till the harmony, if we may so speak, of the operation be recovered. This, indeed, is the cause of our tendency, in such cases, to repeat very rapidly, so as not to allow the sliding movements of the muscles to stop, so long as to interfere with the process. In so far, then, the philosophy of the common phenomena of memory seems sufficiently clear and intelligible, nor can we doubt that, as memory is realised by feeling, the only effectual means of recalling past thoughts is by recovering the former state of mind, or tone of feeling, by tracing backwards the train of thought from feeling to feeling, when the particular thought which we desire will ultimately be remembered, so long, at all events, as any degree of the actual identification of such thought with the feeling which realised its consciousness, continues to remain. The same principle will serve, in some measure, perhaps, to explain, also, certain singular and extraordinary phenomena of memory which have been recorded by Dr. Abercrombie—one of the few phy-

Digitized by Google

sicians that would seem, in any measure, to have appreciated the intimate connection betwixt mental philosophy and medical science—"A man mentioned by Mr. Abernethy," he says, "had been born in "France, but had spent the greater part of his life "in England, and for many years had entirely lost "the habit of speaking French. But, when under "the care of Mr. Abernethy, on account of the "effects of an injury on the head, he always spoke "French." Again, "a similar case occurred in St. "Thomas' Hospital, of a man who was in a state "of stupor, in consequence of an injury of the head. "On his partial recovery, he spoke a language "which nobody in the hospital understood, but "which was soon ascertained to be Welsh. It was "then discovered that he had been thirty years absent from Wales, and before the accident had "entirely forgotten his native language!" But, perhaps the most extraordinary case is the following: "A case," he says, "has been related "to me of a boy who, at the age of four, received "a fracture of the skull, for which he underwent the operation of trepan. He was, at the "time, in a state of perfect stupor, and after his recovery, retained no recollection either of the "accident or the operation. At the age of fifteen, "during the delirium of a fever, he gave his mother "a correct description of the operation, and the "persons who were present at it, with their dress "and other minute particulars. He had never

Digitized by Google

"been observed to allude to it before, and no means "were known by which he could have acquired the "circumstances which he mentioned."[a] Now, were all the particulars of this last case thoroughly ascertained and certain, it would go far to prove that our organic states may affect the mind *unconsciously*, and thus may subsequently be remembered, in the event of a recurrence of perfectly identical or cognate feelings, so as to give consciousness to those states. But though we not only believe this possible, but are also inclined to think that there are many facts more or less corroborative of such a theory, yet, it is evident that the case mentioned is too loosely reported, and altogether liable to too many objections to justify any approach to a positive conclusion upon the subject. The whole of these cases, however, in each of which, no doubt, there must have been some truth, would seem to sanction a supposition previously indicated, that in reality we never forget anything, so as that a recurrence of absolutely identical or cognate feelings might not recall it, but that past states of mind are merely latent until such identical or cognate feelings re-appear as to realise a consciousness of them. Hence it would seem that it is not our memory itself which depends on the state of the body or organic being, but the feelings which give consciousness to the memory. This seems a warrantable conclusion from the cases above quoted, so

[a] Inquiries concerning the Intellectual Powers—Part 3rd, sec. 1.

Digitized by Google

far as they can be depended on, and it is confirmed by all experience, inasmuch as though memory unquestionably appears in so far to be modified by the state of the body—as when the spirits are depressed, for example, or the nervous system agitated; yet this modification of memory is not occasioned by any absolute affection of that faculty itself, which is immediately restored to its full strength on the re-adjustment of the feelings, specially in the restoration of the vigour and energies of the bodily frame. But however intensely interesting this subject may be, it is obvious that we want facts for the attainment of anything like assurance as to our conclusions. If, however, the necessity be clearly understood, and the importance of the results appreciated, we need not doubt that facts well authenticated—for otherwise they are nearly useless—will be forthcoming. Every man, and especially every medical man, has an opportunity of guaranteeing so much, and we shall quickly have the means of ascertaining conclusions which at present are beyond our reach, when men are convinced that they may benefit their respective professions, and illustrate their own professional position, by communicating them.

"The very same principles farther go to explain, in a great measure, many of the phenomena of dreaming, day-dreaming, fever, delirium, and insanity, wherein events long past and apparently forgotten, reappear in the most vivid colours to our

Digitized by Google

recollection. In such cases everything save the specially over-ruling feeling or passion is shut out, whether by voluntary effort, bodily state, or whatever cause; and hence it necessarily follows, under these principles, that the consciousness of the particulars cognate to such feeling or passion must be more precise and vivid than under any other circumstances. Hence the *rationale* of such cases as the following:—"An eminent medical friend "informs me," says Dr. Abercrombie, "that dur- "ing fever, without any delirium, he, on one occa- "sion, repeated long passages from Homer, which "he could not do when in health; and another "friend has mentioned to me, that in a similar "situation, there was represented to his mind in a "most vivid manner, the circumstances of a journey "in the Highlands which he had performed long "before, including many minute particulars which "he had entirely forgotten."[a] Why the particular subjects mentioned should thus have occurred to these parties, rather than any other subjects, it is, of course, impossible to say, without a minute knowledge of their history and tendencies, but that having occurred, all the particulars connected with them should have presented themselves vividly to their minds, and been more precisely remembered, depends upon causes which are now—in so far at all events, we trust—perfectly manifest, and which will be still farther evolved when we come to speak of

[a] Inquiries, &c.—Part 3rd, sec. 1.

Digitized by Google

that mental process usually known under the name of the "association of ideas." In the following narrative the operation of the same cause is even still more strikingly developed: "The late Dr. Gregory "was accustomed to mention in his lectures the "case of a clergyman, who, while labouring under "a disease of the brain, spoke nothing but Hebrew, "which was ascertained to be the last language "that he had acquired."[a] Now it is the nature of all organic excitement, whether it take the shape of fever, cerebral inflammation, or anything else, to stimulate for a longer or shorter time one particular feeling or desire. In many cases, of course, such feeling or desire will be that most strongly affecting the mind at the time when the disease begins, and especially if such desire or feeling have been, as is often the case, itself a main cause of originating the organic excitement. Accordingly, in the case narrated, the acquisition of Hebrew, as we are informed, having been for some time the great object of the patient's anxiety, his mind under the impulse of the cerebral action took this direction with so much violence as to concentrate its whole attention thereon during the state of delirium, so that every particular which he had previously mastered of the facts of the language, necessarily was exhibited to him in vivid consciousness and without any distraction, all other considerations—by the strength of the over-ruling

[a] Abercrombie's Inquiries, &c —Part 3rd, sec. 1.

Digitized by Google

passion—being excluded, and the special object of his desire clothed with surpassing fascinations. Without maintaining that the principle thoroughly explains all those cases, it is indisputable that in a great measure it explains them, and that apart from it not one of them can be explained at all.

It may farther be observed with regard to memory, that its notions or states, however complex, and however rapidly they succeed each other, are only one in so far as cotemporaneous, and coloured, if we may so speak, by the same feelings. Each sensation, and indeed, each state of every kind, as we have already partially seen, implies a separate act of consciousness. We may, therefore, remember a variety of states as one whole; but we cannot remember two or more states, at the same time as different, and of which we are made conscious by different feelings, although we may be made conscious of one state by the combination of a variety of feelings. Farther, we by no means always remember our sensations or any other states of mind in their completeness, as they originally existed, but we may discriminate and extract, and consequently remember any part of any one state, and even combine it with others, just as the several parts more vividly interest us. It is not memory itself, however, that regulates and combines the succession of our thoughts. This is effected by a process which we shall presently proceed to explain, and which will be found to have an essential

Digitized by Google

bearing on many of the phenomena of memory. It must farther be carefully kept in view, that in every act of memory, along with the object recollected, we are also conscious of our own minds recollecting, since unless this were the case, it is evident that the recollection in each case would be something apart from ourselves, and consequently could give us no information, and could not indeed exist, so far as we can conceive, as an object of cognition, but only as a separate, isolated, and absolute entity.

In conclusion, it need only be mentioned, that we owe all our knowledge, and all our experience to memory. Apart from this faculty, we could know only phenomena of the moment, which would immediately pass away, to be succeeded by others equally fleeting. But memory retains them, and enables us thereby to afford to intelligence, when it may be required, a knowledge of those facts which are necessary for the determination and extension of principles, which, as applicable to all times and all circumstances, thereby elevate us above creatures of mere observation and impulse, as teaching us, not only what *is*, but what MUST BE, and thus ascertaining to us the future, from our logical inferences, as deduced from the past.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IX.

ON ASSOCIATION OF IDEAS.

Our thoughts succeed each other in a regulated order—Theory of Hartley, with respect to the cause of this—Of Leibnitz—Views of later Philosophers—Their misconception—Real nature of the process—Farther elucidation of the error of Hume and his successors—Illustration of the process—Effect of habit on the process—Action of mind in it—The process as exemplified in delirium and sleep—Its relation to abstraction or day-dreaming—Nature of our belief in dreams—Manifestation of the process in Insanity—How the process operates with reference to symbolical forms—Summary of the argument.

On looking back on our bye-past lives, we cannot help being sensible that our thoughts have succeeded each other in some regulated order, but what may be the principle of their union, or why one thought rather than another should succeed a previous thought, or how we are to control the series, or whether we can control it at all, are points, so far as we are aware, up to this time, wholly unexplained and unknown.

Hartley attributes the association of ideas to certain operations of the nervous system, and no doubt such operations of the nervous system may, in so far as we can tell, actually accompany, or even be essential to, the process. But the hypothesis is of no practical importance, not merely

Digitized by Google

because the action of body on mind, be it what it may, is utterly undiscoverable by us, but because even if it could be discovered, we should be as far as ever from knowing anything of the mode under which the ideas resulting therefrom could be regulated or controlled. Hartley's work is probably one of the most ingenious that was ever written under any form of the materialistic theory, and is on this account a striking illustration of the practical vanity of that theory, since it has not advanced us one step in the science of intellectual philosophy, in which it is only on a footing practically with every other system founding on the same principle, nor, we may venture to say, can any attempt of a similar character by possibility prove more successful, since evidently the first thing that such a system should determine is the possibility of blood and bones, and brains, and senses, and nerves, producing thought and feeling. Till this be done, it is impossible that any connection can be traced between the two, or any operation of the one realised as causative of the other; and it is clear that this never can be done, till thought and feeling can be subjected to the cognizance of the senses.

Leibnitz, again, was of opinion that human beings are a species of machines, whose minds being wound up, if we may so speak, at the beginning of their existence, progressively develope the series of thoughts let loose, as the chain runs down! It is a curious instance of German theories,

Digitized by Google

but hardly realising so much probability as to merit a lengthened consideration, deservedly eminent as was its author in many or most other branches of science.

Philosophers of a later date, have hardly even made an attempt at philosophically explaining the phenomena exhibited in this mental process. Incidentally, no doubt, they record many important facts; but, so far as principles are concerned, they have contented themselves with a sort of natural history of association, by collecting the various classes of relations under which associations seem most generally to take place.[a] This tendency originated—at least in modern times—with Hume, who supposed that consecutive ideas suggest each other, from certain peculiarities of their own nature, which he classifies under three heads. "To me," he says, "there appear to be only three "principles of connection among ideas—viz., resem- "blance, contiguity in time or place, and cause or "effect. That these principles serve to connect "ideas, will not, I believe, be much doubted. A "picture naturally leads our thoughts to the "original, &c."[b] Now nothing can more clearly shew the extreme indifference of philosophers to the proper use of terms, or more strikingly indicate a main cause of their consequent embarrassments,

[a] We have in this probably the origin of Mr. Jeffrey's idea, formerly mentioned, that mental philosophy is a science of classification.

[b] Hume's Essays—Sect. 3.

Digitized by Google

than that one endued with so much logical acuteness as Hume, should in this application, have called, "resemblance, contiguity, or cause and "effect," principles. They are mere facts, and facts external to the mind too, until such time as the mind has appreciated and realised the "resem- "blance, contiguity, cause or effect" of such facts as may be exhibited to it, which implies that the consecutive idea has *already* been suggested, and hence the very first question which occurs for determining the cause of the phenomenon, is as to the process under which this happens. If we once know *how the mind comes to attend* to the "resem- "blance, contiguity, causative, or effective" character of an object, and to direct itself to any one of these peculiarities rather than to others, the problem is well-nigh solved. It is evident, therefore, that Hume has given us, as has been said, a sort of imperfect natural history, instead of the philosophy of the process, and in this he has been followed by all succeeding inquirers. They have indeed added, and correctly added, certain other relations to those which he had proposed, and in thus far, have rendered the natural history of the process more complete; but it seems now universally admitted, that to perfect it is impossible, inasmuch as there is no possible relation which can be conceived, direct or indirect, real or symbolical, which may not constitute the antecedent in the process of association.

Digitized by Google

Dr. Brown seems, almost alone, to have perceived the difficulty, and in order to meet it, and thus explain why some of the relations which he assumes to constitute the primary laws of suggestion—"resemblance, contrast, nearness, in place or "time"—should occur to the mind rather than others, he proposes certain secondary laws of suggestion, operative when "the ORIGINAL feelings have "been—1, of longer or shorter continuance—2, "more or less lively—3, of more or less frequent oc- "currence—4, more or less recent—5, more or less "pure from the occasional and varying mixture of "other feelings. But which vary—6, according to "differences of original constitution—7, according "to differences of temporary emotion—8, according "to changes produced in the state of the body— "and 9, according to general tendencies produced "by prior habits."[a] Now, besides that this is merely another attempt at classification, the whole of these *forms* of the "original feelings," as he calls them, can, of course, apply only to RECOLLECTIONS, for these are the only "original" or previously existing feelings that we have; but, apart from this, the fact is—as a moment's consideration will satisfy any one—that the process of association, whatever it may be, rarely recalls previous feelings *precisely* as they had "originally" existed. On the contrary, our ideas suggested by the associating principle, are in the vast majority of cases, either entirely or

[a] Brown's Lectures—Lectures xxxvii and xxxviii.

Digitized by Google

partially new, and such as we never had previously known *precisely* in the same form. It is not, in other words, past ideas or feelings in their fulness, that are usually suggested, but modifications of them, operating in an entirely new way, and frequently having no conscious reference to any past state whatsoever. A misconception on this point runs through the whole of Brown's Lectures on the subject, from beginning to end. He says, that association of ideas is "a term employed to denote "that tendency of the mind by which FEELINGS "THAT WERE FORMERLY EXCITED BY AN EXTERNAL "CAUSE, arise afterwards, in regular successions to "each other, as it were spontaneously, or at least "without the immediate presence of any known "external cause."[a] The whole of this definition is a mass of errors. What, indeed, he could have meant by limiting the feelings resulting from the suggesting or associating process, to those that were "formerly excited by an *external* cause," it seems impossible to imagine, and the less, that he subsequently goes on to add, that "the associating prin- "ciple extends not to ideas only, but to every "species of affection of which the mind is suscepti- "ble. Our *internal* joys, sorrows, and all the "variety of our emotions, are capable of being RE- "VIVED in a certain degree by the mere influence "of this principle, and of blending with the ideas "or other feelings which awakened them, &c.[b]

[a] Brown's Lectures—Lecture xxxiv. [b] Do.

Digitized by Google

The inconsistency of these passages, in so far, is evident, although in both he still consistently, though most erroneously, perseveres in limiting states that result from the process of association, to recollections only. In no one instance, however, does he even attempt any explanation of the philosophy of the process, nor, indeed, considering that he held suggestion itself to be a primary principle, was it perhaps possible. Yet, making allowance for the rapidity with which our ideas and feelings succeed each other by association, and the subtilty which not unfrequently characterises the consecutive links of the operation, we cannot think that its analysis either implies difficulty, or admits of doubt.

In the first instance, however, and as preparatory to such analysis, we would observe, what has indeed already been partially indicated, that the notion of one idea suggesting another of its own nature, which seems the universal belief of philosophers, and indeed of every one that has ever thought, or at least written, on the subject, is undoubtedly a mistake. An idea *per se* is not, and cannot be A MOTIVE POWER at all. Merely to know one fact, it is obvious the moment we fairly consider it, could not OF ITSELF suggest to us another fact. This is manifest to common sense, and every one feels conscious that the proposition is true. Were there nothing in the mind but an absolute idea or fact, it, assuredly, of itself could never originate another idea or fact. It might remain,

Digitized by Google

or it might go away, but it could produce no new state. To tell us, therefore, that certain facts are related, that they resemble, are contiguous to, or causative of, each other, can never explain why such resemblance, contiguity, or causation should occur to our minds! still less why some special relation or form of relation among them, should be apprehended by us. It is clear, therefore, that the principle of association cannot be in the ideas themselves *quâ* ideas, but must consist in something existing along with them, and somehow implying an active power, in stimulating the operations of the mind, else, of course, the mind could never change its states, since there would BE NO CAUSE TO PRODUCE SUCH CHANGE.

Now this principle or active power stimulating the mental operations, and thus associating or suggesting ideas, by generating, in each case, a new idea from the previously existing state of mind, is, there can be no doubt, even under a superficial examination of the subject, the desire or desires with which such previously existing state of mind is accompanied, and through which it is realised by consciousness. In order to understand this distinctly, we must keep in view that every idea is stamped upon the mind, as we have already seen, by some feeling, using the word generally to denote all the passions, emotions, and desires, and in proportion to the depth and concentration and power of such feeling. Accordingly, when the mind becomes weary of an idea—as undoubtedly it

Digitized by Google

becomes ultimately weary in dwelling on any idea, and the more so in proportion as the feeling with which it is connected, and by which it is impressed on the consciousness, is weak and uninteresting—this sense of weariness, though we may be scarcely conscious of it, yet necessarily generates a desire of change, and thus impels the mind to seek some new idea which may occupy it more agreeably. This, however, supposes the feeling that co-exists with, and gives consciousness to the idea, to involve no ulterior desire in itself, as for example, in the case of our sense of sublimity. But when the idea farther involves and realises an absolute and prospective desire co-existing with it, there is evidently a state of mind produced, which, apart from any new desire introduced, implies in itself a tendency to change, since desire, whether negative or positive, of weariness or of purpose, of its very nature, LOOKS BEYOND ITSELF, and seeks its gratification, *not in its present state*, but in the attainment of an ulterior object. Hence it is manifest, that if the passion in any idea be very strong, and, therefore, deeply interesting, it will hardly be possible to get quit of it, for, as is now apparent, it can only be superseded by another idea involving the same passion in a stronger measure, or some other stronger passion than that which is realised in itself. Hence, even a painful idea may adhere to the mind with the most invincible pertinacity, because, painful as it may be, it will not

Digitized by Google

only not be wearisome, but on the contrary most deeply interesting, although every possible conjecture will probably, in the meantime, occur under such circumstances, as to the modes under which it might have been avoided, or may be superseded. Yet this must long be in vain, since the idea in which the feeling is concentrated so absorbs the whole mind, as that frequently nothing else can supersede it, and it is only time—which, from the very nature of our position as human beings, forces on us new ideas, through our necessary duties, which external circumstances involving other desires suggest to us and compel us to realise—that, by introducing feelings cognate thereto, can gradually weaken the absorbing power, and thus restore us to any measure of enjoyment. Hence the cause why persons in active life, much sooner after affliction, recover the tone of their minds, than those who have little to do, or who yield, without resistance, to intensity of affliction or of sympathetic emotions. Pleasurable ideas, if connected with strong passions, of course, in the same way for a time occupy our minds to the exclusion of everything else, and only gradually disappear under the operation of the same causes, conjoined with the feeling which in general we rapidly realise, that there was much more anticipated in the hope, than there is enjoyed in the possession of any earthly thing. On the contrary, ideas connected with slight feelings, under the very same principles,

Digitized by Google

quickly vanish. We weary of them more or less consciously, and, under a process to be immediately explained, new ideas supersede them, and occupy their place, to give way again to others still, in their continuous order. The consecutive ideas, if no external object attract us, being, of course, those most cognate to our chief desire, which reason at once teaches, will, of all others, afford us the highest gratification.

To make the subsequent argument perfectly clear, however, it must be observed, that our desires assume various forms, under different circumstances, so as to originate by habit certain species of what may be called secondary desires, materially modifying the train and succession of our thoughts. That there are primary desires, or rather tendencies which become desires, existing in some form in the human mind, is indisputable—and we say tendencies, because it is evident that, strictly speaking, they cannot become desires till we know from experience what it is that will gratify them. And hence, there seems great reason to doubt whether there be any succession of ideas generated one from another in the infant's mind. But, as we have said, that there are essential tendencies which generate desire when we come to know the objects that will gratify them, is indisputable. It is thus our uneasiness of stomach which generates a desire for meat and drink—our uneasiness from listlessness which generates all kind of effort—our uneasiness at inferiority

Digitized by Google

which generates ambition in all its various phases and forms—our uneasiness in ignorance which generates our desire for knowledge, and so in all cases. The desire, therefore, is evidently not the original state of mind, but a state of mind flowing from the original feeling of uneasiness, and depending for its realisation on intelligence and experience. Yet does it so completely supersede the original state, that subsequently to experience it is more to the desire than to the primary uneasiness that our attention is directed—so much so, indeed, that the real nature of the process has been so misunderstood, as to lead people to believe desire to be a primary and elementary state, which is evidently impossible, unless we could be supposed to desire something of which we have no conception. The consequence of this real condition of the process is the opening of a way for the constitution of new desires responding to no primary uneasiness, but generated indirectly in the view of the ultimate relief of any form of uneasiness, and this is a phenomenon, which, though perfectly certain, yet, no one has ever attempted to explain, because it arises solely out of the phenomena which have now been propounded, and which, consequently, except under the analysis that we have given, must be altogether unintelligible. Those desires, then, which may be called secondary, do not, it will now be evident, apply to the *objects* which *directly* relieve uneasiness, but to the *means*

Digitized by Google

by which such objects may be procured. Thus a man may have a desire for a spade, or a plough, or a horse, not because those objects will themselves directly remove his uneasiness, but because he knows them to be the means through which such uneasiness may *ultimately* be removed. In the same way, a man may desire money, not as of itself directly removing his uneasiness, but as the means through which he knows that such uneasiness may be removed, either as felt at the time or as subsequently anticipated; and this desire more and more continuously dwelt on, we know gradually in many cases, perhaps more or less in all cases, becomes substituted in place of the original desire, of which at first it had only in view the gratification; so that money, simply for its own sake, becomes a substantive desire under the name of avarice. In one word, means of any kind may thus gradually be substituted through habit as substantive objects of desire, in place of those desires which they were at first merely sought for in order to gratify. All this could only be explained under the assumption that desire *quâ* desire is not an original feeling, but, in so far, a result of experience, and can thus be generated by circumstances, only requiring that its object should be steadily viewed in connection with the gratification of cravings of some kind or other, felt or anticipated. In fact, anything may thus become an object of desire, and to such secondary desires consequently, there can be no limitation what-

Digitized by Google

ever. By combining any agreeable feeling steadily with an object, we generate, it would appear, necessarily a new desire, and this conclusion is the more fully ascertained, just as our experience extends. Hence is explained, as will indeed at once be obvious, an immense variety of moral phenomena, while a totally new phase, philosophically speaking, is exhibited of our moral condition, shewing how much our purposes in life must depend upon ourselves.

The grand particular, however, in this matter which affects our more immediate inquiry, regards the connection of desires with the association of our ideas, which will be found to be very intimate, since, as has been said, wherever an idea co-exists with a cognate desire, whether primary or secondary, such desire as from its very nature LOOKING BEYOND ITSELF, to something else calculated to gratify it whether as a means or an end, necessarily in its action, and as a part of its action, generates a new idea. In this we have manifestly the nature of the process developed. Uneasiness under the action of intelligence generates desire. Such desire being thus a result of intelligence, and necessarily implying an object, from its very nature forcibly—to the extent of its power—stimulates the mind to seek the means of realising such object. This, again, calls into operation our past experience. Thereafter, the result will, of course, depend not merely on the character of the co-existing idea and desire, but on the character of the particular mind,

Digitized by Google

and the extent of its experience. It is impossible, therefore, farther to trace *specially* the train of thinking in each case, though its course *generally* is perfectly manifest. Hence, it is manifest, too, that the desire in all cases, whether primary or secondary, is merely the active principle stimulating the mind, while the co-existing idea in connection with such desire, limits and determines the range by which the intelligence seeking a new idea corresponding to the desire, is to confine itself. It evidently cannot, in the first instance, go beyond that range, because it is only in thus far that the desire or active principle gives the stimulus, the desire evidently arising out of, and thus being necessarily limited in its intensity, by the idea co-existing with it, *which is all that it has to found upon.* In this way is worked out the second idea, such idea being a step towards the attainment of the object which the desire points at, and thus the process goes on, until we arrive at some idea involving a strong feeling, on which, of course, our attention will rest, as in the case of absolute enjoyment, until either such feeling pass away, or we become weary or partially weary of it, when this weariness or partial weariness as a form of desire, will direct us to a new idea, which will be constituted either by some subordinate desire connected and co-existing with the former, or by some external cause operating upon the mind, and then the process will go on as before.

Digitized by Google

It often happens, however, that intelligence is but indirectly called into operation, as when the mind is in a state of listlessness, and consequently allows the dominant desire to revel at its will, which is a state of mind usually known as imagination, for imagination is just the process of association, having in view a more or less definite object. If the object be clear and precise, the process of association being regulated by intelligence, becomes just classification or reasoning. For the dominant desire, be its object what it may, will be mainly the desire of knowing what will most probably effect our object, and the rational faculty will, therefore, reject all extraneous considerations so far as our knowledge enables it, and will regulate the whole train of our thoughts. But when the mind in a state of listlessness merely desires occupation, or when its object is not real, but theoretical or possible only, so that the exercise of the rational faculty is little requisite, except indirectly in guiding the desire to the ideas which will gratify it, the desire of knowledge being hardly in operation, then the result will be imagination, strictly so called, or day-dreaming. For though profound thought, which draws away the mind from passing events, is sometimes called day-dreaming, yet this is an evident misapplication of the term, which truly means association proceeding without any definite practical end. Thus, suppose a man being occupied with no practical matter, or fixed and definite object, is led

Digitized by Google

somehow to a sense of his inferiority, and a consequent desire for glory of some kind, he will indulge immediately in a series of imaginary ideas of success, cognate to his desire, and his other tendencies at the time—those, of course, suggesting themselves, at least in the first place, which seem most likely to remove his uneasiness, but which, as they consecutively arise, will again bring along with them cognate desires, probably bearing on the same general purpose—till gradually elevating himself to the highest attainments and the widest fame, he be interrupted in his speculations by some terrestrial avocation, or what is not less likely, by a sense of their absurdity and folly. In fact, under such circumstances, as in all others, the desire and its consecutive succession of gratifying, or responding ideas, will remain in the mind so long as they continue sufficiently pleasing, but when by a natural process we become wearied of them from whatever cause, or any stronger feeling is originated, either from being cognate to some of our ideas, or from external interruption, then a new state of mind is immediately generated, and new desires will give our thoughts new directions, in conformity with the nature of the process. Hence, we could, on these principles, almost anticipate the train of a man's thinking were we thoroughly cognisant of the prevailing character and desires of his mind.

But it is obvious, that there may be times when there is no idea in the mind, and consequently

Digitized by Google

there can be no passion nor desire in operation, since, as no idea can exist consciously in the mind without some feeling to realise its consciousness, so no desire can exist in the mind without calling forth some ideas as its subject. In this state our minds frequently are on awaking from sleep. They are perfectly blank, unconscious of idea, desire, or feeling, except in so far as the feeling of mere existence is concerned. In such a case, we instantly desire mental occupation. We must have something to engage our attention, and it is clear that the primary idea responsive to such desire, must, under the circumstances supposed, in the first instance, be introduced from without. It may be some bodily pain, for example, or some sensational uneasiness, as in the case of the light dazzling our eyes the first moment that we half unconsciously open them. The idea will be to get rid of such pain or uneasiness. We give these as possible cases, though it matters nothing what may be the desire primarily generated, or how it may be generated, for each must have its cognate idea, and IT being constituted, the process will proceed as before described, until we come to some complex notion, when that special part of the compound most cognate to our existing frame of mind, and specially our dominant desire at the moment, will be selected by the natural and necessary tendency in operation, will be adapted to the mental state, and again the process will proceed in its regulated train.

Digitized by Google

It is at this point that we can fully appreciate the error of Hume and his successors, in supposing that "resemblance, contiguity, &c.," suggest their corresponding ideas. This is not the fact, and is demonstratively impossible. They have nothing to do, indeed, with the principle of association, except in so far as desires may co-exist with, as cognate to them. The sight of a picture, for example, is not, as Hume supposes, necessarily followed by an idea of the person whom it is intended to represent. That such an idea *may* follow the sight of a picture is perfectly true, because if there be no strong feeling existing and operating within us, then the desire of comparing the picture with the person whom it is intended to represent, might lead to such a result. But it is just as possible that the next idea might be that of the painter, or of beauty, or its excellencies and defects in comparison with other pictures around it, or an INFINITE variety of others, just according to the character of the preceding idea, the tendencies of various minds, and the possible desires that might be stimulating them. In this way, in looking at a mineral, the chemist would very likely think of its composition, the mineralogist of its class, and the jeweller of its value. The principle is always the same. The desire, whether primary or secondary, is the stimulating agent, and each successive idea must spring out of, and be coloured by the desire that preceded it, which then, of course, gives place to

Digitized by Google

another more cognate to the changed state of mind. The preceding idea itself could evidently never suggest anything, nor stimulate the mind to effort in any form. To say, therefore, that one idea has been suggested by another, is indisputably an utter misconception. It is intelligence stimulated by desire, which can alone suggest the thoughts related to or calculated to gratify such desire. The philosophers who have entertained such an opinion, manifestly confound association with recollection, and, because certain ideas frequently follow each other, they have erroneously imagined that they suggest each other, whereas the suggesting or associating principle is the link that connects them, and which can alone be found in the desire stimulating the intelligence to the suggestion of that which will gratify it. Of course, the desire in each such case will be more or less cognate to the preceding idea, and must in so far be limited by it, but this is all that the preceding idea has to do with the operation. Now, it is necessary to attend to this matter carefully, because, though the distinction be quite marked; yet, there may be confusion in special cases of mental analysis from the ideas suggested often being mere recollections more or less modified, but this in no way makes the one idea suggestive of the other. No doubt, some ideas may be the more readily suggested from being better remembered, and being thus more readily seizable—if we may so speak—by their

Digitized by Google

cognate desires; but it is to the desires stimulating intelligence that they respond, and it is under this process alone consequently that they can be associated or suggested.

The whole process, however, goes so rapidly through the mind, that though its character generally be perfectly obvious, it yet requires considerable attention to trace its progress in detail. It may, however, be easily illustrated. Stewart mentions, "that whilst Captain King and his companions "were at dinner in a miserable hut, on the banks "of the river Awatska, a solitary half-worn pewter "spoon attracted their attention, and on examina- "tion, they found it stamped with the word Lon- "don." Captain King, he says, adds, "I cannot "pass over this circumstance in silence, out of "gratitude for the many pleasant thoughts, the "anxious hopes, and tender remembrances it excited in us."[a] Dr. Brown copies the story, but neither he nor Mr. Stewart make an attempt at explaining the philosophy of the associations excited by the sight of the "half-worn pewter spoon," which yet, under the circumstances, is abundantly obvious. The existence of a "pewter spoon" at all in such a place, constituted an unknown and singular fact, and thus naturally excited that feeling of curiosity which implied a desire to know whence it came. Hence the examination of it. The stamp of "London" thus discovered, constituted again a

[a] Philosophy of the Human Mind—Ch. 5, part 1, sect. 4.

Digitized by Google

symbol equivalent to that of "home," with all the simple ideas involved in it, and all the feelings cognate to it. Hence the "pleasant thoughts." But these ideas, and feelings, also implied cognate desires of knowing the condition of those whom the voyagers had left at home, and who were embraced in the idea of home, and hence the "anxious hopes." There was also cognate to these ideas and feelings, a desire of renewing the happiness of every kind involved in the notion of home, and hence the "tender "remembrances." Such states of mind must, more or less, have been excited by the process of association as we have described it, but, of course, their modifications would depend on the tendencies of each individual. The recollection of wives, parents, children, property, and so on, would suggest themselves, just as the feelings and consequent desires towards each respectively, were stronger or weaker in the various individuals with respect to the various particulars that the complex idea of home may be supposed to include. Probably, no two of them had precisely the same ideas suggested, but each had his own idea, connected with some very strong feeling, and of which, the impression would—on the principles already explained—continue for a considerable time, thus stamping a stronger and more vivid recollection of this particular fact on their minds, than they had realised probably of any other during the time of their absence. From this it will be seen, that the feelings of the human mind are

Digitized by Google

merely those states of uneasiness, whether of fear, anxiety, sorrow, suffering, or any other, which generate desires; but it must be carefully observed, that it is neither feeling, strictly so called, nor any form of absolute enjoyment, which suggests ideas, or rather, which stimulates to their suggestion, because neither mere feeling nor enjoyment look beyond themselves. It is a sense of deficiency, or desire alone, of whatever kind it may be, which does this, or can possibly do it, by stimulating intelligence and memory into action for its gratification.

From all this it is obvious, that as every idea is stamped on the mind by some feeling, or passion, or desire, so no idea can be recalled to recollection, without recalling also the feeling, passion, or desire, which gave it consciousness. Such feeling, passion, or desire, accordingly modifies necessarily the train of thought in proportion to its intensity. Under these principles, it is the easiest thing possible to analyse and explain every process of association by a little attention, and the unspeakably important consequence is thereby realised, that just as a desire is permanent, so by connecting itself in the memory with a wide range of ideas, it will be still the more frequently suggested, thus gradually by habit acquiring a greater and greater strength, till ultimately it must become almost perpetually present with us, regulating all our thoughts and modifying all our conduct. Hence the necessity of

Digitized by Google

controlling our desires and of so commanding ourselves, as to be able to introduce when we choose new desires, seeing that if any one desire permanently abide in the mind or frequently recur to it, the power of that desire, under the influence of habit, will become ultimately almost irresistible, for, whenever a desire acquires a certain strength, it becomes by another peculiarity of our natures, all in all to us, and thus other desires—and, of course, that of change as one of them—in the first instance are weakened, and ultimately disappear altogether under its influence. Hence, in one word, it will follow from our whole analysis, that as all our acts must depend upon our ideas, so up to this point the mind can neither act nor the conduct be regulated, except under the influence of such desires as may co-exist with them.

At this point, however, appears the action of the mind itself in the process of association—an action usually attributed to what has been called the will, and correctly so, no doubt, if by the will be meant the determination of the whole mind, as contradistinguished from the mere wishes implied in the tendencies of its separate feelings; for there can be no doubt that the mind existing as the subject of all our spiritual operations, and thus operating itself behind them and upon them, must, in so far, have the power of controlling them, by the introduction of new ideas responsive to any determination as to the great object of its being, which it may

Digitized by Google

have attained previously. For, as the mind has before it all its states and ideas at the same time, it is thus, by the very nature of the case, as it were constituted a judge over and among them. It can thus, if it so chooses, select any of them for carrying on a train of thought, and thereby continue to modify the current of ideas every moment, by directing them as one succeeds another. It can compare them, and on such comparison, select any one and reject the rest; our desire to follow forth the tendency thus suggested, being necessarily generated, by the advantages which intelligence thus brought into operation, indicates as likely to flow therefrom. Of course, the selection will be better or worse, just as the mind allows itself fair play, because, if it so choose again, it may satisfy itself with what it feels to be a superficial comparison, thus yielding voluntarily to the strongest desire of the moment, and acting under its influence. But when any one accustoms his mind to mark and compare its states, he will quickly acquire a competency to determine the character of each, and its probable results, not only with accuracy, but with an habitual readiness approximating to instinct. Calling reason into operation, he will at once discover the effect which the indulgence of any desire in a particular mode, will probably have on his future fate and happiness, and reason will be thus, in so far, called into operation in every case, by the desire which must, to a greater or less

Digitized by Google

extent, be present in every mental process of knowing the precise value of each object which we pursue. In this way, the same process continuously repeated, will enable us ultimately, with increasing ease, to form our characters either for good or evil. It is indeed true, that we cannot know our thoughts before they suggest themselves; but we can determine an object which we desire to attain, and the desire implied in this being kept steadily before the mind, will, as a necessary consequence, in so far regulate our whole train of thinking. It is just, therefore, according to the nature of the object, which, whether consciously or unconsciously, our desires or tendencies eliminate through intelligence from mental consciousness, or sensations, or previous thoughts, that the whole series of our mental states must be determined. The mind having all its states under its cognisance, by strengthening a special tendency, under a rational sense of its importance, may, in so far, guide the subsequent process of association. Yet, at this point, the precise form of the operation becomes so subtle and complicated, as apparently to defy farther analysis. To advance farther, would, indeed, seem to imply a resolution of the character of mind in its very essence or entity, an attainment which we cannot but believe impossible by human beings—at least, as they are presently constituted. In so far, however, all is perfectly clear, nor does it seem possible to doubt or differ

Digitized by Google

as to the nature of the process by which ideas are associated, so soon as we clearly understand the terms employed in describing it. We would only observe in conclusion, that, of course, in the exercise of our intelligence in the process of association, many cognate ideas flash across the mind, and that it is in the *selection of some one of these by comparison* that the conjoined operation of desire and intelligence is most distinctly manifest.

The same process of association, there can be no doubt, operates in delirium and during sleep in dreams, our ideas and feelings having either continued from our waking thoughts, or been suggested by some *ab extra* action, or internal physical cause operating upon the nervous system. Nothing, indeed, is more common in dreaming than to feel sensations of cold, &c. This is nearly as common as when we are awake, the only difference being, that in dreaming we attribute the sensation, not to the real but to some imaginary cause, originating in the state of mind in which we happen to be at the time—as, for example, when we attribute the cold felt by a foot being extended beyond the bedclothes, to its being plunged in snow or the like. Nor is this wonderful, when it is recollected that our consciousness of extra-organic sensations, can be felt only as part of an organic consciousness, and that we attribute it to an extra-organic cause, merely in consequence of experience, through which, however, it is obvious that we are ultimately enabled

Digitized by Google

to distinguish the extra-organic sensation as extra-organic by consciousness alone. This phenomenon cannot be thoroughly explained, however, without attending to the farther phenomenon, that intense feeling will so realise an idea of imagination as to give it more or less approximatively a sensation of reality. In other words, intense feeling sometimes seems so to act on our organism as to affect the organic state in the same way, more or less, as it is affected by an extra-organic action, so as to make us believe that an extra-organic cause is operating upon us, the very intensity of the state excluding the discriminating power of reason, and this is sometimes realised in day-dreaming nearly as entirely as in real dreaming. By intensely thinking on some organic pain or bodily sensation, we may almost persuade ourselves that we realise it. In either case, there can be little doubt that the result is attributable to intense feeling acting more or less powerfully on organic nature. In sleep, moreover, the delusion is still farther enhanced by the dormancy of our minds to a greater or less extent, with respect to certain of its powers. In fact, in sleep it must be the mind mainly that is dormant, for though the body be at rest, its nervous system may be acted upon manifestly when we are asleep, to the same extent as when we are awake. Hence it would appear, that in sleep there is a partial disjunction of body and mind, as well as to a certain degree in every instance where violent

Digitized by Google

passions are in operation, which seems indisputable from the fact, that when our minds are concentrated on a special object by any strong passion, not only bodily sensations, but even physical action, that in ordinary cases would generate considerable pain, are altogether unobserved by us; while on the other hand, if the bodily system be materially disorganised by intoxication, or any of those diseases which cause delirium, all precision in distinguishing betwixt ideas of perception and ideas of imagination is destroyed. The same thing happens to a greater or less extent in sleep. There is, indeed, greater calmness and steadiness in our dreamy hallucinations, for intoxication and delirium seem to imply spasmodic and convulsive action on the nervous system, changing the current of thought by violent impulses in the physical organisation itself, but in all such cases, the power of distinguishing betwixt ideas of perception and ideas of imagination is equally modified. In all such cases there could, therefore, seem to be a disjunction in the organic union, in so far as to modify the nature of organic consciousness. The power of judging from experience by accurate distinctions, or in other words, the strength of the rational faculty would seem to be impaired. But, though all this be more strikingly exhibited in sleep, yet the concentration of the mind on some one object, under the influence of strong passion, may, apparently, at all events, so disjoin mind and

Digitized by Google

body, or in other words, produce, what is, even in ordinary language, called absence of mind, as to imply only the slightest possible shade of distinction betwixt day-dreaming and real dreaming. We may, under the awe of sublimity, for example, have our minds so entirely abstracted even from the very objects actually exciting it, as to become nearly unconscious of perceiving them; while, on the other hand, under the impression of vivid images, we may be induced to believe that we have their actual prototypes before us, and may, even under sudden impulse, where the strength of passion checks the operation of reason, absolutely act, as if such were truly the case. Hence, the mind, when its connection with the body thus is modified, ranges over seas and continents, lives ages in a moment of time, and passes through every variety of occupation and position with the rapidity of light, because to judge with any accuracy of duration, we must not only be conscious of existence, but conscious also, it will now be obvious, of organic existence. We need not, indeed, be actually conscious of any perception for the purpose, but we must be conscious of our minds existing in a state capable of perceiving, or in other words, in connection with our physical organisation; for, otherwise, it is obvious that we could have no opportunity of comparing the time implied in our mental feelings with external time, which is the only possible way that we could accurately measure *absolute* duration. Hence, in

Digitized by Google

dreaming, delirium, or intoxication, and even in day-dreaming to a certain extent, any amount of time, and thence, also, of space and number of events, may seem to be comprehended in the shortest possible period—although the measure of time in sleep is always extremely vague and indefinite, there being no clear notion of duration for reasons which will subsequently be explained—the phenomena occurring to the mind being the only instrument of measurement, and these leading us, though vaguely, to extend the supposed time to the length that would have been required *actually and literally to realise them.* We may have hardly closed our eyes, therefore, when under the usual operation of the associating principle, now unrestrained by any sense of organic or physical co-existence, an innumerable series of associated events and changes may have already passed through the mind, and this gives us the idea, that the time which would have been necessary for their realisation has actually intervened. There is no corrective operation, our attention being drawn away from the mere sense of existence, and from all comparison with external realities. Yet, it by no means follows, as some have supposed, that our dreams are thus necessarily limited to a moment. On the contrary, as any strong desire or passion will preserve its most cognate ideas for a long time while we are awake, so there can be little doubt, that in dreaming the same causes will operate in the same way: noth-

Digitized by Google

ing, indeed, is more common than to awake from an interesting dream, which recurs when we fall asleep again, and this sometimes happens repeatedly. The same principle is evidently operating. The feeling and the idea had continued combined while we were awake—more or less modified, no doubt, by a sense of its non-reality—but when we sleep again, and thus are replaced in the same circumstances, the same state or train of thinking is renewed, and continues in our dreams, and it may be throughout our sleep, till we awake again. The phenomenon of somnambulism, when the dream evidently must continue a considerable period of time, demonstratively establishes the same conclusion.

It would seem, therefore, very clear, that sleep implies—in so far, at all events—a separation of the mind from the physical organisation, and hence an incapacity of discriminating imaginations from realities, from the want of means for comparing our purely mental, with our organic states. Hence, intent concentration on the immediate objects presented to our minds naturally deludes us into a vague belief of their reality. In this process, the length of time which we had *previously known* would be necessary for the accomplishment of the events which occur to us in our dreams, is, as has been said, necessarily assumed as the duration which they have actually occupied. This is farther owing to the mind in sleep being directed rather to its pheno-

Digitized by Google

menical states by reason of their intensity, than to its own subjective existence, from which its attention is proportionally withdrawn. Hence, our sense of duration during sleep becomes vague and imperfect. The same thing is true, when even we are awake, but occupied by very intense or strong passion, so that the mind's phenomenical state for the time mainly occupies it, to the exclusion both of its subjective being, and of external existence. At any time, asleep or awake, *the distraction of the attention from subjective existence,* must proportionally affect our accurate determination of duration.

The same state—as we have also said—may, to a very great degree, be produced by the action of strong feelings abstracting our minds from every form of perception, and from all attention to the operation of our senses. It is worthy of observation, however, that the action of strong feeling, which, in thus far so nearly resembles sleep, is yet so far from inducing sleep, that on the contrary, strong feeling and profound thinking prevent us from sleeping. This, there can be no doubt, arises from such feeling or thought disturbing the nervous system, which requires to be soothed in order to generate sleep, which seems to be intended to refresh the organic system by cessation from all effort, and for that purpose, to annihilate for the time almost all sense, even of existence itself. Hence it would appear that dreams are destructive of sound sleep, and consequently, as might be ex-

Digitized by Google

pected under such circumstances, strong feeling generated in our dreams must be held as an unnatural state, and does invariably awake us.

But though sleep thus appears to imply a certain greater or less disjunction of mind from our physical organisation, it is yet strange, that in sleep, the mind seems sometimes to use the body as a mere machine, when it controls the nerves acting on the muscular system, or so far as they act on the muscular system, while its connection with the nervous system *as sensational*, is in operation only to a very limited extent. In such cases as those of somnambulism, for example, the mind may thus use the muscles of the body as if a sort of machinery, while almost entirely unconscious of any external thing, or, indeed, incapable of attending to aught save its own immediate operation. We have here the nearest approach, perhaps, of dreaming to abstraction or day-dreaming. It is the mind fixed with such intensity, though it may be without any vehemence of passion, on some one object that everything else is superseded. Accordingly, in day-dreaming almost the same phenomena are exhibited. A man will, in this state, guide his course through many impediments, difficulties, and even dangers, by a sort of indirect perception, and yet, without being conscious of them. One step more, and a slight diminution of ORGANIC consciousness, and we have somnambulism. Hence, a person in a state of somnambulism seems hardly asleep, while a

Digitized by Google

person in a profound state of abstraction, seems hardly awake. In both cases it is intense feeling, superseding more or less organic consciousness, and thus, by keeping an entire command over the mind, excluding all considerations save those cognate to itself. These views seem to explain that phenomenon which has been called "double consciousness," when the somnambulist forgets what took place during his sleep, till he sleeps again, and then remembers it; for the mind, being restored to its former state of feeling, naturally desires to determine what that state of feeling was, in all its parts, and thus, by the process of association, the former state of his mind is suggested again.

The curious question which arises as to the nature of our belief in dreaming, and the grounds of our assurance that what we call realities are not themselves dreams, since we believe in the actuality of dreams, as well as of such realities, though not strictly belonging to this part of our subject, yet seems so closely connected with it, that our argument might be deemed imperfect, were such an important particular left unnoticed. The fact is, that our beliefs in these two cases, though both indisputable, are yet respectively of a very different nature and validity, as is proved by the precise and felt distinction which, practically, we draw betwixt them. Every one, when awake, believes his dreams to have been imaginations; but no one, when asleep, BELIEVES THIS OF HIS WAKING STATES. Yet, to make

Digitized by Google

the beliefs identical in kind and validity, it is evidently necessary that they should be thus reciprocal. In dreams, moreover, there is not only great vagueness in our belief, but sometimes even a doubt of their reality; and we are inclined to think that this increases as we advance in life, whether from extended experience or not it may be difficult to determine. Belief in the reality of dreams evidently originates partly in the dormancy of the rational faculty which diminishes our power of comparing present feeling with past experience; partly from the torpidity of our perceptive capabilities, in the modification of the organic union, which almost annihilates the possibility of such a comparison; and partly from the intensity of feeling directed to the special objects of dreams, in consequence of the partial non-activity of the mind in other respects, which concentrates our whole attention upon them alone. Hence it is, that recollections occur to us in dreams with a precision frequently which we cannot realise when awake, because the mind, being in no degree distracted by other considerations, is consequently by so much the more intensely fixed on the ideas which our train of association suggests. Where we believe a sensation in dreaming, it is however, nearly certain that we *actually feel it*—the error originating in our attributing it to a wrong *external* cause.

The very same principles, in so far, account for insanity, which very generally results from one

Digitized by Google

special desire or fear having got possession of the mind—fear, of course, being merely a negative desire. The victim cannot get quit of this desire. There it dwells with its cognate ideas, and habit or other causes previously alluded to, will make almost any idea cognate to it, without the mind being able in any measure to supersede it, because no stronger desire can possibly suggest itself, while reason, or the power of discriminating reality from non-reality, is proportionally impaired. That this may be owing to physical causes, is perfectly possible. Certain nervous affections may have a tendency to generate desires. We know, indeed, that it is so with respect to physical desires, but there is no reason to doubt that it may be so, likewise, with regard to mental states, though our facts upon the whole subject are deplorably deficient and unsatisfactory. At all events, we are certain, that mental states may be so intensely felt, as to defy all our efforts to supersede them. Pride, ambition, vanity, shame, &c., may thus so possess the mind, as that they and their cognate ideas permanently endure. Not that the preponderating desire in insanity necessarily precludes the entrance into the mind of every idea not cognate with itself, and which a change of scene or of circumstances may suggest, but then the desire is at once recalled by any idea having the most remote affinity with it, and this, again, recalls the special ideas which have become more particularly cognate with it; for, though it

Digitized by Google

may occasionally be in a half-subdued state, yet it is ever ready to re-assert its influence at any moment, and in connection with the most unlikely relations. It has, in one word, so pervaded the whole mind, that hardly an idea can present itself, which, in some of its phases, has not co-existed with it, or been coloured by its character, and which will not, therefore, recall it in all its power; for, as we have already seen, every desire has, if we may so speak, an attraction for itself, and for all cognate states and feelings, so that each desire naturally tends to those ideas with which it had previously co-existed, or by which it had been previously gratified, and *vicâ versâ*. There is, in all this, also, an evident coincidence in so far, betwixt somnambulism, day-dreaming or abstraction, and insanity, only in the case of insanity the hold of the dominant passion on the mind does not depend on any temporary state of the body, still less on any voluntary direction of the mind, but on some change more or less organic and permanent. The peculiarity in all these cases is, that we have our minds so completely fixed on one object as that we overlook all others, and that object in somnambulism and insanity is always delusive, and yet it is perfectly in vain to reason with any one under these influences, because his object to him is all in all, and he is for the time utterly incapable of perceiving or appreciating any other relationships, and, therefore, any form of argument. The phenomenon, however, will be still better un-

Digitized by Google

derstood, by attending to the extent to which our beliefs depend upon feeling, exclusively or mainly. That which we desire to be true on the one hand, and that which we fear may be true on the other, we more or less *believe to be true*, just probably, in the first instance, from our thoughts being concentrated on its consideration; and, as the energy of those feelings increases, the corrective power of reason necessarily diminishes, specially from our attention being withdrawn from the actualities in real life, and from our desire for the exercise of the rational faculty being proportionally lessened. We thus come, even in ordinary states of mind, to believe, more or less, that which we hope or fear respectively, and thus, if the mind perseveres in dwelling on particular objects, so as to associate them with all its thoughts, a species of secondary madness, if we may so speak, is generated, leading frequently, if there be a predisposition, to real insanity. In this way, lust, ambition, hatred, envy, jealousy, melancholy, &c., may gradually be so intensified, as to approach more or less to insanity. We utterly under-value certain objects, and over-value others, just from habitually or otherwise intensifying the passions which we have made cognate to them. In the same way, by utter neglect of the rational faculty, and, by rarely or ever attempting to appreciate identities or similarities through comparison, we may, and the illiterate actually do, so weaken their

Digitized by Google

intelligent and rational nature, and eradicate its cognate desire, that they cannot perceive or understand the plainest argument. Never having experienced the pleasure of investigation, they have lost the desire, by the non-use of it. Such parties, therefore, care nothing for the truth, *quâ* truth, but care only for the objects of their own desires, and the means by which they would like to attain them. Their belief being the result of feeling and not of reason, they cannot appreciate, nor will they attend to, a proof depending upon reason, except when it agrees with the evidence (if it can be called evidence) of feeling also, *i.e.*, when it suits themselves. In all such cases, however, it is clear that the principle of association operates in the same way. It is in each case the existing idea, stimulated by some co-existing desire, that in connection, more or less, with the special action of intelligence and intelligent desire, produces the next idea, which carries along with it, of course, such of its feelings as are in any measure cognate with it, all of which, stimulated by the same desire continued, or a new one under similar circumstances, generate a new idea, and so on while the process lasts. It matters nothing whether we be awake or asleep, wise or foolish, sane or insane, the principle of association is always the same, and the modification of our ideas in each case is evidently at once accounted for by the variety of our conditions. It may be observed, however, as of some importance

Digitized by Google

in analysing the process of association, that desires seem sometimes to be as it were latent in the mind, *i.e.*, in so far as our consciousness is concerned. I have, for example, been engaged in a train of thinking, directed to a special object, which I desired to realise, and in this frame been interrupted by an acquaintance or friend, with whom I have entered on subjects implying totally different considerations, and, so far as I am aware, the previous object of desire had for the time passed out of my mind, though the moment the other party left me it returned again, and very quickly I recovered the precise point in the train of thinking at which I had been interrupted. There is generally in such cases, however, a recollection more or less vague of a sort of double state of mind, during which the primary desire lay, as it were, behind the more immediate occupation. The difficulty of determining precisely the nature of feelings which are cognate to words or other arbitrary symbols, also somewhat complicates our analysis of the process of association. It is a point, however, under the views now given, very easily explained, for it will be manifest that symbols, and specially words, unless the mind be otherwise pre-occupied, instantly generate a desire to know *what they mean*, and then reason, by a process already described, suggests their corresponding ideas, and thereafter, of course, the train of thinking being begun, will proceed according to its usual laws, unless interrupted

Digitized by Google

again by some external cause—the interruption, whether symbolical or otherwise, leading to a repetition of the operation or operations previously ascertained. It is, however, clear that the desire cognate to every symbol, in the first instance, must be a desire to know its meaning—*unless the mere sounds imply some* desire in themselves—for otherwise it would be altogether overlooked, as many of our ordinary sensations actually are, and would generate no mental state at all.

It is a separate but important question, in so far as this subject is concerned, to determine how ideas come to be cognate to certain feelings and desires, and for this purpose, it is to be observed, in the first place, that some of our states evidently have cognate feelings and desires from nature. A wound has its cognate pain, and, in connection with intelligence, its desire of relief—hunger, its sense of craving, &c. The exercise of our senses, on the other hand, implies a species of gratification greater or less. The idea of an injury, again, is cognate with the feeling of anger, and probably, a desire of vengeance: of kindness, with those of love, gratitude, benevolence, &c. But there are also feelings which become cognate with ideas, by co-existing with them in the mind, and this, be it observed, not merely with the special form of idea which thus co-existed with them, but on grounds already explained, with the general idea generated thereby; such a feeling, therefore, becomes cognate with

Digitized by Google

every identical idea; for every identical idea, or partially identical idea, is in so far comprehended by the general idea. Nay, it must to a certain extent be cognate to every similar idea, for similarity must imply identity on some point, though it be only an accessory one. Hence, as any feeling has become more and more cognate to any idea by habit, it is impossible for such idea again to occur or even a similar one, without a tendency to recall such feeling, because the feeling impresses the idea on the mind, so that they are substantively parts of a whole, and the artificial relationship, if we may so speak, soon becomes as available as the natural one, and a feeling, thus become artificially or by habit cognate to an idea, will, therefore, as naturally arise along with that idea, as a sense of pain from a wound, or of craving from hunger, or of irritation from a sense of injury. Yet such feeling, whether natural or artificial, may be superseded by any other stronger feeling or desire, just as the pain of a wound, or the craving of hunger, or the irritation consequent on a sense of injury, may be so. But, though at the time superseded, these feelings, whether natural or artificial, must still, in a more or less latent form, co-exist with their cognate ideas, and thus will, in so far, though slightly, modify the succession of thought, not as in themselves, apart from the desire involved in them, leading to a change of thought, but as constituting, in a certain measure, a very part of the

Digitized by Google

idea on which the operating desire acts, and thus, in connection with such desire, defining and determining the form which the succeeding idea is to assume. Thus they tend to give a character to the succeeding idea, though of themselves, apart from any desire actually involved in them, or some other desire incidentally intruded on them, they, of course, would never lead the mind to any new idea, but would remain for ever exactly in the same state. A new idea, suggested by the process described, may, indeed, recall along with it a feeling on which, as interested in it, the mind may, to a greater or less extent, DELIGHT TO DWELL, but it is desire alone, which can possibly induce the mind to seek a new idea, because desire alone LOOKS BEYOND ITSELF, and thus impels the intelligence to seek that which will gratify it, and so, directly or indirectly, we account for all associated trains of thought. In this we have a perfect exposition of the mental process in thinking, under which, every succession and every change of thought may be explained. For if the mind actually have an object which occupies and satisfies it, the process is obvious, since such object, so long as it occupies and satisfies it, must remain there, and if it have not, it must necessarily seek one; for we cannot be at ease, nor satisfied in our ordinary state of mind, without an object; and so tracing back the ideas of our memory for the sake of gratifying our desire of procuring one, the most interesting object, or

Digitized by Google

at all events the object of interest which first suggests itself under this general operation, will immediately be realised as cognate to the desire, and will, so long as satisfactory, occupy the mind. At the same time, this tracing back of the thoughts of memory is rarely necessary, because we have almost all some special objects, which, above all others, pleasingly occupy our attention, and which, having co-existed with almost every form of feeling in our minds, thus necessarily suggest themselves by the process previously explained. The operation is so rapid and natural, if we may use the term, that it looks like instinctive; but yet it is merely desire, through intelligence, laying hold of its known and experienced gratification. In the very same way, when an external object attracts us—as, for example, when any one speaks to us, his remarks introduce new ideas into the mind, simply because, from a variety of reasons, we may desire to know more or less anxiously what he wishes to communicate. The process, it is perfectly obvious, is identical in all cases of succession of ideas, and its apprehension renders readily intelligible to us many of the most curious, interesting, and important phenomena of human thought.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER X.

ON HABIT.

Philosophy of habit naturally follows that of association—Reid's definition of habit, and its deficiency—Nature of habit developed—Power of habit on the physical organisation—Relation of association to the process—Influence of habit on memory—Artificial memory depends mainly on habit—Power of habit in intensifying the feelings and primary desires, and in originating secondary desires—Power of habit in constituting belief—Relation of habit to the belief which originates in feeling and in authority or testimony—Growth of habit farther explained by principles of association—The power of habit a result of our mental constitution—Importance of attending to the influence of habit in the analysis of mental states.

A CONSIDERATION of the philosophy of Habit naturally follows our determination of the philosophy of association, with which, indeed, it is so closely connected, that neither can be fully appreciated apart from the other.

Reid defines habit to be "a part of our consti-"tution" so determined, "that what we have been "accustomed to do, we acquire not only a facility, "but a proneness to do on like occasions, so that "it requires a particular will and effort to forbear "it, but to do it requires very often no will at all,"[a]

[a] Reid—Active powers—Essay 3d, part 1st, ch. 3.

Digitized by Google

which is in so far a perfectly correct definition, though we doubt whether, in any such case, "no "*will* be required," admitting, however, that the action of the will or mind may be so rapid as hardly to be perceptible; but the definition omits the most important element of habit, in so far as intellectual philosophy is concerned, as manifested in its power of strengthening and weakening respectively the passions, feelings, and desires of the mind. In truth, Dr. Reid's definition applies mainly to physical habit, which, however, is clearly connected with, and eminently calculated to illustrate that purely mental habit which constitutes so important a part of our natures; for, that habit acts upon physical nature, is indisputable and manifest. Even lifeless matter may be made to assume a special shape and configuration by continued constraint, and still more may sensative nature be acted upon so as to be strengthened and improved by continuous exercise. It is in this way that scent in dogs is brought to such wonderful perfection; that jugglers and others acquire such dexterity in the use of their members; that seamen attain such acuteness of vision; and that the blind ultimately are enabled to read with facility by touch.

The nerves and muscles, evidently, by exercise, act more readily, and acquire a more entire command over each other. Hence it is, that professed musicians—as Hartley has justly remarked—can play a piece with which they are intimately ac-

Digitized by Google

quainted, while thinking on some other subject, or, it may be, even conversing with another party. In such a case, the action of the muscles and nerves would appear to run into each other—habit having gradually assimilated the physical parts—as the continual rubbing of one body on another shapes both into a mutual adaptation. So far, the process is obviously physical or mechanical. It is the same with the use of the fingers or the limbs in jugglery. The play of the parts is facilitated by mechanical adaptation. We almost feel it to be so—we are unconscious of the action of mind in the production of such results. They seem to come of themselves, without effort. They slide into one another, and the results are—as Reid has in so far truly said—instinctive. But, though in so far this be true, yet it is not all the truth. The mind, though in such cases, scarcely conscious of every special organic action, is yet directing the whole, and must be present at every part, since at any point the mind can check, modify, or stop the operation. The mind is, therefore, willing it all, and through the whole process guiding the body, though aided as it were, by the mechanical adaptation of part to part: of this, indeed, as has been said, we are in almost every case, more or less conscious, though, generally speaking, the very small amount of feeling implied in the successive steps of it, scarcely stamps each so deeply, as to leave distinct traces in the memory of their respective existences.

Digitized by Google

When the process is so easy for us, we overlook the successive steps of it. It is only when we struggle to realise it, that feeling is involved in all the parts of it, and that thus we recollect them. As we acquire greater facility, the desire involved in each progressive advance of the operation is proportionally less, because the mechanical operation works it out without any effort, for desire must always be more intense as it induces us to effort. The very same cause seems to account for the improvement of the senses by habit. It braces the nerves and gives facility to the exercise of the muscles, as a result of mechanical action. That the sailor, in his casual glance, has his mind more intently fixed upon his object than the affectionate mother looking for her son's ship, or the loving wife for her husband's, over the wide waste of waters, is incredible and impossible, yet he discovers the object sooner, and that can only be accounted for by the habitual action of the physical organ, through which it has become mechanically better adapted for its end. For as the muscles of the arms or other limbs, when constantly engaged in active exercise, gradually become enlarged and strengthened, so it is with any of the senses when actively exercised. The sense, in each case, is invigorated and strengthened through the exercise of the nerves and muscles which appertain to them. Yet, that the degree of attention, or, in other words, the mental effort, has a certain effect, cannot be

Digitized by Google

doubted, for we are all conscious in our experience, that by attention we can see more accurately, hear more readily, and feel more acutely; and in the same way, of course, must it be with those who, from the physical causes spoken of, realise their perceptions in a higher degree of intensity. It evidently is the mental effort, indeed, combined with the physical repetition, which effects the progressive improvement that habit gradually works forth. That we cannot recall those efforts in their details, is—as has been previously indicated—not merely owing to their rapidity, but to the slight degree of feeling which they imply. The feeling, in such cases, is directed almost exclusively to the ultimate object; and the efforts we make to attain such object, being enveloped in, as they had been originated by such feeling, the whole of them is, as it were, swallowed up in our desire of the object, and hence our recollection of each individually almost instantly passes away. We only remember them, consequently, when they imply some pain or trouble in realising them; but when they become easy from the change wrought on the physical structure of the nerves and muscles from habit, they are necessarily forgotten the moment they are past. All this seems demonstratively proved, by an example which Mr. Stewart has suggested, though applied by him to a somewhat different purpose. "An "expert accountant" he says, "can sum up, almost "with a single glance of his eye, a long column of

Digitized by Google

"figures. He can tell the sum with unerring cer-
"tainty, while, at the same time, he is unable to
"recollect any one of the figures of which that sum
"is composed: and yet nobody doubts that each
"of these figures has passed through his mind, or
"supposes, that when the rapidity of the process
"becomes so great, that he is unable to recollect
"the various steps of it, he obtains the result by a
"sort of inspiration." On the contrary, there can be no doubt, that he was conscious of each figure, and that each was involved in the result of his mental process. He saw each of them, apprehended each of them, and the result is the consequence of his combining them all. But it is not the rapidity of the process which prevents his recollecting the several figures, for that rapidity itself is a consequence of his indifference as to the means which he employs, the sum of the whole being all that he desires to determine. Hence, the steps of the process having no interest to him, he neither dwells on them, as he could not fail to do if he felt any interest in them, nor does he recollect them, in respect of the deficiency of feeling through which alone they could be stamped on the memory. The interest he felt in them, individually, ceases the moment they have served their purpose by being combined into the sum of the whole, and consequently, they cannot be remembered, because the momentary interest felt in them has passed away with the attainment of the object, to which the

Digitized by Google

momentary apprehension of them had been subservient.

Now this brings us to consider the influence of habit on memory, which is no less remarkable, and which can, with equal facility, be explained; for, that memory does improve by habit, universal experience has attested, as embodied in the well-known adage, that "memory is improved by exercising it." Memory is, in fact, strengthened by exercise, just as the eyesight is so strengthened, or the acuteness of touch; yet, there can be no question, that the phenomenon is also modified by other causes. For as memory, as we have already seen, depends on the depth of feeling by which any idea is impressed on the mind, so we know that such impression is farther deepened by the frequency with which the idea recurs in connection with such influences; and as every recurrence of an idea connects it with new accessory ideas, which thus are imbued with the colouring that the co-existing essential, as well as subsidiary feelings, give to it, so is it the more readily recalled when any of these ideas arise in the mind in connection with a cognate desire calculated to generate it; for, as ideas necessarily suggest their cognate feelings, or rather as we cannot be conscious of them apart from such feelings, so do feelings necessarily suggest their cognate ideas, apart from which the desires involved in them cannot be gratified. So that the more widely a feeling is connected with ideas, the

Digitized by Google

more frequently must it rise in the mind, the more must the impression of it be deepened, and thus the greater tendency must it have to exhibit itself again.

Hence the origin of what has been called artificial memory; for as natural memory is the suggestion of an idea, by a symbol naturally cognate to it, with a view to the gratification of some existing desire, so artificial memory is the suggestion of an idea by a symbol arbitrarily or artificially made cognate to it, with a view to the same purpose.[a] To understand this, it must be observed that the mind has the power of identifying ideas which are in themselves perfectly dissimilar by its own act, and this is effected by the one as symbolical of the other, being clothed or coloured with the same feeling, and the process is known in universal experience; for any two ideas co-existing even accidentally thus become so entirely one, by being clothed or coloured with the same feeling, that a desire mainly cognate to only one of them will exhibit both, though that which is less cognate may be allowed more or less unconsciously to disappear and pass away. The operation, however, can be effected by a spontaneous act, so that two ideas may become symbolical of each other, by both implying the same feeling; and thus, when any desire impels us in such a direction, the one will necessarily be connected with, as a substitute for, the other. It

[a] See ch. 8th on Memory.

Digitized by Google

is in this way that elements of compound ideas existing in the mind are frequently followed by the whole compound exhibiting itself, or some other part of it, just according to the character of the existing desire. How far any particular corresponds to such desire, of course, intelligence determines, and this is the reason that similar ideas frequently follow similar ideas, and causes effects, and effects causes; and specially, that not unfrequently ideas present themselves, which are but very distantly connected with those that preceded them, or which are connected therewith by a purely arbitrary bond. It is intelligence selecting them for the gratification of the dominant desire, or combination of desires, though still there must be some connection of the new idea with that which preceded it, because reason has nothing else on which to operate. Hence, if the dominant desire tend to one part of a compound idea, of which we actually remember the other part, and that other part involves a stronger desire, it is easy to understand how the whole current of our thoughts will change, and be turned in a new direction. The new idea has carried the strongest feeling, with which it is connected, along with it. Thus it is that looking at an artificial symbol, such as a knot on a handkerchief, we may instantly recollect a promise to a friend, because the knot, when we have no stronger desire, leads us from its singularity, to desire to know why it was there, and the feeling

Digitized by Google

connected with our promise is the strongest that is connected with it; but, at the same time, it is manifest from the arbitrary character of the union, that it will usually require more or less habit to connect the two particulars together. To colour with a feeling a merely arbitrary symbol cannot, under ordinary circumstances, be thoroughly done at once—at all events, to last for any considerable length of time—but requires frequent repetition, and hence the difficulty of mastering languages, which afford a very striking exemplification of artificial memory. To do so requires repetition upon repetition, and can even thus only be thoroughly effected while memory is strongest. During that period, however, any number of languages, it is obvious on the principles now developed, may be acquired almost with the same facility as we acquire one, supposing that we speak them and read them alternately, so that the repetition by habit fixes them on the memory. Our vocabulary of each, perhaps, may be somewhat more limited, but our knowledge of all up to such limit will be as accurate as our knowledge of any one of them studied separately would have been. In all such cases, the permanence of our recollection depends on the union of the symbols, and the ideas which they represent, having been so frequent or so strong, that a common feeling has identified them, so that the recurrence of either excites that feeling; and this applies not merely to the use of language as

Digitized by Google

symbolical, but to all cases of artificial memory—as, for example, where a particular locality has been the scene of agitating or impressive events, when the strength of the feeling connecting the symbol and the idea produces the same result as a frequent repetition of them in connection. In the same way, the putting a ring on the finger to mark a promise or an arrangement, implies a certain degree of artificial memory. The ring, as it were, forcing itself on our notice, necessarily recalls, in most cases, the idea which it is intended to symbolise, because we desire to know why it is there, and intelligence, as in all other instances, instantly suggests the information by which our desire may be gratified; though, were any stronger desire or passion present to the mind at the time when the promise or arrangement was to be recollected, it is evident, on the same principles, that the desire of knowing what we had intended to imply by the ring would be superseded, and consequently the promise or arrangement forgotten. Hence it is, that people, who have little to think of, will always be most benefitted by the use of such symbols, *unless, indeed, they be connected with any habitually over-ruling passion.* Yet, we need hardly add, that apart from all other considerations, it is habit which mainly realises all such artificial memory. It is just a new form of association, and can only be explained on the principles of association; but the process becomes more marked where habit, as a distinct character of mind,

Digitized by Google

intervenes to give these principles a special direction. In the very same way, therefore, are the phenomena, both of natural and artificial memory explained—only in artificial memory the connection betwixt the sign and the thing signified is arbitrary, whether originating in circumstances or in a spontaneous act of the mind, and consequently, to render it permanent, such connection must either be confirmed by some very strong feeling, or by a series of continuous and more or less interesting repetitions. It is, however, indisputable, and seems, at first sight, to constitute an exception to the conclusion at which we have thus arrived, that we seem, by frequent repetition, actually to remember symbols *quâ* symbols, without attaching any sort of sense to them. We can repeat by rote in other words, as children sometimes repeat a lesson, without the smallest apprehension of that which the words convey. The exception, however, is only apparent and not real, since the fact is—as we have already seen—that any form of words may gradually involve to our feelings a species of cadence and harmony, which implies feeling sufficient for their recollection, while this is assisted by the tendency which the nervous and muscular organisation acquires as a mere physical act, consequent on habit, to generate the consecutive acts or sounds. This is illustrated in music, wherein, though the successive sounds individually have no meaning, yet the recollection of them successively,

Digitized by Google

apart from any effort of thought, is evidently excited, by our feelings of harmony and our desire to enjoy it, to the extent, at all events, of completing the measure, assisted by the organic tendency of the nerves, and through them of the muscles, to accommodate themselves to that particular sequence to which they had been previously accustomed in connection with the harmony partially guiding it. In the same way, in committing poetry to memory, we attend not merely to the sense, but to the harmony; and it is just on this account, by the operation of the double cause, that while we recollect poetry more readily than prose, we are also apt more readily to repeat it without distinctly tracing the sense which it bears in our doing so. It is the harmony of sounds in such cases that is gratifying our desire. Yet it is equally true, that in the frequent repetition of prose we form a sort of harmony for ourselves, which ultimately combines with the mere physical action of the organism in facilitating our repetition of it by rote. Hence, in such a case, we cannot pass over a clause, and recommence, because we thus both break the harmony and interrupt the physical process. If we stop, we must *recover the sense*, ere we can re-commence again, because the organic modulation being lost, the feeling and tendency which generate our recollection of the words, necessarily disappear along with it.

The most important effect of habit, however, in relation to the human mind, is to be found in its

Digitized by Google

direct power over the feelings and desires, apart from our recognition of which, the philosophy of our intellectual processes is altogether unintelligible. To understand this matter with any degree of accuracy, it must be observed, that all the feelings and passions of the human mind are more or less connected with some desire; in other words, they imply some pleasure which we desire either to retain or attain, or some pain which we desire either to supersede, or prospectively to avoid. But, as we have already seen, in addition to the desires essentially involved in our primary feelings and passions, there are new desires generated in the human mind, and having for their objects *the means* through which the objects of our primary and natural desires are supposed to be attainable. Now, habit is a *second* nature, as it has been called, with reference to our primary desires, by its power of strengthening some of them so as to overbear the rest; but it is a *primary* nature as to those artificial desires which we have spoken of, because it *originates* them, and frequently so strengthens them as to change our primary characters. In both these cases, however, its mode of operation is precisely the same. The more we encourage any feeling or desire, whether primary or secondary, in a geometric ratio is its influence intensified, and whatever ideas are coloured with the same feeling, by co-existence or otherwise, so as to be parts of the one compound feeling, its influence with regard to them all will be

Digitized by Google

intensified. Hence, in this way, interest may be felt in objects arbitrarily, that is, through feelings with which in themselves, they have no affinity whatever. Thus, the gift of a deceased friend may become exceedingly dear to us, or the seat which he was wont to occupy may excite in us an interest of the most intense character, simply because he and they have become one idea, in so far as they are impressed on the mind by the same feeling; and hence the more frequently the idea of either, in connection with such feeling, recurs to us, the stronger does it become. In this case, however, we have merely primary feelings intensified, but habit in regard to desires actually becomes itself a primary nature, constituting, as has been said, altogether new states of mind, or in other words, new feelings, having no prototypes in the primitive constitution of the mind. In this way, is originated a pleasure in, and disgust at, means or circumstances merely, and a consequent desire for, or abhorrence at, such means or circumstances, apart altogether from the objects which such means or circumstances were supposed calculated to secure or avoid, or with which, in any other way, they were connected. This could be illustrated by any number of instances. Many, for example, who at first desired fine dresses for the sake of winning admiration, come ultimately to like them for their own sakes, and when it is perfectly impossible that admiration could be their object. Others who have studied

Digitized by Google

subjects, merely with a view to worldly success, or professional advancement, come by habit to love such subjects for themselves. But specially the strange desire called avarice, as was formerly indicated, illustrates this mental operation. Eager in early life for the indulgence of luxury, or the influence of power, men quickly discover that these can only be realised through the possession of wealth. To procure wealth, consequently, we apply ourselves with unwearied perseverance. Our whole efforts of soul and body are directed to it. We rise early, and late take rest. All the strongest of our passions and purposes come to be concentrated on its attainment. In this pursuit, the end passes away from our thoughts, and by habit the means come to be substituted for it. At first, wealth for its own sake was regarded by us as of no consequence; it was only sought as a means through which other things could be procured, and primary desires gratified; but, as it continues to present itself to the mind in perpetual connection with those desires, the pleasure which they imply in their attainment gradually transfers itself from THE OBJECTS TO THE MEANS, and thus a desire is generated of a totally new character, as having no existence whatever in our primary natures. In thus far, in fact, under the influence of habit, we acquire a new nature, and become new creatures. We love, and hate, desire, and repudiate objects, which, to our primary constitution, are perfectly indifferent,

Digitized by Google

and which indeed, of themselves, and for their own sakes, have no action upon, or reference to, our original and primary constitution at all. This is obvious on the slightest consideration, with reference to the special illustration to which we have been adverting; for the avaricious man is perfectly indifferent as to the form in which he realises his property, whether in land, or houses, or railways, or gold, or mere acknowledgments, provided the security be good, and supposing him substantively to have the command of it. Nor does he seek to realise it for any ulterior purpose, except to acquire more. He only desires to increase and accumulate. He never does gratify, nor does he really intend to gratify, any primary or natural tendency. On the contrary, such an application of his wealth would be utterly inconsistent with his now dominant, but no less on that account entirely secondary and artificial, desire. He seeks that which he knows that he can never use, and which, indeed, it would be the most grievous pain for him to expend on any object whatever. For the sake of its accumulation, therefore, he resists all his primary tendencies till they be subdued and eradicated. Every feeling is swallowed up in this acquired desire, and he lives solely for the accumulation of money. We do not say, however, let it be observed, that there may not, at all events, for a very long time, be other desires combined with avarice and intensifying it—we only say, what every one will admit, that

Digitized by Google

this is a description of the phenomenon of avarice itself. The very same result is realised in all cases wherein we permanently and habitually connect a feeling with an idea, whether pleasurable or painful, though not to the same extent, because there is perhaps no case in which strong feelings come to be so concentrated on any one object as in that of avarice; and it is clear, that a principle which thus operates in modifying and changing our primary natures, cannot be incidental, but must be itself of the very constitution of our natures. No doubt, the operation of habit as a process, is, as we have seen, accounted for by the principle of association; but that habit, when operating, should not only modify the strength of our passions, but even generate new desires, can only be explained by supposing, that it is of the essence of the constitution of mind. In so far, therefore, as this is the case, it can admit of no farther analysis.

But there is still another, and little less important result of habit to be mentioned, and that is, as regards its effect on our beliefs. There cannot be a greater error, however common it may be, than to suppose that human beliefs rest solely upon rational evidence. On the contrary, they rest, with a large portion of mankind, at all events, to a much greater extent, on feeling or desire. The proud man always overvalues his qualifications; the vain man imagines that he is deceiving others by his affectation and ostentation; the kind and benevolent man

Digitized by Google

attributes a goodness to his fellow-creatures, which they rarely possess; the malignant, envious, and unprincipled man, on the contrary, imputes motives and ascribes purposes to them which they never thought of. In such cases, and in most others, our only or our chief evidence is the wish that things should be as we picture them. And, no doubt, the desire is a proof—*not that the thing is*, but that *it may be*; for our desires (of course, we do not speak of fantastic wishes, but our *bonâ fidê* desires), whether right or wrong, are, at all events, human, and never do or can transcend the nature of things. It is, indeed, obvious, that if we could *bonâ fidê* desire that which is impossible in the nature of things, our own natures themselves would be a mockery. Our desires, therefore, in themselves imply a sufficient and, indeed, indisputable evidence, that what we desire MAY BE; and on this rests the farther belief which they also, as we have seen, more or less impose upon us, that what we desire IS. Specially, as we desire our fellow-creatures to be like ourselves—for we have a certain distaste to those that are unlike ourselves—and as we only know human nature directly in ourselves, it is a natural result that we impute to them the same motives, whether good or bad, by which we feel that we are ourselves influenced, and this tendency, confirmed by habit, becomes almost irresistible. The principle, however, embraces a far wider range than that which regards merely our

Digitized by Google

opinions of others, for everything that we desire to believe, we, more or less, believe in imagination, because *the desire more or less excludes all other considerations;* and that which we believe in imagination, by just such another process of habit as that recently described, we soon come to believe in reality. In fact, every belief in imagination would be a belief in reality, could we entirely exclude the modifying circumstances in the operation of discriminating reason; and as it is very difficult to introduce a feeling through which these modifying circumstances may be made thoroughly matter of consciousness, *when all our desires tend to belief in the imagination,* it is easy to perceive how much, by habit, the one will accordingly be strengthened and the other weakened. It requires, indeed, a very considerable effort at realising a desire for pure truth, in order that modifying circumstances may have fair play in the exercise of unbiassed reason. Hence it is that a large proportion of our beliefs originate in desire, and from the same cause, almost the whole of them are more or less modified by it. Such, in fact, is the philosophy of prejudice: it is the belief of feeling strengthened by habit. But, to make our apprehension of this subject complete, it must be remembered that belief, originating more or less in mere authority, is also embraced under the name of prejudice. There are few subjects even pertaining to intellectual science more misunderstood than this, since it is generally supposed that

Digitized by Google

we, in the first instance, intuitively believe the evidence of testimony, and that this intuitive belief is modified by experience, in which case it is evident that the grounds of our belief would, of the very nature of things, be frequently unsatisfactory and even false, inasmuch as, whatever may be the *intention* of witnesses, they frequently may be, and even must be, mistaken. To assume, therefore, that we believe intuitively everything which any one may say to be absolutely true, implies an evident absurdity, as resting our intuitive beliefs on authority which may always, and which must, in many cases, be insufficient. The only immediate belief which we can have in testimony is in the conviction of the attesting witness. The capability and tendency to communicate our thoughts and ideas is of the very constitution of our natures, and the co-relative in others to such capability and tendency, is and could only be a disposition or tendency to believe us. We know, from reason, that the capability is conferred on us by nature, in order to enable us to communicate that which we *do* think, and not that which we *do not* think. It is from the very constitution of our minds, consequently, that we, in the first instance, believe what other people tell us, to be true to the *best of their knowledge;* but it would be utterly away from any principle of our natures to believe it true *in the nature of things,* which would, indeed, involve the assumption that our co-relative beliefs in respect to things

Digitized by Google

without us, are not really co-relative to such things, but altogether arbitrary, and not merely arbitrary, but untrustworthy, as leading to conclusions illogical in theory, and false in fact. It is, indeed, indisputable, that notwithstanding our primary tendency to believe in their truth, our fellow-creatures do sometimes wilfully deceive us, but this is because they *violate their natures and natural tendencies*, to which our belief strictly responds and with which it entirely harmonises; and we say, violate their natural tendencies, because, setting aside even our own feelings, which, by rational deduction, settle the point *a priori*, we can, on abstract grounds, no more suppose that our capabilities of mutual communication were given in order that we should deceive each other, than that our desire for society was given, in order that we should maltreat and murder each other. But though our primary belief in authority be thus limited to a mutual belief in each other's sincerity, yet, by a secondary process, this belief quickly embraces a wider range. For finding in early life that our parents and elders do *not* deceive us—at all events, so far as we can discover—and finding, farther, that they are always, or almost always right, we are gradually led, partly by reason and partly by habit, under the principle already explained, to put full confidence in their opinions, not only separately, but as clothed with the various passions, feelings, and desires with which they had invested them. In thus far, we

Digitized by Google

give ourselves no trouble whatever as to the foundations on which such opinions rest. We believe them in so far *rationally* on their testimony, because we have found their testimony almost universally correct, and the habit of believing them has rivetted the various ideas along with their corresponding feelings on our minds. Hence, subsequently to eradicate such belief, or the character of mind with which such feelings have imbued us, is a work of serious difficulty. It is indeed obvious, on principles already explained, that counteracting ideas and feelings can hardly find an open avenue into the mind, so that the belief becomes, as it were, a part of ourselves. It is the consummation of prejudice.

From the explanation now given of these various phenomena, it will be manifest, that while the growth of habit depends upon the principle of association, yet, that the power which habit exercises is of the very nature and constitution of the human mind, and that its influence must, therefore, of necessity be perpetually taken into account ere we can hope accurately to analyse almost any portion of our mental operations.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XI.

ON REASON.

Difference betwixt consciousness and reason—Difficulties as to the nature and operations of reason, in some measure attributable to the use of symbols—Means of superseding these—Growth of our knowledge in relation to this subject—Nature of general ideas, and meaning of words that express them, as illustrative of the nature of reason—Realists, Nominalists, Conceptualists—Analysis of the phenomenon—Explanation of the nature of Mathematical axioms, and of the physical and moral axiom, "every change must have a cause," as illustrative of the nature of reason—Distinction of consciousness and reason more accurately drawn—Knowledge acquired by reason is the knowledge of relations, under which we identify and discriminate existences according to their qualities or powers—Our belief in the proposition, "the same "thing, under the same circumstances, will always produce the same "result," explained—Our belief in the permanence of the universe explained—Extent of our belief in symbols, as expressive of the objects they represent, explained—Conclusion.

INTELLIGENCE, apprehension, or knowledge, implies a process compounded of consciousness and reason. Consciousness gives the knowledge of absolute facts that we perceive or feel; and reason gives the knowledge of relations, *i.e.*, distinguishes the absolute idea from all other ideas, in respect of the speciality or specialities by which it is distinguished. The confusion which has so universally prevailed upon this subject, is mainly owing to the use of symbols, and particularly of language, as represent-

Digitized by Google

ing ideas; for words come ultimately, by habit, to take the place of ideas, by a process already explained, and though every word has a feeling attached to it, by which it is distinguished in our minds from all other words, yet this feeling is frequently very vague and indefinite. The idea or ideas which each expresses, are scarcely ever *accurately* known by us. As we hurry onwards from clause to clause, and sentence to sentence, we are satisfied with a very general apprehension of what is meant. Hence, the feeling or feelings, properly appertaining to words, frequently change, by the unconscious operation of our passions and desires, so as to give to such words a totally different character. They are, consequently, no longer true symbols, and thus, the same word conveys to different persons entirely different impressions, and this altogether apart from the farther consideration, that from the beginning, different persons attach necessarily more or less extensive significations to words, in proportion to the extent of their knowledge of the simple ideas which such words may possibly imply. It is thus obvious, that though every one reasons correctly from his own premises, yet, different persons must arrive at different conclusions in the use of the same words, inasmuch as though the words are the same, yet the premises are different, because each individual attaches different senses to the words employed. The difference of the conclusions at which different

Digitized by Google

persons arrive from the same verbal premises, is, moreover, still farther illustrated by the consideration, that each looks at the facts—even supposing the words to be understood in the same sense—according to the tendency of his own mind, *i.e.*, according to the direction given to them by the desire or the desires which at the moment are dominant in it. There may, consequently, be no feeling in the mind enabling one person to regard the facts under the same aspect as others do—except, indeed, the desire for attaining absolute truth, which is generally the weakest of all our desires, unless in the case of those few who assiduously and perseveringly cultivate it as the great end of their being.

To appreciate, however, in any measure thoroughly, the difficulties which encompass this subject, we must recall the process under which we gradually and unconsciously become accustomed to symbolise ideas and propositions in words, so that we ultimately come to assign senses to words, and realise beliefs in elementary propositions, without knowing when, or how, or why, such results took place. A correct analysis of the words, indeed, though by no means an easy operation, may determine the accuracy of the meanings which we attach to them; but this will evidently give us no information as to the ground of our belief in elementary propositions, to attain which, we must, as it were, throw ourselves back on the circumstances under which our belief in them was realised, and try to

Digitized by Google

determine how we should now realise it, were it to be done anew? For this purpose we must temporarily denude ourselves of the belief which we actually entertain, and endeavour, by the pure use of reason, to retrace the primary operation. The intricacy and complication of such a process is sufficiently manifest, and consequently, we need not wonder, that to evade it, philosophers have usually, in some form or another, had recourse to the much more simple plan of referring our belief in all such elementary propositions to intuition. As, however, we are convinced, and trust, indeed, that we have already proved, that there is no such thing as intuitive belief, except the belief that nature has constituted in our faculties and feelings, and that this can neither involve nor imply any ABSOLUTE knowledge of an external fact, unless in so far as any existence may directly operate upon them, it is evident that we cannot admit such an explanation, but are bound by the very nature of our principles, both to solve precisely the difficulties connected with the meaning of words, and to account precisely for the origin of what have been called intuitive or *a priori* propositions.

Now, to do this effectually, it seems necessary that we should endeavour to discover the origin, and describe the progressive growth, of our knowledge, so that the real nature of the rational faculty and its powers may thus be distinctly exhibited in the simple steps of its primary manifestations. In

Digitized by Google

this argument I shall avoid any assumption that can admit of dispute, and trust to be able to shew how simply difficulties can thus be obviated which have usually been regarded as almost insuperable impediments to the progress of philosophical science.

When we realise a sensation, then, which is the first step in thought or knowledge, we have in such sensation an absolute feeling. This feeling being limited to a particular time, and by a particular place and circumstances, is particular. Of course, therefore, if it be remembered in connection with the same limitations, it becomes a particular idea. Particular ideas are consequently merely ideas of feelings, whether simple or compound, and whether sensational, emotional, or rational, limited by time, place, and circumstances. But such is the constitution of the human mind, that no feeling can thus exist as merely absolute. There is a desire connected with every feeling which forces us first to determine what it is in itself, and then to compare it with others, so as to identify it with those previously felt, and to discriminate it from all other things, an operation which is effected by the faculty of reason. Hence, in every instance, when we have a particular we have also a general, and, in a certain sense, a relative feeling generated along with it. Reason, in other words, picks out that something in the particular feeling which constitutes, in each

* See remarks on the same subject in the chapter "on sensation.

Digitized by Google

case, the distinctive peculiarity by which it is discriminated from all other feelings. Thus, if I see a green square object—say, for example, a piece of green cloth of a square form, I have a particular compound feeling. I am at once conscious of a green colour, and of that colour in a square form, both being known as without me, and both being so combined as to constitute one compound feeling; and I have in addition to this, and as a separate feeling, a consciousness of my own mind as the subject acted upon. In this phenomenon, however, there is immediately another process found to be involved. In our consciousness, on the one hand, of our own minds, we have the first manifestation of the difference betwixt existence and non-existence. In our consciousness, on the other hand, of the compound feeling, we instantly discriminate betwixt the colour and the figure, or, in other words, the greenness and the squareness, and these particulars again, we also discriminate from non-existence, and from our own minds as conscious of them. All this is the operation of reason, and by it every one particular is distinguished from all the rest, the compound feeling being analysed, and its parts at once and precisely discriminated. The speciality of the colour, as distinguished, not only from all other qualities, but from other kinds of colour also, is determined: greenness in fact, *quâ* greenness, is known as contra-distinguished from everything else. There is in the idea, conse-

Digitized by Google

quently, nothing making it particular. In the particular, no doubt, the operation originated, but in the action of reason every speciality, which could connect the idea with any limiting circumstance of time, or place, or degree, is superseded. All that is implied in it, is *some cause or another* without our minds, which affects them in a certain known way, and which, in so far, we discover by reason to differ from everything else. It thus is not THE cause, which can only be constituted by its being regarded in connection with time, but A cause, having a certain relation to our minds, and which we know, not as affecting our mind at *a particular time*, but merely as affecting our minds in *a given way*. It thus becomes a general or abstract idea, not by assimilating a number of green objects to one another, as is commonly supposed, nor as embracing every form of greenness, but as realising the essence of greenness—the something which distinctively constitutes greenness, and discriminates it from all other things and all other colours. Hence, in seeing a green object once, we have the abstract or general notion of greenness as completely as if we had seen green objects a thousand times. In the same way, if our attention be directed to the figure, reason picks out the peculiar characteristic which discriminates a square from all other things and all other figures. It does, indeed, discriminate the particular square from all other squares, but it also discri-

Digitized by Google

minates squareness from all other figures. In this latter case, the particular feeling as limited to present time, which originated the notion, altogether disappears from observation, and we have a rational knowledge in the place of a conscious feeling. It is no longer THE square, but A square or squareness which is known as a *distinctive* something, and this squareness is a general, abstract, or distinctive term, just as we found the term greenness to be in the former case. Again, if I feel irritated, I have a particular feeling limited by a particular time, and a particular cause. It is a present state, and any subsequent recollection of it, in connection with such time, and such cause, more or less definitely constitutes a particular idea. But, in the particular feeling, or idea, our reason, in like manner, picks out the something which constitutes the mental state of irritation, as distinguished from all other states and all other things. This is the general or abstract idea. It is not the *consciousness* of irritation, but a *knowledge* of irritation itself, as a discriminated state of mind, which we may realise without any feeling of irritation at all. Once more, if I have an idea of a tree, which implies a series of sensations identified with a given locality, as we shall subsequently shew more at length, supposing such idea connected with a particular time or place, though only in imagination or memory, it is particular; but, if I have an idea of a tree, away from every consideration of time and place, and

Digitized by Google

every other limiting consideration—if there be any other—and solely as affecting my mind in a certain way, this is a general idea. It is that something, or those somethings, essential to every tree, discriminated from everything else, by the operation of reason. Hence, it is not any external thing absolutely that constitutes such an idea, but those characteristics of an external thing, which distinguish it from everything else, as discovered, and discriminated by reason. Feeling makes us conscious of the external thing, as at any particular time it operates upon us, but reason only can make known its special nature as calculated to affect us in a certain way, which, evidently, cannot imply a particular, but must be a general or abstract idea. There is nothing, therefore, without us, which answers to a general idea, *quâ* its generality, because the general idea, excluding all reference to time, and actuality of feeling, merely involves the essential quality or characteristic of the object, apart from every incident, which thus necessarily distinguishes it from everything else, and which is the operation of reason only. It is attained by a purely mental operation subsequent to our consciousness of the feeling, and separate from it, and consequently cannot be *imaged*, as if it had been a perception, but only *known*, as the result of an act of the rational faculty.

The analysis thus given, however, will be still better understood, by attending to the history of

Digitized by Google

the subject, for difficulties as to the nature of general ideas and general terms begin with the very earliest dawnings of intellectual philosophy. General words or names, even then, of course, existed as phenomena, and instantly raised the questions, what are they? and what do they represent?

The first philosophers of whose opinions we have any definite information, such as Pythogoras, Plato, and their followers, as we have already partially seen, assumed that they represent actual entities, or universals *a parte rei*. They supposed, that is to say, that there is an actual entity of greenness, an actual entity of squareness, an actual entity of a tree, and so on, existing as models or examplars in the human mind, and that general names designate them. This theory has disappeared in more modern times: we do not believe that it could find a single advocate.

In opposition to this realistic theory, however, there was proposed, at a very early period—for in all probability it anteceded the stoics—a hypothesis to the effect that general names or words represent no idea whatever, being merely signs or symbols. What its originators could have meant by such a theory, or how they could have imagined signs which signify nothing, or symbols which represent nothing, it seems impossible to explain. Indeed, if there were no mental states corresponding to general terms, it would evidently be impossible to distinguish the meaning of one such term from

Digitized by Google

that of another, since none of them would apply to any one thing more than another. In this way, how could it be, that the general term, *man*, for example, should include only creatures of a particular form and character, and exclude all others? How could the general term, *tree*, be distinguished in its meaning from the general term, *horse*, if neither represented any one thing more than any other thing? In a word, why should we predicate of any one general term that which we cannot predicate of another? There can be no conceivable reply to such questions, on the supposition that general terms are mere words without any definite meaning. Accordingly, this nominalistic theory has, in modern times, been substantively identified with what has been called conceptualism, and, in this aspect, is merely the recognition of a principle of resemblance or identity in a variety of objects, which principle is assumed to be the something that general terms are intended to express. The retention by some philosophers of the name of nominalists, there can be no doubt, has originated in a certain greater or less misconception on their parts of the meaning of nominalism, as, indeed, is clearly manifested in the case of Stewart—the ablest of modern nominalists—when he says, that it is from the admitted use of symbols in reasoning that he concludes reasoning to be equally valid, whether the general terms employed in it have any precise meaning or no. For he evidently forgets, that

Digitized by Google

though, no doubt, reasoning may admit of certain words being used symbolically in the process, yet this is because they are connected in such reasoning with certain other words, that having a precise signification, *thereby limit their meaning;* the symbols, *though having no meaning in themselves,* yet *receiving a meaning from their connection with the context.* This will be made indisputably manifest, by attending to the terms in which he has stated his argument: "All straight lines," he says, "drawn "from the centre of a circle to the circumference, "are equal to one another; but A B and C D "are straight lines drawn from the centre of a "circle to the circumference, therefore, A B is "equal to C D. It is manifest, that in order to "feel the force of this conclusion, it is by no means "necessary that I should annex any particular no- "tions to the letters, A, B, or C, D, or that I "should comprehend what is meant by equality, or "by a circle, its centre, and its circumference. "Every person must be certain, that the truth of "the conclusion is necessarily implied in that of "the two premises, whatever the particular things "may be to which these premises may relate."[a] According to this view, the reasoning, with equal propriety, might have run thus: "If something be "true of something, then, if something be that "something, the conclusion is true of that some- "thing." Now, no doubt, this is perfectly correct

[a] Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind—Ch. 4th, sec. 2.

Digitized by Google

reasoning, but it is a TOTALLY DIFFERENT PROPOSITION. The moment we use such terms as "equality, "circle, circumference," and the like, we have special notions expressed, which are *included* within the universal idea implied in the word "something," and thus fix the sense of the letters, A B and C D. Hence, though the proposition—as Stewart says—would, undoubtedly, be equally true, even were the letters and terms employed in the most general sense, yet it would be a *different, i.e.*, a more general truth, and therefore, could not convey any special ideas of "equality, circle, centre, circumfer- "ence, or lines," those words, as having no particu- "lar notions annexed to them," being, in such a case, not included in, but equivalent to the term "some- "thing," and, therefore, the conclusion derived from them, however true, would, of necessity, be perfectly general, *not applying to lines, but to any kind or mode of existence whatever*. There can be no other supposition, since, were terms employed, neither applicable to existence generally, nor to any kind or form of such existence specially, it is clear that the proposition included in them—were it possible for such terms to include a proposition—could be neither true nor false, but nonsense. In assuming, therefore, that the terms which he employs apply to no "particular" kind of existence, he can only mean, that they are used in the most general sense possible, or, in other words, that they are applicable to every kind of existence, including everything

Digitized by Google

that does or can appertain to it. The fact, however, is, that Mr. Stewart overlooked the essential consideration, that, though certain of the terms which he used, could *in themselves* have no "particular" meaning, yet, that they receive such a meaning in consequence of their connection with other and definite words in the argument. This is still more thoroughly illustrated by attending to what follows, where he says—"In the following syllogism, all men must die—Peter is a "man, therefore, Peter must die. The evidence of "the conclusion does not in the least depend on "the particular notions which I annex to the words "man and Peter, but would be equally conclusive "if we were to substitute instead of them two "letters of the alphabet, or any other insignificant "characters. All X's must die—Z is an X, there-"fore Z must die, is a syllogism which forces the "assent no less than the former. It is farther ob-"vious that this syllogism would be equally con-"clusive, if, instead of the word die, I were to "substitute any other verb which the language "contains." No doubt! But the verb is as much a general term as the noun, and, in order to make his theory good, he must be prepared to shew, not that "any other *verb*" could be substituted in place of the verb "die," but that "*a letter of the alpha-"bet, or any other insignificant character*" could be substituted in place of it. The known verb is the very thing which gives precision to, and ascertains

Digitized by Google

the limits of, the noun connected with it. Hence, to say "all X's die," is just equivalent to saying, "all creatures of a certain kind die." The verb thus gives a more or less extended, though perfectly precise meaning to the noun, and it would just be the same if a known noun were used with a symbolical verb. All men X—Peter is a man—therefore, Peter X's; is a perfectly good syllogism, the verb X expressing any act which a man can accomplish or do. But a proposition, with all its general terms, both nouns and verbs—"insigni-"ficant characters"—would be nonsense, simply because there could be no means of attaching any sense to them, either general or particular. It is just the same to us, if we cannot comprehend the terms of a proposition. In such a case, it can convey to us no meaning, and consequently we cannot assent to it. At the best, it could only imply the most general of all assertions, that "what is, is."

But, though thus led into a misconception by the apparent facility with which his nominalistic theory enabled him to explain processes of reasoning by symbols, it is evident that Mr. Stewart had, notwithstanding, a sort of latent consciousness, that general words actually express some mental state; for, in explaining the principles of classification, and for this purpose, quoting from Smith's "disserta-"tion on the formation of languages," he says—"it is this application of the name of an individual "to a great number of objects, whose resemblance

Digitized by Google

"naturally recalls the idea of that individual, and "of the name which expresses it, that seems ori- "ginally to have given occasion to the formation "of these classes and assortments, which, in the "schools are called genera and species."[a] This theory, which Stewart approves, seems substantively identical with that of Reid and Brown, the latter of whom says, in nearly identical terms—"If our "mind be capable of feeling resemblance, it must "be capable of general notions, which are nothing "more than varieties of this very feeling."[b] It would be difficult to imagine any difference in principle betwixt the view thus expressed, and that formerly quoted as the joint opinion of Smith and Stewart. In both cases, general names are held to represent that something, which, on comparison, we find to be identical or similar in a greater or less number of cases. Now, this is really the conceptualist theory—the difference betwixt it and the theory of those who, in modern times, call themselves nominalists, being merely verbal, originating in some confusion on the part of nominalists as to the precise sense of the name which they assume.

This conceptualist theory, as explained by Dr. Reid, divides the process of generalisation into two parts—1st, "The analysing a subject into its known "attributes, and giving a name to each attribute," which portion of the process he calls abstraction;

[a] Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind—Ch. 4th, sec. 1.

[b] Brown's Lectures—Lecture lxvii.

Digitized by Google

2nd, "The observing one or more such attributes "to be common to many subjects," which he calls generalisation.[a] As to the former portion of the process, Brown has left little to be said, inasmuch as, in a simple sentence, he has proved that such a faculty as it assumes is impossible, "since every "exertion of it would imply a contradiction, inas- "much as the previous state of mind would involve "necessarily the very abstraction which it is sup- "posed to produce."[b] It will farther be observed, that the assumption of such a process would imply the most erroneous and absurd supposition, that we form our notions of subjects before knowing their attributes—whereas it is, on the contrary, by combining known attributes, as will be subsequently explained, that we acquire a knowledge of subjects.[c] It supposes, for example, that we know substance before knowing the hardness, colour, smell, &c., which belong to it, and that we then proceed by this faculty of abstraction to analyse the substance into those qualities—whereas, the qualities, as is indeed manifest, *are all that we know of the substance*, each attribute being separately known by our various senses in the first instance, and then such qualities being combined together in one locality, constitute what we call substance, so that a faculty of combination would be much more

[a] Reid—Intellectual powers—Essay 5th, ch. 3.
[b] Brown's Lectures—Lecture li.
[c] See chapter on Sensation.

Digitized by Google

readily conceivable than a faculty of abstraction. But, though Brown in thus far made a step in advance of his predecessors, yet he felt that without some such process, it was impossible to account for what he supposed to be the subsequent operation, and which, indeed, constitutes the peculiarity of the conceptualist theory. Hence, while he repudiated a voluntary, he assumed some form of involuntary abstraction. In other words, he assumed, just as Reid did, that we first know subject or substance, and that then, by some involuntary process, we become acquainted with its attributes—which involuntary process he explains, by referring it to what he calls "relative suggestion," *i.e.*, by referring it to an unknown cause. In truth, however, this is just as much an error as the former, though it be more disguised, for there is no such process as abstraction at all, as we trust is now obvious, whether voluntary or involuntary; attributes being known before substance can be known, and, indeed, *being the only substance that we can know*, that which we call substance being merely the reference of attributes to an identical locality under a process of an entirely different character.

Not only, however, is there no such process as abstraction, but in forming general ideas, there is no such "observing of one or more attributes to be "common to many subjects," as Reid supposes in the second part of his imagined operation. The error of this theory, universal as it is, will at once

Digitized by Google

be obvious, if we consider that in perceiving, for example, one green object, we have as general an apprehension of greenness as if we had seen green objects ten thousand times. No one, indeed, will for a moment maintain that we must have seen *two* green objects in order to have a general idea of greenness, or *two* horses, in order to have a general idea of a horse. No doubt, by repeatedly perceiving the same or identical objects, we may have a more accurate and precise idea of the nature of each, but it will not be in the slightest degree more general. Nor does it signify how any idea is formed—whether it be a perception acquired by sensation, or a complex idea acquired through reason—the moment we know it as particular, that same moment it is also apprehended as general. In truth, the only comparison which takes place in forming a general notion is for the purpose of knowing it in itself absolutely, and thus of discriminating it from all others. A particular idea is an absolute feeling limited by time, place, or circumstances; a general idea discriminates the speciality or specialities which constitutes any particular idea what it is, separating it from all mere incidents, so as to distinguish it essentially from everything else. Hence, in reality, every notion is general when it ceases to be a mere absolute feeling or recollection thereof, because it at once becomes DISTINCTIVE, and thus, discriminating its object from all other things, becomes intelligently apprehended.

Digitized by Google

The peculiarity, therefore, or peculiarities which we know in each general notion, is or are those that distinguish them from all other things, and in thus knowing, we understand or apprehend them. The particular idea is thus a mere feeling—the general idea is intelligence or apprehension. We are conscious, therefore, of particular ideas as feelings or recollections of feelings, but we can only be said to know or apprehend them when we discriminate that essential something in each which distinguishes it from all other ideas, and its objects from all other things. Hence, the more frequently we are cognisant of, and the more accurately we examine objects, we have more definite, but in no degree more general ideas of them—the generality of our ideas consisting merely in their separation from all feelings or ideas of time, place, or other limiting circumstances. Every modification of quality or substance, consequently, has its own general notion distinguishing each from all other things, by realising the speciality of such quality or substance which discriminates each from all other modifications of qualities or substances in any way differing from them. In this way is readily explained our idea of a triangle, for example, which is a general idea derived by reason from our perception or conception of any form of a triangle. Hence, when we see a triangle of a special kind—say an isoceles triangle—we have at once, from such perception, two general notions with respect to its

Digitized by Google

figure. We have the general notion of an isoceles triangle as constituted by two equal sides with their combining base, and of a triangle absolutely, as consisting of three conjoined sides. It is manifestly impossible, therefore, to have an image or conception in the strictest sense of the word conception, either of an isoceles triangle, or of a triangle absolutely, because the isoceles triangle *as perceived*, is a mere feeling of a special form which we can imagine in thought; but, *as apprehended* in a general notion, it is *the something which constitutes the speciality of that particular form, apart from time, place, size, or any other limiting circumstance*, and which thus, by an act of reason, contradistinguishes it from all other forms in which those lines can be conjoined. In the same way, the particular notion of a triangle of any kind can be imaged by the mind as limited to a particular form, but the general notion of a triangle cannot be imaged as being merely the result of a rational process discriminating that mode of combining three lines which constitutes a triangle, from all other modes of combining three lines, and from all other things whatsoever; for it is obvious, that discrimination or contradistinction, though it may be *known*, cannot be *imaged*, as being simply a process of reason through which facts and truths are not only felt, but are also intelligently apprehended. We are said thus to know them by knowing their discriminating characteristics, *so far as we*

Digitized by Google

observe such characteristics, as contradistinguishing them from all other things. And we say, *so far as we observe them*, because—and the point is of essential importance—because we may perceive objects, and appreciate propositions, *in certain respects*, without perceiving or appreciating *all* their peculiarities. Indeed, as has been said, the more attentively we examine either objects or propositions, the more precisely and accurately do we come to know them. Thus, taking one of the above-mentioned examples, we may, in the first instance, regard an isoceles triangle only as a figure constituted by the inter-conjunction of three lines, *i.e.*, as a triangle absolutely, because we may pay no attention to the apparent equality of two of its sides. But, when on more careful examination, we discover this peculiarity, we instantly have farther the additional notion of an isoceles triangle. In either case, however, the general notion is a totally different thing from the perception. The perception is an act of the senses, limited by a particular time, place, and size, and the recollection of it implies the same limitations. But the general notion is an act of reason, and regards the discriminating speciality of the figure alone, as contradistinguished from all other figures, and all other things. From all which, it is quite clear, that such objects as the sun, the moon, &c.—of which we only know one example—imply general ideas, just as much as those of which we have an infinity of examples. They

Digitized by Google

are, indeed, particular in so far as connected with time, place, size, or other incidental characteristic; but, in seeing the sun or the moon, we have the general notion of a sun or a moon, by simply regarding them as apart from such characteristic, so that, were we to see another sun or moon, we could at once identify them with as much certainty as if we had previously known them in any number of cases. The nature of the whole process is so plain, that we can hardly think it will admit of being misunderstood. Indeed, the only difficulty of explaining it, arises from its extreme simplicity. There are hardly words to be found for expressing processes so exceedingly elementary, and it is this that makes it necessary to repeat and re-repeat the same thing, in so many different forms.

So far, then, we trust has the nature of general ideas been made distinctly manifest, as they regard *absolute* facts, as well as the real meaning of the words which designate them. The process is every way the same in regard to relations. It will, indeed, be now obvious, from the discriminating tendency of the rational faculty, that its main characteristic consists in that power by which it identifies and distinguishes, and to the exertion of this power it is impelled by a cognate desire, with the continuous action of which we are all experimentally acquainted. Accordingly, when we see any two things—say two lines, for example—we instantly set about comparing them more or less

Digitized by Google

consciously, and in this comparison, we necessarily, in the very act, discover that relation which we call equality, or that which we call inequality in length. It would, of course, be the same with regard to numbers or anything else. In this way we rationally or intelligently apprehend, by such comparison, the peculiarity which constitutes the relation, and which thus contra-distinguishes it from all other relations; in other words, we know the speciality or specialities which makes or make the relation what it is, and without which it could not be. In this we have the general notion, and though subsequent re-observation of the phenomenon in any case may make our knowledge of the relation more accurate, it can in no degree make it more general. In seeing two apparently equal lines once, we have as general a notion of equality as if we had seen such lines any number of times. And as in knowing whiteness, for example, we must also, more or less, definitely know what is *not* whiteness, since anything else, be it what it may, is not whiteness; so, in like manner, in knowing equality, we must also more or less definitely know inequality, since anything else, be it what it may, is inequality. But there is still a more complicated species of relations—our apprehension of which, however, is reducible to the same principle—when we compare *degrees* of differences with one another, which is called proportion. In this case reason identifies one thing as being as different from another thing as a

Digitized by Google

third thing is from a fourth thing—as A : B : : C : D. In other words, A is greater or less than B, in the *same* measure that C is greater or less than D. It is an identifying of the relations of differences, and so is an operation implying considerable complication; but it is evident that neither the ideas involved in it, nor the terms expressing them, involve anything peculiar. It is just a somewhat more complex form of the same process.

The very same analysis which thus explains so simply the nature of general ideas, and the meaning of the words which designate them, will now be found with equal simplicity to explain that belief in elementary propositions which is usually regarded as intuitive, but which, in reality, is the direct result of a universal and very intelligible operation of reason. And we shall, in the first place, direct our attention to the ground of our belief in mathematical axioms, a subject which has so much perplexed philosophers. Our belief in these axioms is not innate, nor intuitive, nor, in one word, *a priori* in any way. They are neither more nor less than definitions of relations with which perception and reason have made us acquainted under the process recently described. Thus, we have seen, that by an act of comparison we know what the relation of equality is, and what the relation of inequality is, just as by an act of discrimination, which is the foundation of comparison, we know what whiteness is, and what blackness is.

Digitized by Google

Accordingly, when we say that "things equal to the "same thing are equal to one another," we define equality by a speciality so essentially of its nature, that we at once recognise it as a fact apart from which, equality could not be equality—as, in other words, a discriminating characteristic of equality. It is of the very essence, therefore, of our rational or general notion of equality. To know what equality means, consequently, and not to know this, is evidently impossible: it would be a contradiction in terms. The axiom is neither more nor less, than a definition or statement of what we mean by equality, under one of its aspects. It is the very same thing with the axiom, "if equals be added "to equals, the wholes are equal," and so in every case. The origin and nature of our belief in mathematical axioms is therefore perfectly clear. Mathematical axioms are merely definitions or statements of the essential characteristics of certain relations of lines necessarily discovered and apprehended in the very act of comparing lines, and without a knowledge of which *we could not know those relations at all.* They are, indeed, mere forms of the more general propositions, to the effect, that "Things identical with the same "thing in any quality or peculiarity, are also in "that quality identical with one another;" that, "if the same quantity, degree, or number be "taken from identicals, the remainders of such "identicals will be the same;" that, "if the same

Digitized by Google

"quantity, degree, or number, be added, &c., and "so on." Not to know these things would evidently imply ignorance of the *meaning* of the words "the same" and "identical," because the fact or relation which these words express imply them and include them, and hence, if we know what these words mean, which we do by a simple act of identification or discrimination, we must know and appreciate the axioms adverted to, since they merely state characteristics which are of the essence of the things expressed. It is obvious that the same remarks apply to such axioms as, "the whole is "greater than any of its parts," and "two straight "lines cannot inclose a space," since, *if we know what a "whole" and "parts" mean,* we must know that a "whole" includes all its "parts," the proposition being substantively an identical one; and, if we know what a "straight line" means, we must know that it is the shortest line betwixt any two points, and that there cannot be two shortest lines, for this proposition also is evidently identical. That such truths are necessary, there can be no question, because we assume that there are such relations or realities as "equality, straight lines," and the like, *such as they appear to us to be,* and consequently they are necessary truths TO US, inasmuch as their falsehood would imply, that our faculties tell us that which is not in itself true—an assumption which, so far as we are concerned, is evidently inadmissible. But they are no more necessary than the proposi-

Digitized by Google

tions that "greenness is not blackness," or, that "fires burn certain articles," or, that "the wind "blows," or in fact anything else of which our faculties assure us ; nor is there anything *a priori* in our belief in them, except the faculty or faculties which submit the facts that they regard to our cognisance, and enable us to realise or apprehend them. The only difference seems to be, that while we can conceive substance or its properties, whatever they may be, non-existent, we cannot conceive such annihilation of time and space as to supersede the existence of number and figure, at all events potentially. This, however, whatever may be the cause of the difference, has nothing to do with the point which we are now considering, and which regards, not our conception of the possible non-existence of the subjects of our relative ideas, but the mode in which we realise them, and the necessity of certain truths implied or included in them, *on the supposition that they do really exist under such forms as our faculties represent them to us.*

In the very same way, and with equal simplicity, is explained the origin and nature of that most important of all physical and moral axioms, and which, perhaps, may be held to include all others within itself, to the effect, that "Every effect must have a "cause," or, to express it more accurately, that "Every change must have a cause;" for an effect being merely something effected, evidently would imply the operation of a cause, in the very use of

Digitized by Google

the terms employed. We say then, that the very same principle explains this axiom, "Every change "must have a cause," with equal simplicity, clearness, and precision; for, as soon as we begin to feel at all, from the very first time that we realise a sensation, the mind, conscious of itself, and embracing also, in so far, an absolute appreciation of the nature of that external existence generating such sensation in us, necessarily in the very act, discriminates also such sensation from non-existence, from which both our consciousness of self and our feeling of sensation had emerged, and which had implied neither the one nor the other. We discriminate something feeling, and something acting so as to generate that feeling, from the absence of either feeling or acting, *i.e.*, we know existence as that which operates, or that which may be operated upon, and non-existence, as that which neither operates, nor is operated upon, and this is all that we can know, either of the one or of the other. It matters nothing, be it observed, that there may be existences which can operate, though we are ignorant of their operation. That of which we are ignorant of the operation is nothing to us. This, however, is not the point. Our knowledge of existence is derived from experience, as something which operates, or may be operated upon. From our consciousness of this, taken in connection with non-consciousness, we are made acquainted with the conceivable possibility of non-existence as its oppo-

Digitized by Google

site. In other words, the knowledge of being, implies rationally that of non-being, *as the only condition from which it can be distinguished.* If existence, therefore, be that which operates, or can be operated upon, then non-existence must be that which does not operate, and cannot be operated upon. To say, therefore, that "Every change must "have a cause," is merely to express an identical proposition by saying, that that which cannot operate cannot operate. The fact of existence, as an operative power, is all that we know of existence; and we say as an operative power, because it is not mere power of which we are conscious, but we are conscious of existence itself operating by power. In other words, we are conscious not merely of action, but of something acting—not merely of changes, but also directly or indirectly of their causes; and we say indirectly, because, when bodies external to us act upon each other, we perceive both their action and its results, without ourselves feeling either in the way that we do when our own organic system is directly acted upon.

This subject, however, is so eminently important, and has so perplexed philosophers, that for the sake of avoiding misconception, it may, perhaps, be desirable to sketch, as we have done on other subjects, the history of opinions with regard to it, so that, by determining the difficulties which have actually been found in the way of explaining the true nature of causation, we may be enabled clearly to appre-

Digitized by Google

ciate the validity of the mode under which it is proposed to solve them. Hume, then, who was the first on this, as on many other such topics, to raise a discussion on principles, endeavoured to prove that there is no other connection betwixt cause and effect than that which results from priority of sequence. This was a theory entirely accordant with Hume's general tendency; for, if there be no connection betwixt cause and effect, except priority of sequence, then, of course, every argument founded on the assumption of a necessary connection between them became false, and scepticism could be the only philosophy. Dr. Reid, therefore, could not admit such a theory, which, accordingly, after his usual fashion, he, in the first instance, endeavours to elude by ascribing our necessary belief in the connection betwixt cause and effect to intuition. But Reid, however deficient in acuteness and subtilty of thought, yet we cannot doubt, felt the absurdity implied in explaining our belief in the relations of *external* things by an *internal* instinct. It was, no doubt, this feeling consequently which induced him—substantively waving his reference of the belief to an intuitive action—to have recourse to what has been called the volition theory, under which our idea of power, or what was supposed to be the connecting link betwixt cause and effect, is ascribed to *our own consciousness of its exercise.* "According to Mr. "Locke, therefore," he says, "the only clear notion

Digitized by Google

"or idea we have of active power is taken from the "power which we find in ourselves to give certain "motions to our bodies, or a certain direction to "our thoughts, and thus power in ourselves can "be brought into action only by *willing or volition.* "From this, I think, it follows, that if we had not "will, and that degree of understanding which will "necessarily implies, we *could exert no active power,* "*and consequently could have none.*"[a] Again, "It is certain that we can conceive no kind "of active power, but what is *similar or ana-* "*logous* to that which we attribute to ourselves."[b] Again, "The name of a cause and of an agent is "properly given to that being only, which, by its "active power, produces some change in itself, or "in some other being."[c] Again, "In compliance "with custom, or perhaps to gratify the avidity of "knowing the causes of things, we call the laws of "nature, causes and active powers. So we speak "of the powers of gravitation, of magnetism, of "electricity. We call them causes of many of the "phenomena of nature, and such they are esteemed "by the ignorant, and by the half-learned; but "those of juster discernment see, that laws of na- "ture are not agents—they are not endowed with "active power, and, therefore, cannot be causes, in "the proper sense—they are only the rules, accord- "ing to which the unknown cause acts."[d] From

[a] Reid's Active powers—Essay 1st, ch. 5.
[b] Reid's Active powers—Essay 4th, ch. 2. [c] Do. Do.
[d] Active powers—Essay 4th, ch. 4.

Digitized by Google

all which passages, and many more of a cognate character, it is obvious, that Reid, denying all physical power, supposes that the nexus of cause and effect, is in every instance to be sought in the will of a voluntary agent—or, in other words, when not ascribable to a human being, in the divine mind, either directly, or indirectly operating. Nor does he shrink from avowing this conclusion: "When "we turn our attention," he says, "to external ob- "jects, and begin to exercise our rational faculties "about them, we find, that there are some motions "and changes in them, which we have power to "produce, and they have many which must have "some other cause. Either the objects must have "life and active power, as we have, or they must "be moved and changed by something that has "life and active power, as external objects are "moved by us."[a] Again, "It is to this day pro- "blematical, whether all the phenomena of the "material system be produced by the immediate "operation of the first cause, according to the laws "which His wisdom determined, or whether subor- "dinate causes are employed by Him in the opera- "tions of nature, and if they be, what their nature, "their number, and their different offices are? "and whether, in all cases, they act by commission, "or in some, according to their discretion?"[b] At the same time, Reid does not deny, that "unintelli- "gent instruments" may be employed by the Divine

[a] Active powers—Essay 4th, ch. 3. [b] Do. Do.

Digitized by Google

mind in working out His purposes, he only denies that such instruments have any power in themselves, or *can, in any measure, be apprehended by us in such an operation.* He regards them, therefore, not as causes, but *media*, through which the Divine mind MAY act in the putting forth of His own power, although we have no means of discovering whether this be the case or not. This is clearly brought out in the following passage, where he says, "But whether the intelligent first cause acts "immediately in the production of these events, or "by subordinate intelligent agents, or by instru- "ments that are unintelligent, and what the nature, "the number, and the different offices of these "agents or instruments may be—these I apprehend "to be MYSTERIES PLACED BEYOND THE LIMITS OF "HUMAN KNOWLEDGE."[a] Now, assuredly, it seems most singular, to find the champion of common sense denying the existence of physical power, since, if there be one fact more certain than another, it is our full conviction of the action of physical power as a matter of common sense, and hence we believe there has never practically been a difference of opinion upon the subject since the creation of the world. Farther, to find Dr. Reid sneering at the belief of "the ignorant and half-learned," and resting his theory on the dogmas of "those of juster "discernment," seems so inconsistent with the general tenor of his writings, as of itself almost to

[a] Active powers—Essay 1st, ch. 5.

Digitized by Google

prove that there must be something wrong about his theory. Such language might have suited the systems of those who reason *a priori* on everything in utter indifference to the practical convictions which their conclusions may contradict; but that Dr. Reid should have adopted it, for the purpose of evading a metaphysical difficulty, does appear inexcusable, and his doing so has, perhaps, received its due meed of punishment from the retributive effect which the theory that he employed it to defend has had in subverting the very foundations of that philosophy which he conceived it to be the glory of his life to have originated. That such was its result, has been demonstrably established by Dr. Brown in his "Inquiry into the relation "of cause and effect," in the following clear and logical argument:—"But God the Creator, and "God the providential Governor of the world," he says, "are not necessarily God the producer of "every change. In that great system which we "call the universe, all things are what they are in "consequence of His primary will; but, if they "were incapable of affecting anything, they would "virtually be themselves as nothing. When we "speak of the law of nature, indeed, we only use a "general phrase, expressive of the accustomed "order of the phenomena of nature; but in this "application the word law is not explanatory of "anything, and expresses merely an order of suc- "cession which takes place before us—there *is* such

Digitized by Google

"a regular order of sequences, and what we call "the qualities, powers, or properties of things, are "only their relations to this very order. An object, "therefore, which is not found to be the antecedent "of any change, and on the presence of which, "accordingly, in all imaginable circumstances, no "change can be expected as its immediate conse- "quent, more than if it were not existing, is an "object that has no power, property, or quality "whatever. That substance has the quality of "heat, which excites in us, or occasions in us, as a "subsequent change, the sensation of warmth; that "has the quality of greenness, the presence of "which is the antecedent of a peculiar visual sen- "sation in our mind; that has the quality of "heaviness, which presses down a scale of a bal- "ance that was before in equilibrium; that has "the quality of elasticity, of which the parts, after "being pressed close together, return when the "pressure is withdrawn in a direction opposite to "the force which compressed them. If matter be "incapable of acting upon matter or upon mind, it "has no qualities by which its existence can become "known, what is it of which, in such circumstances, "we are entitled to speak under the name of "matter?"[a] Again, "That which excites in us all "the feelings which we ascribe to certain qualities "of matter, is matter; and to suppose that there

[a] Brown's Inquiry into the relation of cause and effect—Part 1st, sec. 5—page 82, &c.

Digitized by Google

"is nothing without us which excites these feelings, "is to suppose that there is no matter without, as "far as we are capable of forming any conception "of matter. The doctrine of universal spiritual "efficiency, then, in the sequences of physical "causes, seems to be only an awkward and compli- "cated modification of the system of BERKELEY; "for, as in this view of physical causes that are "inefficient, the Deity, by his own immediate voli- "tion, or that of some delegated spirit, is the "author of every effect which we ascribe to the "presence of matter, the only conceivable use of "the inanimate masses which cannot affect us more "than if they were not in existence, must be as "remembrances to him who is omniscience itself."[a] Now, this argument, however erroneous it may be in its assumptions with respect to other particulars, is in its bearing on the doctrine of "universal "spiritual efficiency," absolute demonstration. If "matter be incapable of acting upon matter or upon "mind," it cannot act upon us, and consequently, in so far as we are concerned, it can be nothing at all. The efficient mind or will which is supposed to excite our belief in it, is all that we can know, and this is so obvious, that we are not aware of any of Reid's disciples who has disputed the logical necessity of the conclusion. Hence, it farther follows, that if our senses be delusive in

[a] Brown's Inquiry into the relation of cause and effect—Part 1st, sec. 5—page 95.

Digitized by Google

persuading us of the fact of external existence as acting on our organic natures, when in reality it is an invisible spirit that acts, our senses, in all cases, must be held as utterly unworthy of confidence, since the delusion would be so universal as to embrace almost every instant of our conscious existence. Such a theory would not only, therefore, be an "awkward imitation of the system of "BERKELEY," but it would lead, by direct and irresistible inference, to the scepticism of HUME. Admit that our faculties deceive us necessarily in one case, and that specially a case of such perpetual occurrence, and it will be impossible to assign any legitimate reason for trusting them in any other instance whatever.

But, though Brown has thus indisputably annihilated the volition theory, he yet leaves the great difficulty, which that theory was invented to explain, precisely as he found it. The nature of the relation of cause and effect, or in other words, the mode under which we can logically distinguish the relation of cause and effect from mere incidental sequence, remains as unknown as before. He says, "The belief of power is an original feeling, intui-"tive and immediate on the perception of change."* Now, this is merely saying that it is inexplicable; but supposing it to imply something more, still, if "we be irresistibly determined," as he farther tells

* Brown's Inquiry into relation of cause and effect—Part 4th, sec. 6, page 356. (4th Ed., 1835).

Digitized by Google

us, "to ascribe to the antecedent in a sequence "that invariableness of priority which constitutes "power," how can we be able to distinguish betwixt those antecedents which *are* causes and those which *are not* causes, seeing the "invariableness of priority"—which, according to him, is the only proof of causation—may be the same in both cases? The deficiency of his theory, in this respect, is at once exposed by Reid's *ad absurdum* argument against Hume—whose doctrine, substantively, Brown adopted—to this effect, that "if the relation "betwixt cause and effect be that of mere antece- "dence and consequence, then day would be the "cause of night, and night would be the cause of "day."[b] Accordingly, nothing can be more unsatisfactory than Brown's attempt at explaining away this *ad absurdum* illustration. We do not, indeed, go too far in calling it unintelligible; nor is this wonderful, since "invariableness of priority" is merely a matter of fact—merely a name for that which ever has been, *whatever reason may be assigned for it;* but it is not a power at all, nor a quality, nor an essence, nor, indeed, anything substantive of any kind whatsoever: nay, instead of being itself "invariableness of sequence," power is obviously that something, be it what it may, which *produces* "invariableness of sequence." To

[a] Brown's Inquiry into relation of cause and effect—Part 4th, sec. 6, pp. 356 & 385.

[b] Reid's Active powers—Essay 4th, ch. 3.

Digitized by Google

call "invariableness of priority or sequence," therefore, power, is to make an effect the cause of itself.

Now, setting aside the theories of the modern German school—which, so far as I can understand them, are mixtures of sceptical and dogmatical philosophy, combined in an anomalous and inconsistent mass, and claiming a species of originality merely in respect of the strange and uncouth phraseology under which they are expressed—the philosophy of causation remains in the same unsatisfactory state in which it was left by Dr. Brown; and this seems the more extraordinary, as will now appear, if our views as already expressed on the subject be correct, from the extreme simplicity of the explanation. In truth, so simple and obvious does the solution appear, that its very simplicity implies the only shadow of a doubt of which it is susceptible.

The whole confusion, indeed, as to the relation of cause and effect seems to have originated in an idea that it is something mystical and obscure, as implying a latent link which connects cause and effect, change together. An effect was thus assumed not to know NEW CREATION, evolved by the operation that we can know natural agency called POWER. It was

From all this, it is manifest, that the relation of cause and effect is, in the first instance, made known to us solely by experience, *i.e.*, by perception and consciousness. If something external act upon my organism, and through that organism on

Digitized by Google

therefore, Hume and Brown, with their successors, rightly rejected it, had they only substituted something better in its room. In point of fact, however, they substituted nothing, and to this, as a main cause, is to be attributed that tinge of scepticism which has more or less tainted modern literature, and especially modern philosophy. It is just what might have been expected, since, if we are not assured of the necessary connection betwixt cause and effect, of what can we be assured logically?

The fact, however, is, that there is nothing mystical or obscure about the subject at all![a] Power is no latent link connecting cause and effect, but is just CAUSE ITSELF called by another name. In other words, when we speak of a cause *absolutely*, we call it a quality or property; when we speak of it as *operative on something else*, we call it a power; and the word cause is only used to express the same idea, *when we direct attention to the result of its union with, or the change it works forth, on some other attribute.* Hence, the words "quality, power, "cause," are in thus far interchangable. Th[illegible]ure of hardness is called a quality, when we spe[illegible]on thereto absolutely; a power, when we speak [illegible]or smell act on tion to its a[illegible] this example, on [illegible]table that I am [illegible]sed by the external influence. If again, in my presence, a stone breaks a square of glass, I *perceive* the whole process from beginning to end, and retain the various parts of it as perceptions in my memory. No doubt, in both instances, it is reason that distinguishes the

Digitized by Google

Power is not anything different from matter or mind, but it is matter or mind, spoken of as operative on something else. We call steam, for example, a power as operative on an engine; and we call it a cause, in respect of the motion which it works forth on the engine. Nay, while most philosophers have imagined substance to be what we know, and operative power or cause *to be something inferred*, or, as Hume and Brown have supposed, *to be nothing at all*, the fact is the very reverse, OPERATIVE POWER OR CAUSE BEING ALL THAT WE KNOW OR ARE CONSCIOUS OF, AND SUBSTANCE—IN ANY OTHER SENSE—BEING ONLY KNOWN INFERENTIALLY. Thus, if we see a green leaf, it is not the essence of greenness or of a green leaf in its entity that we know, but such essence in so far as it is an operative power or cause, which effects a certain visual sensation in the mind. Hence, unless in so far as we know essence as an operative power or cause, we evidently know nothing about it at all. No wonder, therefore, that confusion and difficulty has been experienced with respect to a phenomenon, as to which we have been assumed to know that which we do not know, and not to know the only particular which it is possible that we can know.

From all this, it is manifest, that the relation of cause and effect is, in the first instance, made known to us solely by experience, *i.e.*, by perception and consciousness. If something external act upon my organism, and through that organism on

Digitized by Google

my mind, it is a cause, or a power, and as a cause or power do I know it in the act of perception, or feeling, and not otherwise. Hence, those who imagine that a power is a link betwixt cause and effect, in this case, just fall back on the old *tertium quid* again, as a something intervening betwixt the external world and our minds; whilst Hume, Brown, and their successors, who deny that there is any connection, so far as we know, betwixt cause and effect, but affirm cause and effect to be mere antecedent and consequent, must either substantially assume Leibnitz's doctrine of a pre-established harmony, or else necessarily fall back upon scepticism; since, to say that two existences *have no connection*, and yet admit that they really and literally act upon each other, is evidently a contradiction in terms.

If, however, it be admitted, as it seems impossible that it can be denied by any one who has his attention directed to the phenomenon, that we are conscious of cause and effect in the first instance, *i.e.*, perceive or feel it, according to the nature of the case, then all difficulty in relation thereto ceases. Thus, if an external colour or smell act on my sensations, it seems indisputable that I am conscious of this effect, as caused by the external influence. If again, in my presence, a stone breaks a square of glass, I *perceive* the whole process from beginning to end, and retain the various parts of it as perceptions in my memory. No doubt, in both instances, it is reason that distinguishes the

Digitized by Google

particulars from one another that take part in each process, and even the successive times that event succeeds event, but still the various facts in themselves have been cognised by consciousness, and in consciousness *alone* are known. In the same way, of course, the result, as substantively a portion of the phenomenon, is solely known by consciousness, though reason, discriminating the nature of each particular, teaches the *modus operandi*, or, in other words, the relation which the several qualities or substances bear to each other. It will now be seen, that it is this combined operation of experience or consciousness and reason which complicates the process, and all the merit which we claim in the analysis is to have referred to each its own proper share in the result. Experience gives us the facts, while reason discriminates their several shares in the effect. We have, by experience, a knowledge of the existences operating, while reason teaches what each does, by discriminating the natures of the several existences in relation to each other. The whole subject becomes thus perfectly simple. We find that we know nothing in any case directly of absolute existence, but only of existences as causes or operative powers, so that, except in so far as we know causes or operating powers, *i.e.*, existences operating, we know nothing at all. That which produces a change in any case, consequently, is nothing *intermediate* between the existence operating and the existence operated upon

Digitized by Google

but the nature, quality, property, or power of the thing operating in *relation* to the thing operated upon, and which *is all that we know about it.* How existences should be so constituted as that they should be mutually related and mutually capable of acting on each other, of course, we cannot tell, because we have no means of knowing either the absolute essence of existence, or the mode in which in any one case absolute essence is constituted. But that every change must be produced by *some* action we certainly know, inasmuch as a change is merely another name for a thing having been acted upon, and thus we are just brought back by a different process to our original conclusion, that the proposition—"every change must have a cause"—is identical, as merely affirming that "where an operation "has been, there an operation must have been."

But if this analysis proves that there is and can be no intermediate link betwixt cause and effect, it proves, with equal certainty, that the relation between them is not that of mere antecedence and consequence, as Hume and Brown, and, indeed, most modern philosophers, have supposed, but that of action or operation by one upon the other, or of different existences among themselves, the operative constitution of existences being *all that we know of them.* Hence it is evident, that except in so far as we are conscious of such operation upon ourselves, or indirectly of external bodies on one another, we cannot predicate either their existence

Digitized by Google

or their causative character, which indeed are, as will now be obvious, one and the same thing. In this way is readily explained that illustration of Hume's error as proposed by Dr. Reid, and which so much perplexed Brown in his attempt to unravel the apparent difficulty implied in it. For we are not only not conscious of day operating in the production of night, *but we know, on the other hand, that it does not so operate.* Night or darkness we know to be the absence of light, whilst we equally well know day or light not to be the product of any operation of night or darkness, but to be produced by the presence of the sun. We are, in truth, assured by the combined information of consciousness and reason, that light comes from a luminous object, of which the form is frequently and distinctly marked to us in the sky. It makes a cause no more a cause, therefore, because its antecession is permanent. Its causative character solely depends upon its operative power, and is constituted thereby. We thus know the whole process, till we feel ourselves back at the direct action of our faculties. We can know no more, and, indeed there is nothing more to be known, except that essential nature of qualities or substances which relates them to one another, and thus enables one to act upon another, and this we can never know.

Our analysis of these elementary processes leaves little more to be done for determining the nature

Digitized by Google

of reason, and the knowledge which it enables us to acquire. We perceive at once that it is the faculty which discriminates the nature, or properties, or powers, whether of modes or substances, and thus indicates the effect which will be produced in their combination with or action on each other; for, if we know the differences of existences in their relation to each other, we must necessarily know the result of their combination with or action on each other. Thus, to take a very simple example, if we know two half squares of equal sizes, then reason teaches us, that by uniting them we shall have a whole square; or, if we know hardness and brittleness as different qualities, and reason teaches us their respective natures, or, in other words, their relations to each other, then we know that the one will break the other. It may, indeed, at first sight be supposed that we are *conscious* of these things, but a very little consideration will satisfy any one that this is a mistake. We may be conscious of each of two half squares separately as absolute facts, but consciousness, simple as the process is, could never teach us that the two united would make a whole or complete square, by realising the result of their combination. In the same way we may be conscious of hardness by itself, and brittleness by itself; but consciousness could never indicate to us their differences, nor their relations, nor anticipate the result of their mutual action, nor, indeed, institute any comparison betwixt them at

Digitized by Google

all. In one word, reason teaches identities and differences of every kind ; but all that we mean by identities, is identical *operating properties or powers*, and all that we mean by differences, is different *operating properties or powers*, ACCORDING TO THE DEGREE OF THEIR DIFFERENCES: hence, it is evident, that in knowing identity and difference, we must, from the very nature of the case, know how different substances will *act* on each other, and generally how they *stand related* to each other, *in every respect in which their differences are known*, since otherwise it is clear, that though we might know them *separately* by consciousness, we could not possibly have realised the points which distinguish them as compared, for this necessarily implies an appreciation of the relation which the nature of the one bears to the nature of the other. But it may be said that this is manifest to everybody, and, no doubt, so it is, when it is explained; but in its very simplicity, paradoxical as it may appear, would seem to consist its difficulty, for this most manifest and indisputable analysis developes the real nature of reason, and unfolds the only process which takes place in the most intricate complications of reasoning.

Hence it is clear, that the knowledge acquired by reason is the knowledge of relations in the widest sense of the term, and is acquired, both by identifying and discriminating existences. All matters of fact, *i.e.*, all perceptions and all feelings

Digitized by Google

absolutely, we know by consciousness, but consciousness *cannot identify or discriminate*, and consequently all knowledge of relations, *i.e.*, knowledge acquired directly or indirectly, by identification or discrimination, must be referred to reason. Comparison, it is farther to be observed, enters more or less into almost every idea. There is probably, indeed, not a single act of consciousness in which we do not discriminate the perception and feeling from other things, in the process of determining that which constitutes each what it is, and, of course, the more complex the idea, so much the more complicated the operations of reason in determining the nature of each particular which it involves, and discriminating them among themselves and from other things, it being evidently impossible to identify or discriminate, without knowing *in so far* the distinctive natures of the objects identified or discriminated respectively.

From all this, it will now be farther manifest, how we should feel certain that the same cause or power will always produce the same result. The difficulty, indeed, of explaining our belief in this most indisputable proposition, evidently originated in the idea that our knowledge of existences is absolute and essential, whereas it will now be obvious, that our knowledge of existences is only absolute in so far as they *affect us, i.e.*, in so far as we are conscious of them as operative powers. In this view the difficulty at once disappears, since, to say

Digitized by Google

that the same power must always, under the same circumstances, produce the same result, is merely to say that the same powers are the same powers, or, in other words, that the same existences are the same existences. But it may be said, that, though no doubt it is thus evident how we believe that the same thing will always, in the same circumstances, produce the same results, yet, the same reasoning will not explain why we believe that all the things in the universe will continue for some time, at all events, TO BE THE SAME, or, in other words, the cause why we believe that no other existence will suddenly interfere to act on and change the system of the universe as at present constituted. But our belief in this proposition, so far as it goes, admits of an easy explanation, as depending on that universal experience which teaches us that violent changes do not take place without warning, since, in all such cases, forces are necessarily brought into operation that must struggle against each other from small beginnings, the power of the one only slowly overbearing the resistance of the other. There is another cause of this belief, in that conviction of the existence of an over-ruling intelligent power which, it can be demonstrably proved, influences every human being. Under that conviction, we feel assured, that whatever He does will be done in conformity with the most perfect wisdom, and in accordance with those general laws which, through our experience, He has made known to us.

Digitized by Google

We cannot imagine any other ground for this belief, and consequently seem justified in concluding, that, in so far as it exceeds the range which these arguments warrant, it must be regarded as a mere result of an habitual prejudice.

Still, however, it may be farther said, that though, no doubt, we can thus understand the ground of our belief, in the proposition that the same thing must, under the same circumstances, produce the same results, yet, it seems difficult to understand how we are assured in any case that that which *appears to us* to be the same, actually *is* the same with regard to other qualities which this *apparent* quality only symbolises. Now the fact is, that the certainty of our conclusion in such cases must depend upon the care with which we attend to every particular. That a symbol—whether natural, *i.e.*, where the symbol is a quality of some substance, and thus symbolises its other qualities, or artificial, *i.e.*, when reason arbitrarily identifies an existence with a symbol—may deceive us, if we allow ourselves from carelessness to *mistake one for another*, is perfectly true; nay, in some few cases it may almost be impossible for our senses to distinguish the one from another; but this merely teaches us that we ought in no instance to be satisfied with a superficial examination, and that in cases where we desire extreme accuracy, and when one symbol may deceive us, we should seek for others. This, accordingly, is what persons under

Digitized by Google

such circumstances usually do, and thus quickly find that the obtuseness of our senses may be entirely compensated by a due exercise of our intelligence.

Having thus determined the nature of reason, in so far as it can be ascertained, by an analysis of the more elementary processes of the mind, we now proceed to consider it, in its application to those ulterior operations, which are usually known as processes of reasoning.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XII.

ON REASONING.

Reason, in its application to ulterior processes — Kinds of reasoning. DEMONSTRATIVE REASONING—Its nature—Its bases—Misconception of Stewart on the subject. PROBABLE REASONING—Difference betwixt demonstrative and probable reasoning in regard to the certainty of their conclusions—Analysis of probable reasoning—Object of logic as therefrom deduced—Nature and use of syllogisms—Their inefficiency even for the only purpose to which they can be in any measure logically applied—Importance of understanding the true object of reasoning, and the nature of the rational faculty—Summary of the argument—Mode in which, under the view given, we appreciate the nature of extended substance—Determination of the principles which distinguish intelligent man from the lower animals, idiots, dotards, and madmen—Proof that the lower animals, &c., are possessed of that faculty usually called reason.

IN the former chapter, we endeavoured to develope the nature of reason, by shewing the mode of its operation in the simplest and most elementary processes, and in the analysis which this attempt implied accordingly, we trust that both the nature of reason, in so far, and the precise character of the processes analysed, have been made so clear as to be intelligible to any one capable of understanding the sense of the terms employed in the inquiry. We now proceed to consider the mode in which reason operates in its application to those ulterior processes

Digitized by Google

usually embraced under the name of reasoning, in the determination of which, our previous conclusions, with regard to the nature of the rational faculty, will be found to be confirmed and perfected.

Reasoning, then, is usually divided into two kinds —demonstrative and probable. According to the view which we have already given of the nature of the rational faculty, however, it will be manifest, that there is really no difference betwixt these kinds of reasoning in principle. The difference will be found not in the reasoning, but in the assumptions on which, according to the nature of the facts, the reasoning proceeds. Demonstrative reasoning proceeds not on the assumption of facts *as they are*, of which it takes no cognisance, but on the assumption of facts SUCH AS THEY APPEAR TO US TO BE, and, therefore, its conclusions must be true to us whether they be true in reality or not. Probable reasoning, on the other hand, proceeds on the assumption THAT THE FACTS ACTUALLY ARE AS THEY APPEAR TO US TO BE, and consequently the truth of our conclusions must depend on the accordance of the facts *as they appear to us* with their reality. From whence, however, it is obvious, that if we assume the facts as *they appear to us*, to be *the actual truth*, without any reference to their absolute reality, probable reasoning becomes at once demonstrative reasoning, and our conclusions as to other things are just as certain as in regard to lines and num-

Digitized by Google

bers. The process of reasoning, however, in both cases is precisely the same, and consists either in synthesis, by adding some truth or analysis by taking some truth away—meaning by a truth merely a fact which we have been taught by consciousness, or by consciousness and reason combined. With these few preliminary remarks, we proceed to consider Demonstrative and Probable Reasoning in detail.

DEMONSTRATIVE REASONING.

Every step of reasoning, of whatever kind it be, must, as has been said, consist in adding a truth or taking one away—it being, of course, understood that the proposition on which we propose to reason has been, in the first place, constituted under the use of such terms as are clearly understood, their sense having been determined by definition. Accordingly, mathematical reasoning, like all other reasoning formally instituted, must be premised by definitions and axioms, definitions being the definitions of figures or numbers, which constitute the *absolute* truths of the science, and axioms the definitions of relations which constitute the *related* truths of the science. It is, therefore, evident that there can be no mathematical reasoning without both, and hence Mr. Stewart's misconception in undervaluing the importance of axioms;[a] and we

[a] Stewart's Philosophy of the Human Mind, vol. 2, ch. 1st—Sec. 1st of Mathematical Axioms.

Digitized by Google

say *undervaluing*, though it be somewhat difficult to determine precisely what value he really attaches to them, since, while he indicates at one time that they are of little importance, he tells us at another, that "their truth is supposed or implied in all our "reasonings in both arithmetic and geometry." No doubt, "the theorems of geometry do *not* rest "on the axioms *in the same sense* in which they "rest on the definitions;" but that is not the question,—the question is, *whether axioms be as essential as definitions to geometrical reasoning*, and this no one can deny; nay, as we have seen, even Stewart himself substantively admits it. The truth is, that Stewart was evidently led to his unintelligible speculations with respect to mathematical axioms by the plausible theory of Locke, who, unfortunately for intellectual science, beyond all doubt, undervalued the importance of axioms for a reason which Stewart did not understand, and with which he could not have sympathised, and accordingly, he accords with Locke in putting this singular question among others—"*the whole is equal to all* "*its parts*—what real truth, I beseech you, does it "teach us?" Now, it seems more than sufficient to answer this question by another—"If a man DIDN'T "know the whole to be equal to all its parts, what "other truth would he ever be likely to acquire?" While we admit, therefore, that definitions are essential to mathematical reasoning—we maintain that axioms, or the definitions of relations, are

Digitized by Google

so too; but we deny that the *special* certainty of the conclusions of mathematics depends on its being based on either or both, *for this, every step of every kind of reasoning must be, or profess to be;* but upon its assuming its facts as we believe them to be, or, in other words, as being conformable to its definitions, whether these facts be absolute or relative, and thus assuring a conclusion which, therefore, must be true to us, whether it be or be not true in reality. No doubt, in mixed mathematics—that is, mathematics applied not to numbers or figures, such as we believe them to be, but to *actual* numbers or figures—there may be error, but this is just because we have now changed demonstrative into probable reasoning, by the assumption of facts which depend on observation for their authority, and not on our belief of their nature according as we have defined them.

Definitions and axioms, then, being thus fixed as the foundations of our reasoning, we next proceed to add or to subtract them, according to the nature of the proposition which we have to demonstrate.[a] Now, we need hardly say how readily this explains all the processes of Arithmetic and Algebra, which resolve themselves in every case, merely into more or less complicated forms of addition and subtrac-

[a] The axioms involved in the process are—"The whole is made up of "its parts"—"The less must be added to, in order to equal the greater," and, "if the less be subtracted from the greater, the balance is the measure "of their difference." "The balance must be subtracted from the greater "to reduce it to equality with the less."

Digitized by Google

tion. It is substantively the same with regard to geometry. The fourth proposition of the first book of Euclid, which is the foundation of all geometry, consists of two axioms united. The first is to the effect, that "if two triangles have two "sides of the one equal to two sides of the other, "and the angle betwixt them equal, the sides will "lie upon each other." As the "angle" is the measure of the distance of the sides, there can be no doubt that this is an axiom, though, singularly enough, it is assumed as true, though not premised as an axiom, at all events in any edition of Euclid that we have seen. The second is to the effect, that "two straight lines cannot inclose a space," or, in other words, that "two straight lines beginning "and ending at the same points must lie the one "upon the other." The combination of these two axioms constitutes the whole proof of the proposition as implied in the affirmation, that "the whole "is made up of its parts." The proof of the fifth proposition of the same book is again mainly constituted by subtracting a series of axioms from a mass of them combined in its figure, so as to leave a remnant embracing the previous proposition already demonstrated, as implied in the affirmation, "that if one truth be subtracted from several, those "remaining are still true." The very same principle applies to every geometrical proposition, whether problem or theorem. In every instance the proof is to be found in adding axioms together, or, in

Digitized by Google

subtracting them, so as to leave only a known truth remaining by which the point to be proved is embraced. Of course, the axioms added together must be so added as to form a complete whole, and the operation of reason in this process is manifest. When, again, axioms are subtracted, it must be from their having no bearing on the point to be proved, or, in other words, being discriminated from it by reason, and thus being mere incidentals to the purpose. They are, therefore, successively subtracted till we reach a known proposition in which the point to be proved is contained. Thus the whole operation is performed by identification on the one hand, and discrimination on the other, and when we arrive at the result, it is ultimately identified with some axiom or proposition previously recognised, and the demonstration is completed. The process, however, will be more fully realised by attending to the nature of

PROBABLE REASONING.

Probable reasoning implies precisely the same process as mathematical reasoning, the only essential difference between them, consisting, as has been said, in this, that while pure mathematical reasoning depends on assumptions which are merely expressions of our own knowledge, as determined by definitions, that which is called probable reasoning depends on facts of observation, which may or

Digitized by Google

may not be true, just as our observation is more or less accurate, and this is indisputably proved by the consideration, that the moment mathematical assumptions are made to depend on observation as in mixed mathematics, the reasoning immediately becomes probable, while the moment, on the other hand, that we discard observation from probable reasoning, and assume the facts to be as they appear to us, that which was probable becomes demonstrative reasoning.

That this point, however, may be thoroughly appreciated, we have only to consider the object at which we aim, when we desire to prove anything to be true or false from facts resting on observation, for that object invariably is to identify the particular to be proved with an axiom, or what comes ultimately to the same thing, to identify its evidence, with evidence which experience had previously assured us testified the truth. Thus, if we desire to prove the composition of water, we may do it either by synthesis in uniting oxygen and hydrogen in certain proportions, or by analysis in analysing the water into its constituent parts. In either case, the proof evidently consists in identifying the thing to be proved with an axiom to the effect that "the whole is made up of its parts." The real proof, however, it is manifest, is altogether apart from any formal statement of the axiom, which is merely a verbal definition of that knowledge of the nature of "whole" and "parts"

Digitized by Google

which we derive from the most elementary operation of consciousness and reason combined. If, again, we desire to know the nature of a tree, we endeavour to identify its qualities with the qualities of some species previously known. If we desire to determine the character of a man, we examine his acts and identify them with acts previously known, of which we had ascertained the motives, and of which motives the identical acts newly observed are thus constituted the symbols. If, in like manner, we desire to know whether Christianity be true, we compare its evidence with other evidence which we had already been taught by experience to be probative of truth, and if it be identical, we recognise a rational proof, or, in so far as it may appear different, we recognise a legitimate doubt of its authority. There is no difference whatever in the process in any case. The only question is, whether the evidence in one case be identical with, or different from, the evidence in another case. If it be identical, the same conclusion follows: if different, a different conclusion follows, and that, just in proportion to the degree and kind of difference in the evidence. Of course, it will be obvious, however, that the process now described applies only to forms of evidence of which the validity has been already ascertained. In determining the value of evidence, in *the first instance,* the nature of the conclusion which it warrants, if not axiomatical, or, in other words, a result

Digitized by Google

of the elementary operation of consciousness and reason, must be ascertained by experience. It is only from the knowledge primarily thus acquired, that reason can draw its conclusions.

In probable reasoning, consequently, the object generally is to remove from the evidence or facts to be identified, every incidental and collateral particular, so as to have the one naked speciality presented to the mind, which is to be identified or discriminated, and this is specially effected in that form of experiment which is called an *experimentum crucis*. In regard to objects submitted to the senses, however, this is easily effected even by ordinary observation. In identifying or discriminating colours, sounds, or figures, attention is all that is required. Even in cases of chemical analysis, there is little difficulty in the operation, so far as mere identification or discrimination is concerned. We need hardly, however, say that it is very different with mental processes. Yet, even with regard to these, the difficulty mainly originates in the necessity, under which we are compelled to reason from arbitrary symbols in the use of words, for few are competent to attach definite meanings to words, or, in fact, to know anything more of them than as expressing more or less indefinite feelings. Now, it is just at this point that the importance of logical science becomes discoverable, which does not teach us to reason as many seem to imagine—since all human beings reason,

Digitized by Google

and must reason equally well *on their own premises*—but which teaches us, or ought to teach us, to use and understand words, not only in definite, but also in identical meanings. No doubt, this can never, perhaps, be thoroughly effected, inasmuch as our respective desires will always more or less give a tone and colouring to our language; but it is, or ought to be, the great object of logic to effect this as far as possible, so that the same word may be used precisely in the same sense, and and hence the value, so far as they have a value, of syllogisms. A syllogism, strictly speaking, can prove nothing: it is only an awkward attempt at giving precision to language, or, in other words, at indicating sophistry; for the major proposition being assumed, the conclusion is certain, if the syllogism be correctly drawn, and the truth of that proposition can only be ascertained by discriminating the various meanings of the predicate, and determining the one precise sense with which, in the conclusion, it is identified. *It is in fact a very rough and imperfect definition or determination of the subject.* The process is the very same in every instance. If we desire to ascertain the quality of a mineral, we must discriminate all its accessories, such as the soil in which it is found, or anything else which may incidentally adhere to it, from the mineral itself, and so determine what the subject to be examined actually is. If, then, we find that we have known the same substance before, its

Digitized by Google

quality and character are at once discovered by thus identifying it with that previously known substance. If we want to ascertain the nature of a disease, we must endeavour to discriminate the essential from all merely secondary and incidental symptoms, and then by identifying the essential symptom or symptoms with such symptom or symptoms as previously known, the real disease to be determined is at once discoverable, and so in all such cases. The very same process must be realised with respect to verbal proof. Whenever a word has different senses, even as to degree, we must carefully define and determine that particular sense in which we use it, by discriminating and separating all other senses; and hence, just as a word is more simple, *i.e.*, has fewer meanings, so is our verbal reasoning the more simple and the more precise. Thus, as we have seen, that the certainty of mathematical conclusions depends on our assuming its principles or premises as equivalent to certain apprehensions of our own minds, so its simplicity and precision is owing to the character of language which mathematics employs, which is all of the simplest kind, the words either not admitting of more than one definition, or if they do, all the definitions coming substantively to the same thing. Indeed, it is obvious, that, however defined, no one could ever confuse a straight line with a crooked line, or a circle with a square. There is, therefore, no complication, and little risk of error in mathemati-

Digitized by Google

cal reasoning, while its premises involving in reality nothing without us, *but only our ideas or apprehensions of certain things without us,* assure the certainty of our conclusions, if the states of our minds are really what we believe them to be. But as probable is in principle just the same process as mathematical reasoning, it is, therefore, manifest that we will approximate to mathematical reasoning in the certainty of our conclusions, just as in the first instance we observe with care, and then so define each term as to assimilate our language as closely as possible to the simplicity and precision of the language of mathematics. Now we repeat, that to do this is the object, or, at all events, is the only use of the syllogism, which contains in its major proposition a sort of rough and imperfect definition of the word which constitutes its subject, by *attaching a defining predicate to it.* This we we have no hesitation in maintaining to be the only possible use of the syllogism, however much the subject may be misunderstood, and even this object it only realises in the most superficial and unsatisfactory way. If we are to reason with any real accuracy, our definitions must be something very different from the major propositions of syllogisms, and the whole science of the formal logic, if science it may be called, must be set aside as a coarse and complicated system of verbiage, utterly inefficient for the discovery of truth, and, except in the most glaring cases, when ordinary sense requires no

Digitized by Google

assistance, even for the discovery of error. We venture to express ourselves strongly upon this subject, as being convinced with Dr. Reid—who, however, was himself by no means without some remnant of practical reverence for the formal logic—that nothing has tended more, even down to the present age, to retard the progress of sound philosophy.

But while it is thus evident, that the purpose of logic is, and can only be, the determination of the true and precise meaning of words—our conclusion in all cases *necessarily* following on such determination—yet it will be obvious, that this is by so much the more readily and certainly effected, inasmuch as we more thoroughly appreciate the true nature of reasoning, since our confusion as to the meaning of words very generally originates in our greater or less ignorance of what reasoning does, or is intended to do. Hence, the moment we understand reasoning to be simply the discrimination of a word, or a substance, or anything else whatever it may be, from all accessories and incidentals, so as that it may be known in its naked absoluteness, and then the identification of it with some axiom or fact previously known, we have a test for ascertaining the meanings of the words which we use, that grows more perfect every time that we realise its application. We do not, however, advise by any means, that this should supersede formal definitions, but we think it cannot be doubted, that thus formal

Digitized by Google

definitions will, under such knowledge, be both more easily framed, and more precisely expressed.

According to this view, then, reasoning is merely the identification or discrimination of a fact with or from another previously known, and reason is the power which in all cases identifies and discriminates. If a fact in any instance identified or discriminated be regarded merely with reference to our apprehension of it apart from its absolute reality, whether such apprehension be or be not determined by definition, then the conclusion is demonstrative. If, on the other hand, a fact so discriminated or identified be regarded not as we believe it to be, but as it actually is in itself, the conclusion is only probable—not, indeed, as a matter of reasoning, for as a matter of reasoning, every conclusion, *where a man understands himself*, must be demonstrative—but because the actual conclusion *in respect of its truth in the nature of things* must depend on the accordance of our assumption with the premises as they exist in reality. But as our feelings or our senses may have deceived us, to this extent our conclusion must be uncertain. Hence, demonstration consists of a series of axioms added or subtracted, these axioms being merely our apprehensions of certain facts immediately derived from the conjoint operation of consciousness and reason, and having no relation whatever to the *actual* truth or falsehood of the facts themselves; so that to us the conclusion must be true, in so far

Digitized by Google

as we are capable of apprehending at all, since otherwise it would imply that we were deceived as to what are our own apprehensions, which is obviously, in so far as our convictions are concerned, a supposition that is impossible, it being observed that the argument in such a case does not even depend on what our apprehensions are, but what we *believe them to be.*

This view of the nature of reason fully explains the mode under which we attain a knowledge of extended substance, to account for which has so much perplexed philosophers, and no wonder, since as we have already seen, they assume that directly or indirectly we become acquainted with substance first, and that afterwards by an imaginary process which they call abstraction, we become acquainted with the qualities which appertain to it. Whereas the process is precisely the reverse. We first, as was formerly indicated, become acquainted with qualities, and thus, by identifying them with one locality and one solidity, we form our idea of substance as the something in which they inhere.

Before concluding our argument on the cognate subjects of reason and reasoning, however, we must farther notice a particular of the first importance in spiritual philosophy, as leading directly to the determination of a special tendency of the mind, which philosophers have altogether overlooked, but on the existence and determination of which, in a great measure, depends all that is characteristic of

Digitized by Google

intelligent man, as contra-distinguished from the lower animals and idiots, while the application of it indicates those specialities by which he is discriminated from dotards and madmen. Nor does the subject, under the views which have been proposed, in so far involve any serious difficulty. One thing, seems clear, that the distinction in any of those cases, is not to be found in the mere possession of the rational faculty, since the lower animals, idiots and madmen, all reason, and reason in so far, with the most perfect accuracy. We have, at all events, never heard of any one who could discriminate many of the processes which, it is evident, must take place in the minds (if we may so speak) of the lower animals, from those which, in the case of human beings, are called processes of reasoning. A dog, for example, knows his master, fights for him, and defends his property. A horse avoids the place where he has been frightened, and will, on the contrary, of his own accord, direct his course to the house where he has been treated kindly. Any number of similar phenomena might be cited; and those who deny that they are attributable to reason, are surely bound to tell us in what, in so far as their *kind* is concerned, they differ from similar phenomena in human beings, which all agree in attributing to it. In such cases these animals determine identities and discriminate differences, and we know nothing else that the reason of man can accomplish. The only real difference lies, not in

Digitized by Google

the possession of what is usually called reason, but in the nature of the objects to which reason is applied. The lower animals reason entirely *under momentary impulse.* They reason only on what has a direct bearing on the passion, desire, or feeling of the instant, and such passion, desire, or feeling, with the fewest possible exceptions, is limited to bodily states. Hence—and in this consists the grand distinction—we never find that they look forward to ulterior results, or manifest any approach to what may be called prospective reasoning. Whenever any of their doings *have regard to futurity,* it is invariably the result of instinct, and is in no way dependent on identification or discrimination.

Now, in so far as the use of reason is concerned, it is exactly the same with idiots. These do not differ from the rest of their race in being unable to reason, but in reasoning only with respect to passions, desires, and feelings of the moment. They never look forward to ulterior results, at least in the lowest stages of idiocy, nor do they manifest any approach to that which we have called prospective reasoning. They have, in fact, the same rational character, to all appearance, as the lower animals, though deficient in the instincts by which these animals seem more or less to be guided. Hence, idiots could be taught to work as the lower animals are taught, under the influence of either *immediate* hope or fear. The experiment has often

Digitized by Google

been tried, and may readily be repeated. It is a painful subject, this apparent identification of a portion of our race with the lower animals, but yet, so far as we may judge from the phenomena, there seems no doubt of the fact, and hence it follows, irresistibly from both instances, that that which constitutes the special characteristic of intelligent humanity is not reason, but the tendency to prospection which enables and induces us to apply reason to the determination of ulterior results. Of course, therefore, the farther this tendency is cultivated and strengthened, the more do we differ from the beasts of the field; in other words, the more intelligent we are, and the greater desire for knowledge that we realise, the more are we characterised by the nature of humanity. Hence, again, the special capability of intelligent man to reason abstractly, for this having no relation to momentary impulse, but solely to future and possible results, evidently can be realised by those only who are capable of, and have a pleasure in, directing their attention to prospective and indirect consequences. It need hardly be added, that under the same principles, intelligent man can alone, of the creatures of this world, have any notion of a future state of existence, and THAT HE MUST HAVE IT. This, indeed, is manifestly the brightest and greatest realisation of his characteristic nature, that it compels him, as he rises higher and higher in intelligence, to look forward to an eternity,

Digitized by Google

and to reason upon it. There may, indeed, be no such eternity, but he is not the less under an absolute necessity of expecting, and more or less believing it. It seems most extraordinary, that this capability of, and tendency to, prospection has never been observed by philosophers, and the more, that it is evidently the co-relative of our desire of investigating causes and anticipating results. The philosophy of the subject, however, does not belong to this branch of the science, but to that which regards our feelings and tendencies.

Dotage, again, though a totally different state from idiocy, yet does not any more than idiocy imply a deprivation of reason. It is different from idiocy, because in dotage we still have a tendency to prospection. It does not imply a deprivation of reason, because a man in his dotage can reason with perfect accuracy on the principles which he assumes. Dotage chiefly exhibits itself in an apparent decay of the faculty of memory, though it is very doubtful whether that faculty be really affected, inasmuch as the facts of a man's earlier history are in such a state comparatively well remembered, and it is only more recent impressions that are forgotten. Now, this can be accounted for by the weakening of the energy of our passions, desires, and feelings. We do not feel with equal earnestness, and consequently, under principles already explained, the facts take only an imperfect and weak hold on the mind. Our anxiety about

Digitized by Google

worldly things and worldly indulgences, except in so far as they have been confirmed by habit, seems in dotage to be diminishing and dying away. Hence, there is every probability, that a state of dotage is intimately connected with a change on our physical organization. The subject, however, is well worthy of a more careful examination. We have ourselves had but little opportunity of studying minutely the phenomena.

Insanity exhibits phenomena, again, almost the reverse of dotage, for it involves an extreme energy in one or more of our passions or desires. Certainly it implies no deprivation of reason strictly so called, for the madman has frequently the most acute perception of identities and differences, and reasons with indisputable accuracy, and that specially—*assuming his principles*—in those cases where his own special extravagance is concerned. Insanity, in fact, consists in the overbearing strength of some one passion or desire, which, according to the principles of association, perpetually hurries and drags the mind in a particular direction, so that, instead of events being felt by consciousness, as they actually are, they all take their character from this irresistible influence. The error of the madman, therefore, is not in his reason, but in the feeling that is *essential to his consciousness*, and which, consequently, gives to the facts of his consciousness, a character which they do not bear to anybody else. He may be compared to a man in the jaundice, to

Digitized by Google

whom everything appears yellow. Insanity, in truth, is little more than what is usually called strong prejudice, for, whenever a man is prejudiced by passion or desire, so that he cannot appreciate facts as they are, it is evident that on the particular point he approaches to insanity, and if his prejudice be pushed a little farther, so that he could not appreciate facts at all, except in so far as they harmonise with his overbearing passion or desire, it becomes insanity altogether. In the same way, if the passion or desire in insanity be diminished, it becomes prejudice; and if at length it be rendered, in a measure, subservient to the desire for absolute truth, sanity is at once restored. The prejudice involved in insanity, however, depends probably in all cases, more or less on *organic* change. But it is not necessary, at present, to enter on this question, it being sufficient for us here to have proved that insanity is not a deprivation of reason, since the philosophy of the subject belongs also to another branch of the science.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIII.

ON THE INFINITE, THE ETERNAL, AND THE ABSOLUTE.

Importance of those subjects—Causes which have specially led Philosophers to attempt their expiscation by *a priori* speculations—They cannot be so expiscated—Origin of confusion betwixt *a priori* speculation and experimental knowledge—Application of the distinction to the Infinite, the Eternal, and the Absolute—Analysis of the Infinite—Of the Eternal—Of the Absolute—Amount of our knowledge of the Absolute—Conclusion.

THE subjects of which we propose to treat in this chapter are evidently the most important and sublime to which the attention of intelligent beings can be directed; and they are forced on our consideration, from the very constitution of the human mind, for the prospective tendency—which, we have seen, constitutes the very characteristic of intelligent humanity—embraces space and infinity, as well as time and eternity, inasmuch as the two things cannot be practically separated from each other, though, indeed, this tendency is itself, perhaps, merely a form of that desire of knowledge, whether for its own sake, or for the sake of some either direct or indirect advantage to be derived from it,

Digitized by Google

which is felt by all intelligent human beings, and embraces the universe in its range. Hence, as might be supposed, these subjects from their very awfulness and magnificence, have attracted the attention of philosophers from the earliest times, but in consequence of this very awfulness and magnificence, they have been supposed to transcend experience, and thus philosophers in all ages have endeavoured to expiscate their philosphy by *a priori* speculations, and this especially has been the system of the modern German School, which has, as a natural result, above all others, ended in the delusion of substituting high-sounding words in the place of facts and phenomena. Were it indeed possible, that the nature of the Infinite, the Eternal, and the Absolute, were discoverable *a priori*, it is manifest, that there must have been some precise *a priori* facts on which our speculations might be founded, but there are none such, and even if there were, as, from the very nature of the case, they could be comparable with nothing else, it follows that reason, if reason be merely the faculty which discriminates and identifies, could never carry us one step beyond them. These *a priori* facts would constitute the *ultimatum* of our knowledge, and, as existing *a priori* in every mind, they would be equally known to every human being.

We are now, however, arrived at a stage of our argument which enables us perfectly to comprehend what is the origin of the confusion betwixt

Digitized by Google

a priori speculation and experimental knowledge, for it is evident that our knowledge is to be regarded under two aspects—1st, as regards facts as they are, and 2ndly, as regards our apprehension of them. Now, whether we know accurately facts as they are, which is usually what is known as experimental knowledge, must ever be a matter of greater or less uncertainty, and, consequently, all our conclusions with respect to these must be uncertain proportionally. If, for example, we argue from the nature of a tree or any other object as it exists without us, we may or may not be right as to the nature of such tree, or such object, and all our conclusions must be true or false, just according to the correctness of our assumption. In the same way, if we argue on the assumption, that a given triangle *which we see*, is an isoceles triangle, the correctness of our conclusion must depend on whether it really be an isoceles triangle or not which we see, a point which the human senses are not so perfect as with certainty to determine. Now this is what is usually called experimental, and sometimes, though not very accurately, empirical knowledge. In regard to such knowledge, we never can have positive assurance; but the case is altogether different with respect to our reasoning on facts or phenomena, not as they are, but as we apprehend them, for here our premises are certain, in so far as we are concerned. It is on our own belief that we reason, and not as to the

Digitized by Google

actual nature of anything without us. Hence, if we reason with respect to a tree, or any other object, not as it actually is, but as we apprehend it to be, our premises are certain, in so far as we are concerned, and our reasoning, consequently, to us must be demonstration. In like manner, if we argue that "the angles at the base of an isoceles "triangle are equal to one another," not in any given case, but as we apprehend the nature of an isoceles triangle, then we cannot doubt the certainty of our conclusion, else it would follow that "two straight lines might enclose a space," which, being inconsistent with our apprehension of what a straight line means, is to us impossible. Now, from not perceiving the distinction betwixt these kinds of knowledge, farther than that the one is certain and the other uncertain, philosophers have been led to suppose that they are essentially different with respect to the mental sources from which they are respectively derived, and, regarding the former as derived from reason, they have supposed the latter to be *a priori*, innate, or intuitive. They allow, indeed, that there is some exercise of the rational faculty in the acquisition of demonstrative knowledge, though they do not know precisely in what it consists, but they conceive that all the details are known innately or intuitively. Yet, in point of fact, so far are the details in demonstrative reasoning from being acquired *a priori*, that they are all derived from knowledge acquired *a*

Digitized by Google

posteriori—are the direct results of it, and, apart from empirical or experimental knowledge, consequently we could not have known them at all; nor is it of any importance whether our knowledge regards anything without us or an internal state: in both cases, it must be primarily experimental. Thus we are conscious of the exercise of memory as an experimental fact. We know it from experience, only being an act of our own minds, we are more perfectly acquainted with its nature, and therefore may in so far reason thereon with greater assurance as to the actual certainty of its phenomena, than with respect to those of any merely external object. Yet, our knowledge in such a case is no less knowledge of experience, and we can only, in a measure, be more assured of the facts which it communicates, if we regard their *actual* truth; but, on the other hand, we cannot be deceived in regard to them, so far as we are concerned, if we regard them not as to their actual truth, but only as to our own apprehensions of them. From all which it is perfectly clear, that all our knowledge must, in the first instance, be derived from experience, and consequently that the knowledge which has been supposed *a priori*, is simply the special FORM OF OUR APPREHENSION of such knowledge as may, through experience or consciousness, have been thus realised.

It will thus be perfectly manifest, that in any proper and strict sense, we cannot be said to *know*

Digitized by Google

the Infinite, the Eternal, and the Absolute. We can, in other words, have no experience of them, we could not have been conscious of them in any particular case, and therefore it is impossible that we could intelligently apprehend them ; and it is quite absurd to say that we may *in a measure* know Infinity in space, and Eternity in time, because it is in their endlessness, and not in their modes, that the difficulty lies, of which we can have no experience nor consciousness in any form whatsoever. Hence, every one feels, that his ideas of them are somehow totally different from his ideas of almost everything else. We do not know them as we know any object within or around us. Our notions of them are quite special. We know in fact *that* they are, but not *what* they are, for to this effect and extent only can our experience reach upon the subject.

In order, however, that we may as thoroughly as possible appreciate the extent and character of our knowledge of these particulars, it will be proper to analyse it in regard to each of them separately—the first to which we direct our attention being infinity, which meaning infinite space, it would, of course, follow, that if we know infinity *a priori*, we must know space *a priori*, or else there could be no *a priori* knowledge at all, except abstract infinity ; but as there is, and can be, on grounds repeatedly explained, no such idea as that of abstract infinity, Kant was induced to maintain that

Digitized by Google

our notion of space itself is *a priori*, and thence he was assuredly entitled to conclude, that much more must our idea of infinite space be so. Yet, most strange does it appear, that any one could have ever been deluded into the adoption of such a theory. The very proposition, that our knowledge of space is from within, that it originates in nothing without us, and that we know nothing of it as without us, but that it proceeds from an internal conviction altogether apart from any assurance of its real existence, is a theory utterly opposed to our firmest faith, and our unvarying experience. Were it true, indeed, then we must conclude that all the universe which space contains, must be within us too, and thus, it would follow, that all which we suppose ourselves to know, would at once be liable to doubt, or rather scepticism in such circumstances, would be the only possible philosophy. A very child would ridicule such a contradiction of all that humanity holds as most indisputable.

The fact is, that philosophers confused themselves originally, by supposing that our knowledge of space was acquired absolutely from sensation; and as this is evidently not true—since we cannot feel, nor see, nor hear, nor taste, nor smell space—their successors, assuming that there was no other way of accounting for our knowledge of space, came to the conclusion, that such knowledge must be intuitive, or what is really the same thing, *a priori*. Yet, the mode of our becoming acquainted with space,

Digitized by Google

is really a matter involving no difficulty, according to the principles which we have already developed, since, though we do not absolutely know space by sensation, in the way that we know hardness, colour, &c., we no less assuredly become acquainted with it from experience, in the combined action of sensation, memory, and reason. Our every motion, indeed, gives us a knowledge of space, for we are perceptionally conscious of the action of our muscles, and rationally cognisant of the difference of localities in which our members exist at successive periods. Every sense of touch, directly, and every instance of vision, indirectly, gives us the same knowledge by a similar process; nay, our very sense of existence, as creatures constituted of united bodies and souls, gives us a knowledge of space, by the rational discrimination of that which constitutes our existence, from that which such existence exists in, which is evidently not *a priori*, but *a posteriori*, or experimental knowledge. It is not, therefore, an object which we *perceive*, but room or space which we *apprehend* as something distinct from ourselves, and in which we exist, and which thus, in its relation both to us and to other objects, we are made acquainted with. In this way we are assured, from the knowledge of space or locality so acquired, that to exist out of space is to exist nowhere, *i.e.*, so far as we are concerned or can conceive, is not to exist at all. Now, from the very nature of the knowledge thus acquired of

Digitized by Google

space, it is evident that we can only have the most vague and indefinite idea of infinity. We only know that the limitation of space is to us, inconceivable and impossible; for, in other instances, reason gives us the idea of the opposites with some degree of precision, or, at all events, it makes them conceivable. In our conception of hardness, for example, reason implies the possibility and conceivability of non-hardness; in our conception of light, of non-light; in our conception of existence, of non-existence. But reason gives us no indication even of the opposite of space; on the contrary, the opposite of space, reason teaches us, would imply the absence of a negation, which, of course, could never constitute an idea, and which, indeed, it is impossible that we can conceive at all. Space, to us in fact, it will be manifest, from what has been already said, is not existence of any kind, but the void wherein existence may be contained. To suppose space to cease, therefore, would be to suppose something of which neither existence nor non-existence could be predicated, which—these being to us the only conceivable possibilities—evidently must imply a contradiction in terms, since it would be equivalent to an assumption that something is and is not, at the same time. Nor is this a merely negative conclusion: it is a positive conclusion, involved in the axiom, "that contraries cannot be predicated "of the same subject." That space has limits, therefore, implies to us an impossible proposition.

Digitized by Google

Nearly the same remarks are applicable to time and eternity. As was said of space, we do not know time as absolutely discoverable by our sensations, but through the conjoined operation of consciousness, memory, and reason, as we recognise ourselves and other objects as existing in successive states or at successive times. We know, therefore, existence and even non-existence only as existing in time, and we cannot conceive them to exist otherwise, because neither reason nor any other faculty gives us any possible substitute for it. Not to exist in time, therefore, as not to exist in space, is to us just not to exist at all; but in all this there is no *a priori* knowledge. We know time by experience, not as an existence or substance, but as a succession of existence and states in duration, by a rational apprehension, of the distinction betwixt *the time in which we exist*, and *existence existing in such time*, just as we know space by a similar process, as a succession of existence and states in extension or locality. And as with respect to space, so with respect to time, reason gives us no opposite. We cannot even conceive non-time, nor any modification of it, for we cannot conceive time to move either faster or slower. To us, therefore, there cannot be a limitation of time any more than of space, as equally implying an impossibility and a contradiction. It would, in other words, be assuming a time which was non-time, just as the assumption of the limitation of space

Digitized by Google

would imply an idea of space which was non-space. Hence, again, and on the same grounds, we can only have a very vague notion of eternity. We cannot, without absurdity, suppose a beginning or an end of time any more than we can do of space, because we cannot conceive a time which is non-time, nor a space which is non-space, but it is exceedingly doubtful whether our knowledge extends any farther.

It is under these views, obvious, that space and time cannot be annihilated, in so far as we can conceive, for all our notions are embraced in the categories of existence or non-existence; but existence we know, from experience, to exist in space, and, from our knowledge of its nature, we know that it can only exist in space while non-existence is space *strictly considered*, since, if anything were contained in it, then, in so far, it would not be *space*, but *existence in space*. Non-space, however, were it possible, would be a third species of notion. It would be neither existence nor non-existence, but *the absence of both existence and non-existence*; which is not only an impossible idea, but from its very nature an absurdity, because it would imply a condition of being which was neither something nor nothing. The very same conclusion follows with regard to time which is with regard to duration, just what space is with regard to extension. In this argument it will be observed that we are obliged, from the very

Digitized by Google

necessity of the case, to go back to our very primary feelings as to the nature of existence, and this gives it an appearance of metaphysical subtilty which cannot be avoided, for the ideas are so simple and elementary that words can hardly be found to express them. A very little consideration, however, will make it perfectly plain, inasmuch as the subtilty is only apparent and not real, originating in no cause whatever, except the exceeding imperfection of philosophical language.

The nature of the absolute, differs altogether from that of infinity and eternity, inasmuch as "the absolute" implies actual existence, and not merely the receptacle or duration of existence. It differs, however, from ordinary existence, in so far as "the absolute" implies existence, which exists *by its own energy*. This "absolute" has, by some, been called "the unconditioned," as if it were existence without powers; but this is evidently to us an impossible supposition, for we cannot know existence except by its powers, and therefore, to us, existence without power, is merely another name for non-existence. The only possible assumptions, therefore, as to the nature of "the absolute" are, first, that all existence exists by the necessity of its nature, and, consequently, is eternal; or secondly, that there exists an infinite and eternal power by which everything else has been created, and by which all things are preserved and regulated. Now it appears to me perfectly indisputable, that the whole

Digitized by Google

of the former of these assumptions, and a portion of the latter, rest on no evidence, and consequently, in so far as reason is concerned, must be regarded as pure conjectures or possibilities. Neither consciousness nor reason give us any information as to the essence of existence, and consequently it is altogether impossible for us to determine, by our natural faculties, whether the universe be eternal in its essence, or created. The errors and confusion into which philosophers have fallen as to this subject just originate, indeed, in the supposition, that in knowing "the "absolute" we know it in its essence, for such a supposition necessarily leads to the conclusion of Kant and Sir W. Hamilton, that we cannot even conceive it, a conclusion implying absurdity in its very enunciation, since, if we cannot conceive it, then *what is it of which they predicate the non-conception?* We do not, therefore, and cannot know "the abso- "lute" or any thing else essentially. We can only know essence in the exercise of its powers, and that by three processes:—1, that of consciousness, of course, including perception, through which we know it directly; 2, that of reason, through which we know it inferentially; and 3, that of co-relation, which is merely a more complicated operation of reason, through which we know it, or have the means of knowing it potentially—and we say have the means of knowing it, because, in determining co-relatives, the operation of reason is necessary, in order to discriminate the nature of the existence or

Digitized by Google

power which will specially correspond to that something which the co-relative is needed to perfect. Thus, if we see, for example, a semi-circular hole artificially cut in a stone, reason tells us the character of the co-relative figure which it is intended to receive, because it is impossible to know *definitely* a deficiency or relation, without *as definitely* knowing its supplement or co-relative; or, if we see a piece of machinery, we endeavour, in like manner, through reason to discover the co-relative, or, in other words, the instrumentality which will set it in motion, and the co-relative, or, in other words, the object which it is intended to effect. Now, it is by the appreciation of co-relation, which is evidently a process of discrimination and identification combined, that we know all that we can know about "the absolute." We cannot see it, nor touch it, nor know it by any of our external senses, nor can we feel it in the same way that we feel the action of our faculties, or the impulses of our emotions, hence, the only other possible way that we can become acquainted with it, is as a co-relative to a desire, reason indicating the *nature* of the co-relative alone competent to gratify such desire, according to the axiom, that "all its parts are necessary to make "up a whole." This, indeed, as will now, we trust, be obvious, is the only kind of *a priori* knowledge that is possible, and even this, it is evident, is not *a priori* in the ordinary sense of the word, since the desire in each case is really all that we know *a priori*, but

Digitized by Google

is merely an inference of reason discriminating the nature of the something which will correspond or harmonise with, and thus complete, by combining with it, the desire of which, by our natural constitution, we had been conscious. Reason compares all the various objects or possibilities suitable for gratifying any desire, and thus ultimately identifies with it, its proper co-relative. Thus, hunger is a feeling that implies the need of a co-relative for its gratification, or in other words, in the feeling of hunger is indicated a something provided by nature, for the realisation of a normal condition. Reason discriminates this indication, as well as the proper means of attaining the result at which it points. In this way the something, however vaguely, becomes, if we may so express ourselves, co-relatively known to us. Sexual desire constitutes a still more striking illustration, because it implies the need, not merely of a physical quality, but of a moral sympathy, for its full gratification. Hence it seems to imply the existence of a fellow-creature as a co-relative. No doubt, the idea might be vague in the case of one who had from infancy been secluded from his race; but that such an idea as co-relative to the desire, must be generated in some form, seems indisputable. In the same way, all our feelings of sympathy, and desires of society, give us an identical result. They imply the existence of other beings like ourselves. However vaguely such ideas may be suggested, it seems im-

Digitized by Google

possible that such states could be, without in some measure involving them. Now, this is precisely the knowledge that we have in the first instance of "the absolute;" we feel dependent, and this sense of dependence implies an uneasiness which, under the influence of reason, again generates a desire for an assurance of the existence of some power capable of relieving us from this uneasiness, of preserving and protecting us, and that not for a time, but for ever. That power must be "the ab- "solute," because it could not serve its purpose, nor constitute a full co-relative to our desire which is "absolute," unless the existence to which it appertains were omniscient and omnipotent, infinite, eternal, and true, and that we must believe in it, is as certain as that hunger compels a belief in the existence of food; the sexual impulse, in the existence of some species of being co-relative to its tendencies; and our feelings of sympathy, in the existence of fellow-creatures with whom such sympathies may be reciprocated. All states, in fact, which are essentially imperfect, must necessarily imply our belief in those co-relations which will realise and complete them, else must we suppose our nature a delusion, and our reason a lie. Nor is this our knowledge of "the absolute" under such a view, confined merely to a knowledge of its existence. In the very nature of the case, we must also know its qualities *in so far as they are co-relative to our desire*. This, however, does not appertain to that

Digitized by Google

branch of the subject which we are now considering. It is the link which strictly connects intellectual with theological science.

Such is the knowledge which we possess of the "Infinite, the Eternal, and the Absolute," we do not say all the knowledge that we *can* acquire on those subjects, but all, so far as we know, attainable in the present state of philosophical science. It is, however, a knowledge in thus far not depending on mere speculation, but on indisputable facts ascertained by experience, and determined by intelligence in their application.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIV.

ON IMAGINATION, HUMOUR, AND WIT.

Usual sense of the word Imagination—More restricted sense. In this latter sense imagination merely a form of reason—Humour analysed and reduced to the same category—Cause of laughter—Wit, an exhibition of incongruity limited to one particular—Puns are merely exhibitions of incongruity in expression and words.

IMAGINATION, in its usual sense, is merely a process of association in which the mind, having no definite object in view, but only a more or less vague conception of an object, its desires call forth a series of ideas unusually interesting and vivid, as specially cognate to themselves, and which are commonly known under the names of visions, fancies, or, generally, day-dreaming. In such cases, the controlling power of the mind is only partially in operation. The mental state, indeed, which such a process implies, seems to result from a concentration of the mind in itself, and a consequent cessation of the perceptive faculty, which cessation, in its most pure state, is realised in actual dreaming. This is the process, as will be obvious, under a modified form, which generates poetical descriptions. Imagina-

Digitized by Google

tion, however, in the stricter sense in which the word is used, is merely the recognition of similarities. Hence the metaphor, similitude, allegory, and all kinds of figures. Now, this, though frequently conjoined with a tendency to day-dreaming, is *in itself* neither more nor less than a form of reason. It is an imperfect reason, giving us similitudes instead of identities, and, singularly enough, wherever it is strongly developed, the power of logical thinking is almost invariably deficient. A tendency to realise resemblances hardly ever coexists with a strongly logical mind, yet the difference is evidently only in degree, and not in kind. Reason appreciates identities absolutely, while imagination merely appreciates similitudes, and often, consequently, errs logically, in supposing objects identical which are only similar. There is, however, no real difference in kind between similarities and identities, for similitude is identity in mode, or some other incidental, though not in essence, and, therefore, it is not improbable that the poet might be a logician, did he accustom himself to attend more carefully to the essential characteristics instead of the incidents of things. The comparison, consequently, of things so as to identify and discriminate their essences, is reasoning. The comparison of things, so as to identify and discriminate their incidentals, is imagination in the stricter sense of the term. The difference seems to consist in the greater or lesser degree of attention

Digitized by Google

given to the precise nature of the objects presented to us.

This analysis of the process of imagination is still farther illustrated by the determination of the nature of wit and humour, which are merely forms of the same process. Humour is just the exhibition of unexpected incongruities in the same subject, and consists as a mental process in the acute perception, consequently, of identities and opposites in the same subject, causing surprise, mixed with a certain amount of admiration and pleasure. The greatest effect, however, is usually produced when such incongruities have reference to human beings, so as to imply a certain sense of superiority in those to whom they do not apply. Thus, for example, in the Rape of the Lock—

> "Whether the Nymph shall break Diana's law,
> "Or some frail China jar receive a flaw;
> "Or stain her honour, or her new brocade;
> "Forget her prayers, or miss a masquerade;
> "Or lose her heart, or necklace, at a ball;
> "Or whether heaven has doomed that Shock must fall."

The contrast exhibited in this passage betwixt that which is most important, and that which is most trifling, as if a giddy girl held both to be of the same value, and the absolute truth of the estimate of such a person's character, as occasionally, at all events, realised in experience, implies humour, which, however, as in most such cases, must, to right thinking minds, suggest also no small cause for pity and regret. There are many similar exhi-

Digitized by Google

bitions of the same species of humour in Byron's works, and particularly in Don Juan, but which is of a still more painful kind, as consisting mainly in the contrast betwixt the serious character of the truths which he illustrates, and the half-trifling, half-contemptuous style and terms in which the illustrations are couched. Thus—

"What are the hopes of man! old Egypt's king,
"Cheops erected the first Pyramid,
"And largest—thinking it was just the thing
"To keep his memory whole and mummy hid;
"But somebody or other rummaging,
"Burglariously broke his coffin's lid:
"Let not a moment give you or me hopes,
"Since not a pinch of dust remains of Cheops."

Under the definition of humour, it is evident that every species of fun is included, or, in other words, those incongruities, whether practical or verbal, which cause laughter, for this is by no means the result of every species of humour. To cause real laughter—for much more frequently than people imagine, laughter is more or less unconsciously forced, if not a mere result of habit—but to cause real laughter, the incongruity of the fact or idea presented to us must not only imply some *obvious* absurdity, but it must be of a very unexpected kind, and generate a variety of feelings so as to occasion an action of the mind on the nerves more rapid than the muscular system can immediately accommodate itself to, which, in all probability, is the cause of the convulsive movement of the bodily organisation. The length of

Digitized by Google

time that this convulsive movement may continue, will, of course, depend upon the violence and continuance of the cause, though it would seem also to be sometimes determined by the nervous system being for the time so disorganised and complicated as to require a considerable effort for the purpose of recovering its tone.

Wit is merely a single flash of humour. An incongruity limited to a single particular. It is, in fact, to humour what a metaphor is to an allegory. The one is embraced in a single phrase, the other implies a sustained description. Puns constitute a species of verbal wit when the incongruity, *i.e.*, the conjoined identity and contrariety, consists in a mere incongruity in the form of the expression without any incongruity of idea. This is usually regarded as a lower species of wit, and it really is so, as implying very little imagination, being usually the result of the habit of attending to the various senses which words usually bear.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XV.

CONCLUSION.

Analysis must, in so far, be imperfect—Cause of this—Main object of the Work—What it professes to have attempted—How far there seems reason to hope that the objects attempted have been realised—In so far, a foundation laid, on which the super-structure of Religious, Moral, and Political Science may be reared—Philosophy of the feelings and desires necessary to complete such foundation.

We have now finished the first part of the philosophy of the human mind. We have described what may be called the machinery of the mind, and in so far explained its processes of operation, although any such description and explanation must necessarily, to a certain extent, be imperfect, until the active powers, setting the machinery in operation, be also analysed, and their respective energies, and their mutual bearings be also thoroughly expiscated. These powers, it will at once be perceived, are the feelings and desires; for it is evident, that apart from these, the faculties could never be stimulated to action. In this work, therefore, these have been assumed, but their character has only been briefly and incidentally indicated, in so far as absolutely necessary for the explanation of those processes

Digitized by Google

which constituted an essential portion of our subject. The more thoroughly, however, the nature of these feelings and desires is understood, the more completely, it is thence evident, must the character of each such process be appreciated, in so far as each is respectively dependent on their influence; for as every state of mind is coloured, not merely by a consciousness of existence, but by feelings either of cheerfulness or depression, of hope or of fear, so the tendency of every state must be determined by the character of the desire or desires which generate it. Hence, from these alone can we be assured in any measure, either of the divine purpose in the creation of man, or of his future and final destiny. We, therefore, admit that many of the mental processes have been, and could only have been imperfectly developed, that not a few have, perhaps, been overlooked altogether, and that much more may be effected in the way of illustrating and combining the various particulars even which have been discussed; but, on the other hand, we trust, that so far as we have gone, each conclusion has been rested on facts and evidence that are indisputable. The great objection hitherto taken to intellectual science has been the uncertainty of its foundations, each succeeding philosopher sweeping away the principles on which his predecessors had reared their respective systems. Now, it has been our main object to meet and to obviate this undeniable difficulty. We have never inten-

Digitized by Google

tionally, or without some indication, appealed to any proof which would not seem to have justified our conclusion under the same circumstances, according to the strictest deductions of physical science; and we have farther endeavoured so to state such proof as to render it not only intelligible, but perfectly obvious in its application, to every one capable of understanding ordinary language. In this way, we trust, independently of minor particulars, that our consciousness of our own existence has been proved; that the true and only grounds of our belief in personal identity have been proved; that the idealistic and materialistic theories—referring to materialism in its grosser form—have been disproved, and ideas demonstrated to be neither mind nor matter, but OUR KNOWLEDGE of mind and matter, and the relations which different powers, whether of mind or matter, bear to each other; that the confusion betwixt relative knowledge, and knowledge of existences as related to our minds and organic being, has been cleared up, and the real origin of our belief in external existence precisely explained; that various particulars in regard to memory, and the knowledge derivable therefrom, have been established; that the true principle of the association of ideas has been ascertained; that the nature of general ideas and general words has been so developed, as to relieve the subject entirely from those difficulties and perplexities by which it was supposed to be complicated; that

Digitized by Google

our belief in mathematical and other axioms—specially the axiom, "that every change must have a "cause"—has been reduced to ordinary and obvious mental processes; that the distinction betwixt consciousness and reason has been determined, and the true power of the rational faculty indicated; that the mental process in reasoning has been analysed, and reduced to its simplest elements: that the nature of the Infinite, the Eternal, and the Absolute has been explained, and the amount of our possible knowledge of them defined and limited: and that imagination, humour, and wit, have been identified with the exercise of reason, as forms under which, in certain circumstances, it developes itself. Of course, we feel that it would be presumptuous to assume, that all this had been done thoroughly, or that the various particulars are brought out with equal fulness and precision; but we do say, that after most careful and anxious examination, we have not been able to discover any portion of the argument to which, so far as we can judge, any one can logically object, nor have we found any one—and we have stated our views to many individuals—who has hesitated to admit their validity; of course, however, when we say this, we assume the authority of consciousness, and generally of the human faculties, so far as experience proves that they were intended to regulate belief. If, however, our previous arguments be conceded even in a measure, any dispute on this subject must be at an end,

Digitized by Google

since even our earlier chapters, supposing their argument valid, superseded, so far as we know, every form of scepticism which could bring their authority into question. If, then, even in a measure, we may be entitled to assume, that the particulars adverted to have actually been realised, the purpose of this work has, in thus far, at all events, been accomplished. The principles of intellectual science have been so established, as to constitute, in thus far, a solid foundation on which religious, moral, and political science may be reared. There may be much still to be done, no doubt; but, certainly it would be of the most immense importance, to be assured that what is done, is not built upon sand, which at any moment may once more slip away, and leave us precisely where we were before. To attain this assurance has, in every part of the preceding work, therefore, been our main object, and we cannot help humbly, though anxiously trusting, that in this object we have not altogether failed.

We would, however, in conclusion, repeat, because it is a most important point to be attended to, that even if we have succeeded in our "inquiry "into the powers and processes of the human "mind," to an extent beyond what even our most sanguine hopes would justify us in anticipating, yet we by no means conceive the foundations *completed* on which the higher spiritual sciences may be reared. The philosophy of the feelings and passions, as has been indicated, is the bond which

Digitized by Google

unites that foundation with these sciences, and it has been even less cultivated than any other branch of the philosophy of mind. Yet, it evidently must involve most interesting considerations, and, indeed, so far as we have been able to ascertain its results, seems to lead to conclusions so extraordinary and novel, that if we be correct—and we have endeavoured to prosecute the subject with the utmost caution—it must lead to a complete alteration of those ideas usually entertained as to the foundations on which the higher branches of spiritual science are rested. Nor do we conceive the subject to involve considerations implying anything like insuperable difficulty—on the contrary, we believe that if the work has been fairly and surely *begun*, the impulse which it will thence receive, especially taken in connection with the strange and startling results which seem to flow from the determination of the philosophy of the feelings, will have the effect of directing the attention of a larger number of thinking men to a more anxious cultivation of the science, and thus will render its ulterior success both certain and progressively accelerating.

THE END.

ABERDEEN: JOHN AVERY, ST. CATHERINE'S WYND, UNION STREET.

Digitized by Google