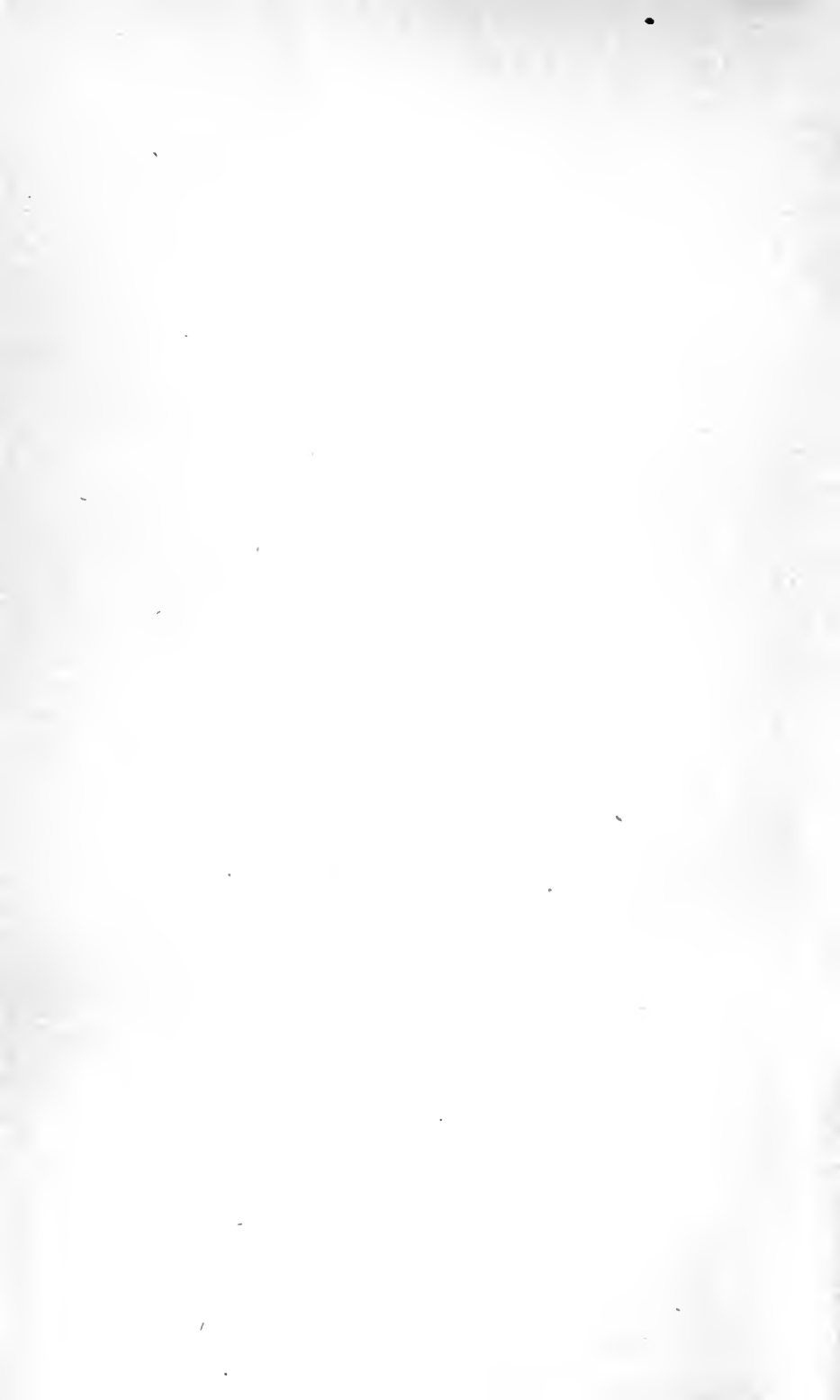


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THE
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BY
ANTONIO ROSMINI SERBATI

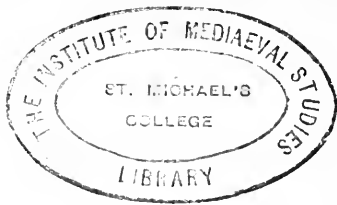
VOL. III.

NEW AND CHEAPER EDITION



LONDON:
KEGAN, PAUL, TRENCH, & CO., 1, PATERNOSTER SQUARE.

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1886.



JAN 10 1964
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OF
THE THIRD VOLUME.



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SECTION VI.

ON THE CRITERION OF CERTAINTY.

1040. In the two preceding volumes I think I have fulfilled all that I had promised to the readers of this work. I have pointed out and described in full detail the exact nature of the difficulty which must be faced in dealing properly with the question of the Origin of ideas (41-45). I have given a history of that question (41-384), and also offered a Theory in solution of it (385-1039). In this Theory I found, that what had been so often asserted, and so often denied, was true—namely, that there is in the human spirit something concreated with it, and constituting it intelligent ; but at the same time I saw and demonstrated that this concreated or innate element was more simple than had been opined or suspected by even the ablest thinkers. Then, by deeper research into ‘What this most simple element might be,’ which had escaped the notice of so many other philosophers, and had therefore been denied by them altogether, I discovered that it must consist and did in fact consist, in an idea which constituted the ONE ONLY FORM¹ of the human Intellect and the human Reason. I might now, therefore, lay down my pen and close this Treatise. Nevertheless, I cannot permit myself to do so without deducing from the said Theory some corollaries which spontaneously flow from it, and are of the greatest importance, especially in our times.

1041. The minds of men seem nowadays to be exercised

¹ The absurdity of maintaining, as Kant does, that the *primal forms* of the understanding are many, can be seen also from the reason given by S. Thomas in the following words : ‘It is impossible to understand many things together *primarily* and *per se* ; for one and the

same operation cannot at one and the same time end in many terms.’ ‘Impossibile est simul multa primo et per se intelligere ; una enim operatio non potest simul multis terminis terminari’ (*Cont. Gent.* I. xlviiii.).

more anxiously than ever by questions deeply affecting human knowledge and the dignity of human nature ; questions which form the basis of all that is noble in our thoughts, destinies, and hopes. Foremost among them stands out the question of the *Criterion of Certainty*, so intimately connected with that of the Origin of Ideas, that its solution is a natural consequence of the solution of the latter. To this first and principal corollary I shall therefore devote the present Section, aiming therein at two things : (1) To determine in what the Criterion of Certainty consists ; and (2) to show how that criterion is applied, or how the certainty of our cognitions is substantiated by means of it ; so that they may be seen to have an intrinsic and true validity, and not one merely conventional or illusory, as the followers of the Sceptical and Indifferentist School appear to imagine. For this purpose, I shall pass in review the various kinds of knowledge of which man is capable, and then endeavour to make good my position in regard to each kind.

1042. We have seen that there is in man (1), *Feeling*,¹ (2) the *Idea of being*, and (3) an innermost or radical Force (the human *subject* at once sentient and intelligent), which unites the *felt* with the *idea of being*, and thus forms the *intellectual perception* of things.

The *intellectual perceptions* being formed, our spirit, through diverse operations carried on by the use of reflection, draws *ideas* from them, and then, by means of ideas, joins together and decomposes, both the ideas themselves and the perceptions, *i.e.*, goes on continually making *judgments* and *reasonings*.

All human cognitions are derived from these few sources.

Now simple *feeling* cannot as yet be called *cognition* ; it is only the *matter* of cognition.

Human knowledge therefore is divided into that which consists of pure *form* (whence it is also called *pure*), and that which is composed of *matter* and *form*.

¹ Here under the term *Feeling*, I include also the phantasms, which are interior reproductions of sensations formerly experienced, and likewise the

fundamental feeling, which is, as it were, a universal and permanent sensation of our own selves.

1043. I shall therefore undertake to prove against the Sophists of every age, that the *formal* knowledge, as well as the *materiated*, far from being essentially illusory and subjective, is really such as to put man in possession of objective and absolute truth.

I shall begin with the *formal* knowledge, and then pass to the *materiated*; for the *form* of the understanding is essentially intellectual, and from it every species of cognition originates. In it alone therefore can the supreme and universal principle of certainty be found. Lastly, I shall treat of the errors to which human knowledge is liable. But first of all it will be necessary to define what *Certainty* is, and also to make some general preliminary considerations respecting it.

Thus, the whole of this Section will be distributed into five parts, namely :—

Part I. The Criterion of Certainty.

- „ II. Application of the criterion to demonstrate the truth of *pure* knowledge.
- „ III. Application of the criterion to demonstrate the truth of *non-pure* or *materiated* knowledge.
- „ IV. Errors to which human knowledge is liable.
- „ V. Conclusion.

PART I.

ON THE CRITERION OF CERTAINTY.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT IS CERTAINTY, TRUTH, AND PERSUASION.

1044. *Certainty* is 'A firm and reasonable persuasion in conformity with truth.'

1045. *Truth* therefore, in man, is not the same thing as *certainty*.

I may have in my mind an opinion true in itself, and yet may doubt its truth : in this case I have not certainty.

Hence the mere fact of a thing being true in itself is not enough to render it also true to us. In order that it may be true to us, we must have a motive producing in us a *firm persuasion*, and producing it *reasonably* : that is, we must have a *reason* which logically necessitates in us the conviction that our opinion or belief is true and indubitable.¹

Certainly, logical truth does not exist in itself apart from every subsistent mind ; but it exists in itself apart from the human mind ; and this justifies the distinction between what is true in itself, and what is true to man through the *certainty* he has of its truth. These things are self-evident, and there is no need for me now to investigate further the nature of truth : this I shall have to do later on.

1046. The definition I have given of *certainty* shows also the difference there is between *certainty*, *persuasion*, and *truth*.

A persuasion may be most firm (or be declared such by the person who has it), and yet the thing to which the persuasion refers may be false. This is not certainty.

¹ I here use the term *opinion* or *belief* to denote any proposition conceived by our mind, to which we may either give or refuse our assent.

Again, a persuasion may be most firm and also in conformity with truth ; but at the same time it may be grounded on an irrational and false motive.¹ In this case a man would be persuaded of the truth ; he would possess it in part, but he would not, strictly speaking, have certainty ; unless we wish to distinguish two kinds of certainty, one reasonable and the other unreasonable—a distinction which I do not like to make, as, instead of giving clearness to our present argument, it would only introduce confusion.

1047. *Certainty*, therefore, is the result of three elements:—

- (1) *truth* in the object ; (2) firm *persuasion* in the subject ;
- (3) a motive or *reason* producing that persuasion.

¹ Sometimes the motive which produces a most firm persuasion is reasonable without the individual himself being aware of it, or knowing how to declare it to others. This individual has *certainty*. We must therefore take care not to confound believing without reason, or on false grounds, with believing on true reasons, but such that one is not competent to account for them to oneself. Many of the uneducated believe the gospel, and if you ask them *why*

they believe, they will perhaps be unable to tell you. But this does not mean that they believe without reason, since they believe on the authority of God, and on the force of truth which speaks to them interiorly. They are won by the best of all reasons, yet without having the ability at once to reflect upon it, and take note of what passes within themselves, so as to be able to communicate it to others.

CHAPTER II.

CERTAINTY CAN NEVER BE BLIND.

1048. Since certainty is produced in us by a *reason* which brings conviction to our mind, and draws us into assenting to a proposition, we must needs conclude that it can never be *blind*, can never be a mere *fact*, a purely *instinctive* yielding.

Reid, the founder of the Scottish school, was the first in modern times to broach this absurdity, thus hurling philosophical truth into an abyss, where, if not rescued, it must have perished. Alarmed on the one hand at the universal scepticism which had been the logical outcome of Locke's philosophy, and which implied the dismal prospect of an existence agitated by continual doubt; and, on the other, disheartened, it would seem, by a sense of the insufficiency of his individual reason, he sought for help in the opinion of other individuals, seizing on common sense as a plank to save philosophy from shipwreck. Those things which all men believed were, he said, incapable of argumentative proof; one felt bound to give assent to them by a law of nature which admitted of no resistance. *Nature* itself made up for the insufficiency of *reason*. Although reason could not satisfactorily account for the primary notions, *instinct* necessitated men implicitly to believe in them, because men naturally shrink from that self-annihilation which a denial of the primary notions and the principles essential to the exercise of reason would inevitably entail.

In this way he fancied he had completely uprooted scepticism, not perceiving that in reality he had given it a deeper and stronger hold.

For if I yield assent to certain propositions simply from a

necessity of my nature, from the instinctive craving to preserve my existence as an intelligent being, which would otherwise be taken from me, what am I actuated by except a principle, strong and irresistible indeed, but *blind*—the principle of self-interest? And does the mere fact of such assent being useful or necessary to me render those propositions true? Or rather is not this to transmute *truth* into *utility* or *necessity*, and therefore to destroy it? And if so, am I not left as much in darkness as before—nay, in a far worse darkness, because unavoidable and essentially irremediable? I say further: it is not to *ignorance* alone that I am condemned; positive *error* is what I must accept on pain of forfeiting my intellectual life, since it is an error to give the name of *truth* to what is only utility or dire necessity. A crime of the most degrading kind is enjoined, or rather forced on me; for is it not a crime, and one wholly destructive of my dignity as a rational being, to take the useful or the injurious as the sole test of truth or falsehood? Cruel Nature if such be thy law! Cruel gift if we can only receive thee on condition that we shall not be able to escape annihilation except by submitting to the extinction in us of every spark of our distinctive excellence! Foolish and lying Nature if thou effacest the character thou thyself hast imprinted on our rational spirit in order to deceive us, and if thou repentest of having gifted us with intelligence and the call to virtue that we might exercise dominion over the beings inferior to us! Could there be a tyranny more hideous, more crushing, more pernicious, than would be practised by a nature like this on what is essentially the intelligent and free portion of our being? In such a system absurdity would reign supreme; truth would be for ever eliminated from the universe and from the category of essences; our mind, deprived of the light which is its informing principle, would be unceasingly tossed about from uncertainty to uncertainty, just as instinct might chance to dictate. A mysterious and terrible dread would underlie our whole existence on this earth, for we should be continually flying from that destruction which would be ever dogging us, without our even

knowing what we were trying to avoid. So gloomy and nemesis-like is the fate of man as conceived by the philosophers of this school, whilst the Deity Who watches over him is a being unknown, inexorable, inconceivable!

This system which, at first sight, seems to represent man as placed under a beneficent and provident dispensation, has already produced the evil results I am referring to.

Passing from England into Germany, it has there transformed itself into the philosophy of Kant, which is nothing but the Scottish system fathomed to its depths, and developed with much greater fulness and in far graver and more regular forms than were ever dreamt of by its first inventor.

As we have seen, Reid held that men generally believe in certain primary notions by an immediate, instinctive, and irresistible prompting of the soul. This, according to him, was a fact incapable of explanation. Kant accepted the fact, but added that, if it could not be fully explained, it could nevertheless be accurately analysed; in other words, that that interior energy by which the soul, acting under a sort of natural 'inspiration,'¹ emitted from within itself the common principles of reason and impelled us to assent to them,² could very well be known by an examination of its effects. These effects he attempted to distinguish and classify.

As a result of his labours, he laid it down that this species of spiritual instinct manifests itself by a certain number of functions; and to those partial activities by which these functions are severally accomplished, he gave the name of *Forms* of the human spirit. Thus originated the *Forms* of Transcendental Philosophy. Reid had believed in all good faith that he was securing to man the possession of objective truth; but Kant saw very clearly that Reid's system did precisely the contrary, *i.e.*, that it entirely destroyed

¹ Reid, *Essays on the Powers &c.* Vol. I., Essay II., chap. vi. (Tr.)

² One of the errors of our time has been to confound the *principles* of reason with the *assent* which is given to them. That a natural inspiration may prompt us to *assent* to certain known principles I can well under-

stand; but an inspiration which produces the principles themselves, is to me simply incomprehensible. Reid as well as Kant confounded the two operations of the soul—*intuition* and *assent*—and pretended to explain them both by a single *hypothesis*.

the objectivity of truth. Presenting that system openly in its true character, he intimated that the 'Theoretical reason had no objective value whatever, and that the truth of all human reasoning could be no other than subjective, *i.e.*, *appearing* as truth to us.' Yet he did not perceive that to designate truth as *subjective* was simply an abuse of language, and that *subjective truth* was no truth at all, but a contradiction in terms.

1049. In Italy this absurdity found no favour, and was persistently opposed.

In France, the Scottish philosophy made its appearance in 1811. Before that date Condillac held absolute sway, although, strange to relate, the countless crowd of his followers who took his word for gospel, boastfully proclaimed themselves the possessors of absolute independence of thought!¹

¹ How little does man know about himself! How often is he deceived in the estimate he forms of his own acts! They who think themselves most free are very often the greatest slaves. The period of excitement must pass away ere other men can be in a position to form a correct estimate of the mental state of those who preceded them. A man will often declare that he intends to reach a certain goal. Does it follow that he has chosen the right road for it? If you relied on his intention, you would be often deceived. Let us confine ourselves to philosophers. Berkeley assures you at the very outset that his only object in inventing his Idealism was to refute the Sceptics who had sprung up in multitudes from the philosophy of Locke. Alas! Locke himself had written for no other purpose than to combat Scepticism. Now the effect of Berkeley's *Idealism* was to accelerate the progress of Scepticism. Reid, actuated by the best possible motives, came forward to check the evil; and lo! the system he opposed to it gave rise to the *Critical Philosophy*—the worst form of Scepticism the world has ever seen; for it is Scepticism developed to its fullest perfection. But now what did Kant propose to himself by his philosophy? He pledges you his word that his aim in

writing is no other than had been contemplated by all his predecessors; namely, to dispose once and for ever of the Sceptics, whom he compares to 'A Nomadic tribe who hate a permanent habitation and settled mode of living, and threaten daily more and more to dissolve the bonds of civil society.' (See *Preface* to the first edition of the *Critique*, etc.) He goes so far as to assert that in the kind of investigation he has undertaken 'mere opinions are inadmissible, and that everything which in the least resembles an hypothesis must be excluded as of no value in such discussions.' (*Ibid.*)

And now, after all these declarations and promises, he offers to satisfy you by a mere quibble. He first tells you that there is no denying the existence of a knowledge characterised by *necessity*; but then he subjoins that the necessity is purely *apparent* and *subjective*. By this slight addition he has destroyed all knowledge, together with the possibility of knowledge. This is certainly nothing but rank sophistry; nor would I dare to inquire what he had in his mind when advancing it. But of the other philosophers I have just named, the rectitude of whose intentions is above suspicion, I will say that they give us a manifest proof of the truth mentioned at the beginning

Later on the German philosophy, veiled in part under the name of *Eclecticism*, found its way into France. *Criticism* evidently suggested this name, for a system which summoned all other systems to judgment might well make *selections* from them. However, I do not care to find fault merely on account of names.¹

Not every one in France understands the true nature of this philosophy, because, being still new in that country, its ultimate consequences have not yet come to light. Now it is by the last results of a philosophy that one is enabled to judge definitively of the source whence they proceed, to say for certain whether it be good or bad.

Hence it is not surprising that, while there are some who attempt to use this philosophy in the interests of religion, others cultivate it wholly regardless of religious consequences, and show themselves ready to accept whatever it may lead to, without knowing what that will be. These last hasten the development of the system, and therefore the moment when the final verdict will be passed on it. It is, however, sad to think that no bad system of philosophy is finally adjudicated upon until many have, through it, been sacrificed to error!

of this note; namely, that in the judgments which man makes on himself, he often errs, and that it is difficult for an individual to know precisely where he stands, and what will be the true and full result of his manner of thinking.

¹ There is nevertheless something presumptuous and absurd in the very name of *Critical Philosophy*, since by it an individual professes to pass judg-

ment on the reason of his fellow men, as if he were of a nature different from theirs. The name *Eclecticism* has not the same defect; but signifying as it does a mere *selection* of doctrines, it fails to express that *unity* without which there is no true philosophy, but only a congeries of detached opinions. To judge of the *Eclectics* by the name they assume, one would say they are men of memory rather than of genius.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE TWO PRINCIPLES OF CERTAINTY.

1050. We must distinguish two principles of certainty.

The one is a proposition expressing the essence of *truth*, and this might be called *principium essendi*.¹

The other is a proposition expressing an indubitable *sign* of the truth ; and this might be called *principium cognoscendi*.

1051. It is evident that the principle which expresses the essence of truth, must also be the principle of certainty ; for if I can see that what stands before my mind is the truth, I have no need of any other motive for being certain about the thing of which I think.

So in like manner, when I have an *indubitable sign* that the thing I think of is true, I am justified in firmly believing that thing, although I do not see its intrinsic reason, *i.e.* its truth.

1052. But let us see what relation these two principles have with the three elements of certainty, namely, *truth* in the object, *firm persuasion* in the subject, and the *reason* which produces that persuasion.

That our argument may proceed more smoothly, let us, first of all, fix the meaning of the terms we employ.

Anything to which we give or refuse our assent may be expressed in a proposition ; and a proposition present to our mind may also be called a *cognition*, so far forth as we know

¹ By carefully distinguishing between these two principles of certainty, I save myself, in the process of my argument, from many ambiguities, and the reader from many misunderstandings. At the same time, this enables me to be more brief in what I have to say ; since a train of reasoning is never

so long as when the terms used in it are uncertain and confused in meaning. I have to observe, moreover, that although certainty depends on a cause external to ourselves, nevertheless such properties of this cause as have no relation with certainty must be excluded from the nature of the present argument.

what it means. I shall therefore use the term *proposition*, not as expressing any one particular form of our conceptions, but as expressing in general anything to which our persuasion may refer, even though it were a simple idea, since even an idea can, as I have said, be expressed by a proposition.¹

So much being premised, I say that what causes *persuasion* in us, or takes it away, is the assent or dissent we give to a *proposition*.

Now assent, in order to produce a persuasion entitled to the name of *certainty*, must be prompted by a *reason*, and not given at random or blindly.

A *reason*, therefore, is invariably the cause of certainty; and of the three elements whence certainty results, it is the *third* that generates it in the individual, the only real subject of certainty.²

1053. Now the only purpose for which this *reason* becomes necessary is, that we may be brought to the persuasion of the *truth* of that proposition. But if the *truth* shows itself to me intuitively, then the *reason* which moves me is truth itself. The direct vision I have of it generates in me a firm persuasion, which is reasonable precisely because I have therein yielded solely to the force of truth acting on me. In this case, the elements of my certainty are reduced to two, namely *truth* in the object (which is also the reason of my persuasion), and the *persuasion* itself, which that truth has caused in me, the thinking subject.

But if I am not able to see the *truth* itself, which is the *supreme reason* and the *evidence* of the proposition, then, in

¹ All acquired ideas presuppose a judgment; and as to the original idea, it may be translated into a proposition by applying it to itself, by saying, for example, *being is*.

² The *subject* of certainty is always an *individual*; since it is only by an individual that assent can be given or refused to a proposition, there being none but individuals on this earth. Humanity, as such, is only an abstract idea. Hence it would be an absurdity to take (as Lamennais has done) an abstraction for a real person, and to say

that *humanity*, and not the individuals which compose it, gives that assent which produces certainty. To give assent is to pronounce a judgment; the proximate judge therefore of certainty is, beyond all controversy, the individual himself; in the same way that the *proximate judge* of the morality or immorality of actions is the conscience of each individual. This, however, does not mean that the individual is not obliged, in making that judgment, to follow a *rule* which is independent of himself.

order that I may give a reasonable assent to the same, I must have a motive, token, or sign, so certain that I cannot be deceived in it.¹ Now this indubitable *sign* of the truth may be, for example, an infallible *authority*,² by relying on which I therefore act reasonably, although I do not understand that which the authority affirms. . But again, speaking in general, certainty as to the truth of a proposition may be produced in us by a *sign* which, although perfectly trustworthy, is extrinsic to the proposition, and incapable of giving us the immediate perception and intuition³ of the truth therein contained.

We must, then, distinguish these two principles of certainty, the one being *intrinsic* to the proposition, and the other *extrinsic*. The first does not stop at persuading or convincing us that the proposition must be true, but enters into the proposition itself and gives us a clear intellectual vision of its truth. The second, on the contrary, does not enter into the proposition ; nay, does not always concern itself with its contents. Hence with this principle it is not even necessary that we should clearly understand the proposition. No matter what its contents may be, or what we take it to mean (were it even expressed in a tongue unknown to us, or written in unintelligible characters), the principle I speak of is quite proof enough, that there **MUST** be the truth in it, and that we are therefore bound to yield an unqualified assent to what it contains.

¹ 'Erret necesse est' (says S. Augustine), 'qui assentitur rebus incertis.' (*Contra Acad.* l. 2, c. iv.).

² *Authority* is not this extrinsic principle of certainty considered in all its generality, but only a particular principle subordinate to the general. A certain portion of the arguments called *reductio ad absurdum*, falls under the same principle, that is, all those in which the absurdity does not apply to the contents of the proposition, but to the proposition itself materially taken, so that there would be an absurdity in supposing it false, although we do not know what it contains, or it is immaterial whether we know it or not.

³ S. Augustine finds the word *knowledge* more proper for expressing the intuition of the truth, and the word *belief* for expressing the assent we give to a proposition on the testimony of others, or on the depositions of the senses. 'Proprie quippe cum loquimur, id solum scire dicimur, quod mentis firma ratione comprehendimus. Cum vero loquimur verbis consuetudini aptioribus, . . . non dubitamus dicere scire nos et quod percipimus nostri corporis sensibus, et quod fide dignis credimus testibus, DUM TAMEN INTER HÆC ET ILLUD QUID DISTET INTELIGAMUS' (*Retract.* l. I, c. xiv.).

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE ORDER IN WHICH THE INTRINSIC AND THE EXTRINSIC PRINCIPLES OF CERTAINTY STAND TO EACH OTHER.

1054. When I have an *indubitable sign* of the truth of a proposition, for example, when I know that an infallible authority affirms it, I can no longer doubt its certainty.

But in order that that sign may render me this service, it must itself be *indubitably certain*. Here, then, we have one *certainty* producing another. It is only because I have made myself sure beforehand that the *sign* or token on which I depend cannot mislead me, that I obtain certainty in regard to the said proposition. Therefore the certainty produced by the extrinsic principle of truth is not the first in the order of certainty, but supposes a certainty anterior to it.

Whence, then, is the certainty of that *sign* derived? If from *another sign*, also *indubitable*, I ask again: whence this second certainty? It is manifest that the series of these *signs*, each dependent for its certainty on the one before it, cannot be infinite; for a number of links of a chain actually infinite is an absurdity. But supposing for argument's sake that the series of signs were infinite, it would then be impossible to come up to the beginning of it, namely, to that first sign on which depends the certainty of all the others, which would therefore be, one and all, of no value to us. We must, then, of necessity end in a sign, the truth of which is known through its own self, and not through another sign. From this I conclude that the *extrinsic principle* of certainty is not the highest; but is lower than and subordinate to the *intrinsic*; and thus the ultimate principle of all certainty reduces itself to one

only, *i.e.*, to *truth* seen by the mind with an immediate intuition, self-evident, without any intermediate signs or proofs whatever.¹

¹ Be it observed, that the motive or reason which wins my assent must in all cases be *truth*; because nothing could truly persuade me that a thing is *true*, but *truth*. Suppose I were to believe or assent to a proposition simply from a motive of interest: would this proposition be certain to me? Assuredly not; for I should know very well that my reason for assenting was *utility*, not *truth*. For example, an assassin, with his dagger pointed at my heart, forces me to swear to a doctrine. Does he persuade me? No; he only succeeds in making me perjure myself. My conscience tells me that he does not produce certainty in me, because the means he employs is not truth, but dread of

the poniard, which has no right or power over my intellectual assent. But let us suppose that, in consequence of being subjected to a long course of oppression, or slavery, or cruel hardships, and the like undue influences brought to bear on me, I were to assent to some doctrine and form some kind of persuasion: would this be certainty? Not yet, because its motives would be extraneous to truth. If, however, the persuasion which arose at first from these spurious motives, should in course of time be confirmed by true reasons supervening, it would then be certainty, but not till then. The truth seen by us is, therefore, the only motive that can produce certainty.

CHAPTER V.

OF THE MANNER IN WHICH WE SEE TRUTH.

1055. There are, then, two principles of certainty, the one *intrinsic*, and the other *extrinsic*.

The intrinsic principle consists in the *intuitive knowledge of truth*.

The extrinsic principle consists in the knowledge of an indubitable sign of truth.

The extrinsic principle is never the ultimate one: it is subordinate to and dependent on the *intrinsic*; for we cannot have an *indubitable sign* of the truth, unless we have a previous certainty, which in ultimate analysis can come only from the *intuitive knowledge of truth* (1054).

The supreme or ultimate principle of certainty is, therefore, one only—the *Intuitive vision of truth*.

1056. We must now inquire when it is that we can be said to have *intuitive vision* of the truth of a proposition.

We are said to know the truth of a proposition, when we know the *reason* of it.

Now the reason of a proposition may be expressed by another proposition: for example, the reason of this proposition, 'Man is a nobler being than the brute,' may be expressed by this other, 'Because the intelligence with which man is endowed is nobler than mere sense.'

But if a proposition contains the reason of another, there will perhaps be a third proposition which in its turn contains the reason of the second. Thus the proposition 'The intelligence is a faculty nobler than mere sense,' has its reason in this other proposition: 'Because the intelligence has for its object, being *taken universally*, whereas sense is restricted to the body.'

If we also want to know the reason of this third proposition in order that we may be able to say that we know the truth of it, we shall have a fourth proposition expressing that truth.

But in seeking by a similar process the reason of the fourth proposition, and then of a fifth, and so on, we must needs come at last to a proposition beyond which it will be impossible to go, because it will contain and express the ultimate reason, which (from the moment it is properly understood) must satisfy us so completely, that we can feel no desire for further reasons. In this last reason of all is implicitly contained the truth of the whole series, and therefore also of the proposition with which we started in our inquiry.

1057. Now let us consider this matter attentively. The question was, 'When do we apprehend intuitively the truth of a proposition?' and by observing the fact we found that the human understanding is not finally satisfied, and does not believe that it sees the *truth* of a proposition, until it sees the *ultimate reason* of it. The *truth*, therefore, of any proposition short of the final one, does not lie in the proposition itself, but in its *ultimate* and *supreme reason*. Therefore this last reason is that which in the common signification of the word is called *the truth* of the proposition, and to see the truth, is nothing but to see this reason.

1058. Therefore the criterion of certainty, expressed in the phrase 'Intuitive knowledge of truth,' may also be rendered thus: 'The knowledge of the ultimate reason of a given proposition.'¹

¹ I say of a *proposition*, and not of the *thing* to which the proposition refers. The *reason* of the proposition is *logical*; the reason of the thing to which the proposition refers, is *metaphysical*, or final, etc. Take as an example this proposition, 'The human race exists.' The human race is what the proposition speaks of. Now, in

order that I may be certain of this proposition, I do not require to know the ultimate reason of the human race itself; but only that ultimate reason which proves to me the fact of its existence, for the proposition turns on that existence, and not on the origin, or on the *raison d'être* of the human race.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRINCIPLE OF KNOWLEDGE MUST ALSO BE THE PRINCIPLE OF CERTAINTY.

1059. When I wish to know whether a proposition be true or false, I seek for the reason of it (1055-1058).

This reason may be expressed in another proposition, of which I can also seek the reason; and my understanding is not set fully¹ at rest until, passing from proposition to proposition, from reason to reason, I arrive at the last reason of all, which is self-evident (*ibid.*). I then say that I have apprehended intuitively the truth of the original proposition because I have the *supreme principle of its certainty*.

Now let the reader attend to the following fact.² So long as I am seeking to ascertain whether a proposition be true or false, my *knowledge* is distinguished from *certainty*, for I know what the proposition means, but I do not know as yet that it is true. The knowledge, therefore, which I have of it is not the same thing as the truth or *certainty* I am in search of. This distinction between the *knowledge* and the *certainty* of a proposition continues through the whole series of propositions or reasons, until I arrive at the last of all. But when

¹ As a matter of fact, men in their inquiries are not always satisfied on reasonable grounds; but acquiesce sometimes (as we see in the uneducated) on frivolous reasons; and these not unfrequently strike them more than such as are solid and true. It may be asked, therefore, 'According to what law do men practically become satisfied, when seeking for the reasons of things?' and we may lay it down that the law is, 'In a series of subordinate propositions, each individual feels satisfied when

he has arrived at that proposition about which he has no longer any doubt,' from whatever cause his not doubting may proceed.

² I beg the reader to take note that I have not as yet begun to argue with the Sceptics. So far I only state *facts* and analyse them. I describe what takes place in men, or what they believe takes place in themselves. In a word, I now address myself to mankind generally; I shall deal with the Sceptics in due course.

this *ultimate reason* is reached, *knowledge* and *certainty* are necessarily identical; there is no longer any real difference between them.

In truth, I have given the name of *ultimate reason* to that proposition, which, as soon as understood, justly wins our assent by its own intrinsic authority and force of evidence; so that, if we speak seriously, and do not wish to mystify that which is clear, we have neither the power nor the inclination to seek for any other reason, since that reason stands before us as self-evident and fully satisfying to our nature as intelligent beings. It is, in fact, exactly what has been described above as the *immediate intuition of the truth* of the thing (1055-1058). At this last point of our investigations, therefore, *knowledge* and *certainty* are, to us, one and the same thing.

1060. But it must be observed also that, if I stop at that ultimate reason, this is not simply because I feel satisfied with it. I might declare myself *satisfied* even with a reason which is not the last, and rest in that. In the ultimate reason I rest not only voluntarily, but also necessarily; for by saying *ultimate* I express a reason beyond which there is no other that I can seek, or know and give my assent to, unless I wish to deceive myself. As, therefore, the *ultimate reason* of a proposition is that wherein my assent and my persuasion terminates, so is it that wherein terminates my knowledge. Clearly, then, the principle of *certainty* and the principle of knowledge are one and the same; and this is what I had undertaken to demonstrate.¹

¹ When this point is reached, where *knowledge*, *truth*, and *certainty* become identified, we see clearly the absurdity of supposing that knowledge is derived from the senses, since *certainty* cannot originate from them. The Peripatetics were aware that the judgments on the truth of things could not appertain to the senses. Now this alone, had they attentively considered it, should have sufficed to convince them that neither could knowledge originate from the senses as from its formal cause, since knowledge ultimately identifies itself with certainty. Let us hear the ac-

count given by Cicero of the opinion of the Peripatetics and the Academicians: 'Tertia philosophiæ pars, quæ erat in ratione et disserendo, sic tractabatur ab utrisque. Quamquam oriretur a sensibus, tamen non esse JUDICIUM VERITATIS in sensibus. Mentem volebant rerum esse judicem: solam censebant idoneam cui crederetur, quia sola cernebat id quod semper esset simplex et unius modi, et tale quale esset. Hanc illi IDEAM appellabant; jam a Platone ita appellatam; nos recte speciem possumus dicere' (*Acad. i.*) 'The third part of philosophy consisted in reason-

ing and discussion, and was propounded by both these schools as follows: Although the JUDGMENT ON THE TRUTH OF THINGS originated from the senses, nevertheless it was not in the senses. They maintained that the judge of things is the mind; that the mind alone is entitled to belief, because it alone can see that which is unchangeably simple, and existing in the same mode, and truly such as it appears to be. To this they gave the name of IDEA, as Plato had already done. We Latins may appropriately term it *species*. These philosophers, therefore, placed

the principle of certainty in *ideas*. But if they had noticed that ideas are evolved from one another, they would have discovered the *primal idea*, the source of all the rest, and hence they would have seen the oneness of the source of *knowledge* and of *certainty*. Whatever may have been their opinion, certain is it that anyone who has come to understand that the judgment by which we acquire certainty comes only from the mind, can also discover (if he will be consistent with himself) that *knowledge* must have the same origin.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PRINCIPLE OF CERTAINTY IS ONE AND THE SAME
FOR ALL POSSIBLE PROPOSITIONS.

1061. I have not as yet set myself to demonstrate against the Sceptics that there exists for man a valid principle of certainty. The object of the present chapter is merely to explain what this principle ought to be, in order that one may be authorised to call it such, supposing that it really exists.

Continuing my argument, then, I say that, if the principle of certainty exists, it can be but *one* for all possible propositions alike. This is a consequence of what I have set forth up to the present.

In fact, I have shown that, in order to see the truth of any proposition, we must go on investigating until we arrive at its *ultimate reason*.¹ There remained, therefore, to ascertain whether that which is the *ultimate reason* of one proposition must also be such for all propositions generally.

But by inquiring into the nature of this ultimate reason, I found that it was the principle, not only of certainty, but also of *knowledge* (1059, 1060).

Now we have seen, throughout this work, that the principle of all human knowledge is one only—namely, *being*

¹ S. Augustine observes that the term *reasons* may justly be applied to *ideas*. In fact, a *reason* can never be anything else than *an idea*. Here are his words: 'Ideas Latine possumus vel FORMAS vel SPECIES dicere, ut verbum e verbo transferri videamur. Si autem RATIONES eas vocemus, ab interpretandi quidem proprietate discedimus: rationes enim Græce λόγος appellantur, non ideæ; sed tamen quisquis hoc vocabulo uti voluerit, a re ipsa non errabit' (Lib.

lxxxiii. Quæst. q. xlvi.) 'In the Latin tongue the exact equivalent for the word *ideas* would be either *forms* or *species*. The word *reasons* would not be quite so proper, for what we call *reasons* the Greeks designate by the term λόγος (*words*). Nevertheless, if anyone were to adopt this latter mode of rendering, he would, although departing from the letter, maintain substantially the sense.'

*taken universally.*¹ We must therefore admit that the principle of certainty also, if it exists, must be one and the same for all possible propositions; and that it is no other than this same marvellous idea of *being*, which nature has implanted in us to render us intelligent, or what comes to the same—to make us capable of perceiving the truth.²

¹ The ancients were aware that the principle of certainty must be something *most universal*, as may be seen in Sextus Empiricus (*Hypotypos.* L. II. c. ix.).

² In this sense the saying of De la Mennais is true: 'La certitude est la base essentielle de la raison' (*Essai sur l'Indifférence*, vol. ii.).

CHAPTER VIII.

OF A MOST SIMPLE WAY OF REFUTING THE SCEPTICS.

1062. The one only form of human reason is *being taken universally* (385-1039), the principle as well of knowledge as of certainty.¹

Now, this *being thus taken universally*, if considered as the *principle of knowledge*, is called IDEA, the primal idea, the parent idea; and if considered as the *principle of certainty*, it is commonly called the *ultimate reason*, or the TRUTH of our intellections (1048, 1049).

This is sufficient to justify the statement I made in the *Saggio sui confini della ragione*, namely, that 'The only form of human reason is TRUTH.' (See *Teodicea*, n. 131).

1063. Here I may observe, how by simply adhering to this propriety of language, we can supply a very easy refutation of the Sceptics, and show that the common sense of mankind in this matter is *per se* above all their attacks, and that the line of argument by which they fancy to convict it of error does not in reality so much as touch it.

Let us suppose a discussion as taking place between the Sceptics on the one hand, and on the other the bulk of mankind at large, and see how the former do battle against their own chimeras rather than against their opponents. We will designate mankind by the letter *M*, and the Sceptics by the letter *S*.

M. We say that it is possible in some propositions to know for certain the true and the false.

¹ This is also admitted by the common sense of mankind. Sceptics oppose this common sense; the defence

of it will be found in the following chapters.

S. This is mere presumption. The truth cannot be known by any man.

M. And yet we are regularly in the habit of reasoning; we have ideas; with these ideas we form judgments; we connect these judgments together, and so produce perfectly consecutive arguments. By means of these various intellectual operations, we come to know whether a proposition be reasonable or not, true or false.

S. You indeed believe that you do all this; and when you have gone on manipulating ideas, forming judgments, hunting for reason after reason, and syllogising to your heart's content, you place implicit confidence in the result. But we Sceptics know better; we are not content to take things so superficially as is the custom with the generality of you; we scan things closely, and we thus find that all this cudgelling of your brains is to no purpose, because those ideas which you look upon as reasons are nothing but phantoms, and you never get at the truth.

M. Used as we are to the plain and simple road of common sense, we own that we cannot follow you in these your subtleties. Nevertheless, might it not be that the difference between you and us lies precisely in this, that, not seeing so far as you do, we cannot push our desires so far, and must therefore rest content with what you deem unworthy your acceptance?

S. Just so.

M. In other words, we rest satisfied with *truth*, while you wish for something beyond *truth*.

S. You are wrong here. We Sceptics maintain, on the contrary, that you do not and never can lay hold of the *truth*.

M. But have you not admitted just now that we, as a matter of fact, perform those intellectual operations which come under the name of reasonings?

S. Yes, but we have also said that they are of no value.

M. Whatever may be their value, we do perform them, and by means of them come to see an *ultimate reason* of the propositions of which we seek the truth or falsehood.

S. This *ultimate reason*, into which all your deductions

finally resolve themselves, is precisely the thing which is of no authority, because wholly unsupported by proof. Therefore your belief in it is gratuitous; and hence all conclusions based on such belief must be worthless.

M. We shall not pretend to discuss whether the thing be as you say or not, because, as we have stated before, your speculations are much beyond our ken. Permit us, however, to ask whether you know how that ultimate reason on which all reasonings without exception are based, is, in the proper sense of the word, termed?

S. What has the meaning of words to do with the present question? Our argument is about things, not names.

M. But it is impossible to know what the things are about which two sides argue, if the parties be not agreed upon the meaning of the words they use.

S. Well, then, how is this ultimate reason of yours termed?

M. TRUTH.

S. You are jesting!

M. Indeed we are not. *Truth* is its name,¹ its own proper name, and this is why we have said that the difference between you, with your high philosophy soaring above us the common crowd, and ourselves, consists in this only, that we rest quite satisfied with *truth*, whereas you do not think it good enough for you; and so, when you have come to it, you throw it aside to go in search of something better and higher.

S. Surely this is mere trifling with a serious question, and it is an abuse of words.

M. It cannot be considered trifling to point out the difference between your way of thinking and ours. Being

¹ I have shown that being in general constitutes what is commonly called the *light of reason*, and by the Schools the light of the *intellectus agens*, and that it is the ultimate reason by which all other things are known. Now *S.* Augustine calls this light, this reason, exactly by the name of *truth*. 'Lux increata est ratio cognoscendi, et lux sola increata est VERITAS' (*De V. Relig.*

c. xxxiv. and xxxvi.). He calls the principle of knowledge (*ratio cognoscendi*) *uncreated*, because, whatever there is in it of positive is uncreated and divine; but the limits under which it manifests itself to human minds are *concreated* with man, and therefore it may equally be called a *created light*, as *S. Thomas* calls it, who does not on this account disagree with *S. Augustine*.

unable to follow your subtle and arduous investigations, we limit ourselves to the simple statement of a fact. We do not pretend to decide who is right or who is wrong. We only put down clearly our opinion, that when you impugn it there may at least be no mistake as to what you are impugning. But as regards your charging us with an abuse of words, you must allow us to say that we think the imputation somewhat strange.

S. Is it not a manifest abuse of words to give the name of *truth* to that ultimate reason in which all human reasoning terminates, when the very point now at issue is, whether that ultimate reason be true or illusory? You are simply begging the question.

M. We beg to repeat that we do not wish to discuss any question. But with respect to the abuse of words, have you, perchance, forgotten to whom you are speaking?

S. To a multitude for the most part illiterate.

M. That is to say, to the society of mankind, which, whether learned or illiterate, is the only authority on earth that imposes names on things and fixes their value. Remember that you were not born philosophers, but human beings, and were educated in the bosom of society, and learnt from it the speech you now employ for arguing against it. This speech was formed and fully accepted before you and your philosophy were ever heard of; nor have you or we any other to express our thoughts in. Consequently you have no right to give to the word *truth* a meaning different from that which we and our common forefathers have always attached to it. Much less is it allowable to charge the whole of human society with transgressing against the right use of words, when it is this society, and this alone, which, in the matter of language, makes and sanctions the law whereby all men, learned or illiterate, must abide if they wish to understand one another. Pardon us, rather, if we find you, sceptical philosophers, guilty of a wanton presumption in pretending to dictate to the human family as to the meaning of those very words which you have received from it. Indulge in subtleties as you please; but leave to this family that right

over language which no one can touch with impunity. Now the whole human race, from the beginning down to the present, has never meant by the expression 'to know the truth of a proposition' anything else than 'to know the ultimate reason' of it. No other value has ever been attached to the word *truth*. You cannot, therefore, deny *truth*. Your attacks avail nothing against it, since you admit the fact that men, by analysis, reduce all their reasonings to an ultimate element or *reason*.¹ To say that this *reason* is a mere illusion is indeed an abuse of language, because what is called *truth* is nothing but this very reason. Your attacks on truth are, therefore, futile; and the difference between your select selves and us—the bulk of the human family—consists, as we have said, simply in this: that we, when we have arrived at the

¹ The Sceptics do not deny appearances, and therefore do not deny *knowledge*, but only say that it is devoid of certainty. They assail the truth of knowledge by attacking its basis or ultimate principle. The following passage of Sextus Empiricus against 'the Dogmatists' is well worth attention: 'The *something* which the Dogmatists hold to be the most universal of all conceptions (*καὶ μὴν τὸ τί, ὅπερ φασὶν εἶναι πάντων γενικώτατον*) is either true or false. . . . If they say it is false, they must confess that all other things are false. For in the same way that, given this general proposition, "that which is animal has an animal soul," we must also admit this other proposition, "This particular thing is an animal, therefore it has an animal soul." So in like manner, if the most universal of all our conceptions (the *something*) is false, all the particular conceptions must be false, and there will be nothing true' (*Hypotyp. L. II. c. ix.*). Now the main point with the Sceptics is that the *something*—the most universal of conceptions, and on which all the other conceptions depend—cannot be demonstrated to be true; whence they conclude that all particular cognitions are likewise devoid of certainty. Now from the above passage many important things are seen—namely (1) that the ancient *Dogmatists* had noticed that all human cognitions are reducible to a single principle, or a most universal

conception; and that the Sceptics did not deny this, but, while admitting it, took exception to the *certainty* of the *most universal conception* itself; (2) that this most universal conception was the notion of the SOMETHING, namely, of the *ens communissimum*; (3) that on this one conception they (the Dogmatists) made as well cognition as its certainty dependent; (4) that the sophism of the Sceptics of every age consists in requiring a demonstration of the ultimate principle—that is, a *reason* of the ultimate *reason*—which is a contradiction in terms. The easy plan, therefore, which I have proposed in this place for refuting the Sceptics, does not consist in humouring them in their intellectual intemperance by seeking to demonstrate what is essentially incapable of demonstration, and essentially self-evident, and from the evidence of which all the demonstrations of subordinate truths are drawn; but it consists in showing them that they build their system on a false supposition, *i.e.* the supposition that truth is something beyond the ultimate reason or most universal of conceptions; whereas all men, when they say they know the truth of a proposition, mean nothing else than that they see the connection of that proposition with the *ultimate reason*, or with that which is the most universal of all conceptions, and most evident through its own self.

truth, acknowledge the fact, and feel perfectly satisfied with it; whilst you, under the same circumstances, fail to appreciate the discovery you have made, and seek for something better, to which, in defiance of all linguistic propriety, you pretend to give the name of truth.¹

1064. Whoever has caught the drift of this dialogue will see that the cause of the common sense of mankind in reference to the existence of truth is not only vindicated, but placed beyond the reach of controversy.

Likewise he will understand whence the dismal error of the Sceptics arises.

It is due, in ultimate analysis, to an abuse of abstraction.

Whenever, in reasoning about a given object, one forgets to consider it in itself, and bases his deductions upon a purely abstract notion of it, error most easily creeps in. For that abstract notion does not represent the object perfectly—that is, it does not contain all that the object contains, since it is wanting in what is proper to that object, and distinguishes it from every other. Now the absence of this important element must render the reasoning defective and give erroneous results.

And this is what the Sceptics do when reasoning about *truth*. They view it in the abstract as a quality attributed to the various propositions about which one seeks to know whether they be true or false. According to this general and abstract notion, the *proposition* is distinct from its *truth*; and thus it seems that the first can always be admitted without the second. As a consequence, the Sceptics think themselves authorised to say that no proposition is true, and that the

¹ From this example we may see how necessary it is to study the propriety of words before one undertakes to impugn the universally received opinions which are expressed in no other way than by words. By reflecting on the importance of this principle, one comes to understand how intimate is the union between ideas and words, and how it is in language alone that the traditional opinions of mankind are enshrined. Hence the ancients considered etymology—or, to speak more

accurately, the study of the meanings of words—a most necessary part of logic. Cicero expresses the doctrine of the Academicians and Peripatetics on this point thus: 'Verborum etiam explicatio probabatur qua de causa quæque essent ita nominata, quam Etymologiam appellabant' (*Acad. L. i.*) 'They also laid great stress on the interpretation of words—that is, on investigating why each thing was designated by such or such a name; and this they called Etymology.'

union of these two elements—the proposition and its truth—can never be effected.

But would they have done so if, instead of viewing the truth in this abstract manner, they had considered it in itself, and formed the correct notion of it? Certainly not; for they would then have seen that the truth, which in all *deduced* propositions is distinct from them, so that the *proposition* and the *truth of the same* are two things, is itself a *first proposition*. They would therefore have come to see that there is an ultimate proposition, expressive of truth itself—in other words, a *reason* which is commonly known as *Truth*. Having reached thus far, they would have understood that it is an absurdity, a contradiction in terms, to deny the truth of the last of all propositions, because it is to deny that *truth* is *truth*. Thus the error of the Sceptics resolves itself into a mere abuse of words, a neglect to grasp their exact value.

Hence the sceptical question becomes entirely changed, and the real point at issue is, not ‘whether man can know the truth,’ but ‘whether man ought to assent to the truth and be content with it, or not’; in other words, is that to which the human race has given the name of *truth*, a thing so authoritative, so absolute, that nothing can be looked for more excellent and satisfying, or is it a mere hallucination, a will-o'-the-wisp?

This new state of the question which renders its solution so obviously manifest that it would be vain for Sceptics to gainsay it, is the only one that can be admitted. This will be seen more clearly from what I shall say in the following chapters.

PART II.

APPLICATION OF THE CRITERION TO DEMONSTRATE
THE TRUTH OF PURE KNOWLEDGE.

CHAPTER I.

THE INTUITION OF BEING (THE SOURCE OF ALL CERTAINTY)
CARRIES THE PROOF OF ITS TRUTH WITH ITS OWN SELF.

ARTICLE I.

Sceptical objections against the intuition of being.

1065. The Sceptics do not, at least commonly speaking,¹ deny appearances: they do not say that we have not sensations; but they say that our intellectual perception deceives us, and therefore cannot be trusted as a sure voucher of the truth.

Our primal and innate *intellection*, on which all others depend (1044-1064), is that of *being*, and the doubts which can be raised by Sceptics against its truth and validity may be reduced to the following three:—

1. How do we know that the intellection of *being* (the form of all other intellections) is not a mere illusion? that its truth is not purely apparent or subjective?

2. How is it possible for man to perceive what is outside of himself? How can he go outside himself? In what does the bridge of communication between himself and things outside of or different from him consist?

3. Even supposing that what our mind sees were not in itself an illusion, but something objectively true, would it not be

¹ Pyrrho himself, according to Sextus Empiricus (*Hypotypos.* L. I. c. viii.) admitted sensible *appearances*, and

only denied the possibility of proving their reality.

altered and falsified by our mode of seeing it? Does it not seem natural that the mind in seeing things should clothe them with its own forms, just as a mirror reflects the objects, not exactly as they are in themselves, but in accordance with the configuration of its own surface, for example, contracted or enlarged according as its surface happens to be concave or convex?

To these three sceptical objections I must now reply. But first it will be useful to examine how and by what steps some minds can be so far led astray as to fall at last into such extremes of doubt.

ARTICLE II.

Whence do these sceptical objections originate?

1066. Our attention, from our first entrance into this world, is continually occupied with sensible perceptions. And if, when adults, we give ourselves to scientific pursuits, an endless number of reasonings, one more subtle, arduous, abstract and elaborate than the other, engages and, I may say, exhausts our whole thinking energy. Now this immense mass of perceptions and of reasonings, while on the one hand sufficient of itself—indeed more than sufficient—to absorb any amount of intellectual application, has also on the other great attractions for us, for this reason, that we find in it, or hope to find, a variety of excellent means for supplying our wants, satisfying our tastes, and carrying noble projects into effect. Must it not, then, be extremely difficult as well as repugnant to our inclinations to withdraw our mind entirely from a spectacle so imposing and so fondly cherished, in order to reduce ourselves to a condition of intellectual solitude where nothing is left for us to contemplate save the bare *possibility* of gaining knowledge? Yet this is what we must do if we wish to fix our attention on the idea of *being in general* pure and alone. By force of abstraction we must remove from our thought every one of our acquired cognitions, retaining only the ability to direct our attention at will; for when we are reduced to that solitary idea, the *possibility* of

knowledge is all that remains to us. Now this species of abstinence, so to speak, however short its duration, is painful to us ; and it seems as if in it we were thinking of nothing whatever, and were wasting our time in a barren contemplation, of which we see neither the necessity nor the advantage. Hence it is that, as a rule, no one cares to employ himself in this abstract kind of meditation, unless compelled to it by the urgent need of securing a firm foundation for all human cognitions, in danger of perishing under the attacks of scepticism.

1067. Yet the inquiry into the truthfulness of human knowledge is most important for all, and everybody, in one way or another, refers to it in his speech. But the very arguments by which it is attempted to throw doubt on all that the generality of men regard as most certain, from what species of knowledge are they drawn? from acquired and deduced knowledge. For, as I have just said, what most powerfully and continually engrosses the attention of the human mind are the various sciences, so wide in their scope and so dazzling by the prospects they open before us. The man of science finds that a certain observation has miscarried, or that a certain reasoning has proved fallacious. He sees that to a certain reason which was at first thought quite sound, another reason of equal or greater weight has been unexpectedly opposed, and that what had heretofore passed for an undoubted truth was subsequently discarded as an error. So again, he notices how the cunning subtleties of disputation have grown to such a degree as to produce at last a school of sophists openly professing, and undertaking to teach in all due form, the art of taking up *ad libitum* the *pro* or the *con* in every kind of question, of confuting a reasoning, of drawing it out in such a way that no settled conclusion is ever arrived at—in fact, of rendering all agreement impossible, as must clearly be the case when one of the contending parties, no matter whether he be in the right or in the wrong, has made up his mind not to come to terms with the other.

This experience of the fallaciousness of human reason, this flexibility and these continual changes of front in contro-

versies, this possibility of mystifying even the simplest things, this insensate ambition to show how much one can do in making the worse appear the better side, often lead superficial or evil-disposed reasoners into absolute *scepticism*.

But once more (and the question is most important), what portion of human knowledge have sophists made the subject of all these experiments? Simply that portion which is the most attractive and most occupies and delights the minds of the learned; never knowledge taken in its entirety.

On the other hand, have they limited their conclusion by this premiss? No; they have extended it to human knowledge generally, pronouncing it all illegitimate and false, or at least doubtful.

1068. Thus they mistook the part for the whole. They forgot to consider that, over and above the large and showy portion of knowledge contemplated by them—I mean the *deduced* one—there is another portion, the truth of which no man had ever yet attempted to impugn. This was indeed an exceedingly slender portion, like a diminutive little seed uncared for and left as it were in a corner of the mind—nay, treated as one of those low menials whom nobody considers worthy of notice or regard. But the omission, insignificant, almost infinitesimal, as it seemed, had the effect of radically vitiating the argument. Little did our thinkers imagine that this modest particle of knowledge which in men's minds lay confused with the rest, and was not vouchsafed even a passing glance, must be exempted from the operation of their sinister verdict, and that it was, in fact, the only power capable afterwards of redeeming from proscription that other portion of knowledge which man is so proud of, and imagines to be all he knows.

Nevertheless, here also 'the least becomes the greatest.' The basis of all certainty lies in this smallest portion of our knowledge, so extremely difficult of observation, and yet withal so solid and firm that it becomes the *fulcrum* of our reasoning power, by which we work out argumentations irrefragably conclusive. And this is no other than that most

simple *idea of being* whence, as we have seen, all determinate ideas flow, and by virtue of which they are *ideas*.

This original element of our knowledge (which we all have in us, although commonly speaking we do not advert to it) cannot therefore be affected by a general argument directed against the validity of all knowledge; and if we really mean to combat this element, we must do it in a *direct* way: and then it is that we find it impregnable.

On this account I would ask the reader not to rest satisfied with general reasonings like those of the Sceptics, but to take the several parts of knowledge separately and see how far such reasonings are applicable to each. By so doing, I am confident he will find that, even if the reasonings in question could overthrow every other item of knowledge, they are utterly powerless, and even without meaning, when arrayed against the *idea of being*.

But to be convinced of this we must, as I have said, bring the whole of our attention to bear on that idea, so as fully to understand its genuine nature; for whoever understands it will not fail to perceive how utterly inapplicable to it are the abstract reasonings of the Sceptics.

In order to make this thing clear, let us set forth the distinctive character of that idea, replying at the same time to the sceptical objections set down above.

ARTICLE III.

First sceptical objection: ' Might not the thought of being in general be an illusion? '

§ I.

Answer to the Objection.

1069. I have already said (1066-1068) that this doubt could not arise if one only understood what is meant by the intuition of being in general, or taken universally, and considered it as it is in its own self, apart from other intellections.

In fact, what does an illusion mean? It can only mean

to think that a thing is what it is not. If, for instance, being in a wood at night, under the feeble rays of a new moon, I think I see a man, when it is only a shadow, or the trunk of a tree, or a rock, I am the victim of an illusion. From this we see that, to constitute an illusion, two things are necessary, (1) two separate elements, namely, an *appearance* and a *reality*, (2) a *judgment* which changes the appearance into the reality.

If, then, I had an appearance before me, or if I were to experience a certain sensation or a certain visual impression, and did not proceed beyond it, nor form any judgment as to a reality responding thereto, deception would be impossible.

1070. Now these conditions are wanting in the idea of being in general. This idea is perfectly *simple* (542-546). It is purely an intuition, unaccompanied by any judgment. In it, therefore, there can be no deception.

In fact, when I say '*being in general*,' what do I express? Do I affirm anything? Do I deny anything? No, neither the one nor the other (*ibid.*).

To think being in general is not even to think that a something subsists. In thinking this I might be deceived, for possibly that thing might not subsist.

Nor again, by thinking being in general, do I think this or that determinate kind of thing, but only the possibility of any kind of thing whatever (408, 409). And what is *possibility*? Nothing but *thinkableness* (542-546); that is, the object of that thought is an entity *sui generis* which serves as a light to the mind, an entity wherein there is no contradiction or intrinsic repugnance. That in which there is contradiction or intrinsic repugnance, cannot be received by our mind, except in its single elements taken separately from one another. The union, therefore, of these contradictory elements is not thinkable; it is simply nothing, for the one element destroys the other and so nothing remains. Now in a thing that is wholly without determinations, there can be no contradiction; it is therefore conceivable, thinkable, or which comes to the same thing, *possible*.

Consequently, in the simple intuition of being, there can be neither deception nor illusion.

§ 2.

Sceptical Rejoinder.

1071. That we have a conception of being, or in other words, that being is thinkable, is, then, *a fact*.¹

If the Sceptic contents himself with objecting that this conception is an illusion, his objection has no sense, as I have just shown; for it attributes illusion to what by the nature of the case is incapable of illusion.

The only alternative left to him therefore is, to try if he can deny the fact itself, to say that *being* is unthinkable.

¹ The ancients were aware, that all philosophy started from a *fact*, and that this fact was no other than the intuition of being taken universally, or in other words, the actual existence of an intellect. They were also aware, that a fact cannot become known except by the aid of experience: but at the same time they understood, that the *fundamental fact* of philosophy could be attested by our consciousness alone, inasmuch as it belongs, not to external, but to *internal* experience—a species of experience which modern Sensists have entirely neglected, and, as I have so often had occasion to remark, systematically abandoned. In proof of this, I will quote a passage from a celebrated writer of the thirteenth century, the acute philosopher and theologian, Duns Scotus. In his commentary on the fourth book of the *Sentences (Distinct. 43, q. 2)*, we read as follows:

‘We EXPERIENCE in ourselves that we have an actual knowledge of the UNIVERSAL’ (*see how this writer sets out from the experience of the universal*): ‘for we EXPERIENCE that we know BEING; that is to say, a quality of incomparably wider extension than what is presented to us by even the highest among our sensitive powers. We EXPERIENCE furthermore, etc. . . . Now to none of the sensitive powers can the knowledge of any of these things be attributed’ (*see here the intellectual cognition described as essentially different from the sensitive*). ‘But if anyone

were persistently to deny the existence of these acts in man, it would be useless to argue with him any further’ (*see how those who deny the primal intellectual fact, take away the possibility of all reasoning*). ‘Thus if a man declares that he does not see colours, we tell him that he is incompetent to hold a discussion on colours, because he is colour-blind. In the same manner, since by a certain kind of sense, namely, by an interior perception’ (*see here the internal experience of our consciousness*), ‘we experience these acts in us, if our interlocutor denies them, we must say that he is not a man, because he has not that interior vision which other men experience in themselves.’

‘EXPERIMUR in nobis quod cognoscimus actu UNIVERSALE: EXPERIMUR enim quod cognoscimus ENS, vel qualitatem, sub ratione aliqua communiori, quam sit ratio primi objecti sensibilis, etiam respectu supremæ sensitivæ. EXPERIMUR etiam, etc. Quodlibet autem istorum cognoscere est impossibile alicui sensitivæ potentivæ tribuere. Si quis autem proterve neget illos actus inesse homini, non est cum eo ulterius disputandum; sicut nec cum dicente, non video colorem; sed illi dicendum; tu indiges sensu, quia cæcus es. Ita, quia quodam sensu, id est perceptione interiori, experimur istos actus in nobis, si istos neget, dicendum est eum non esse hominem, quia non habet illam visionem interiorem, quam alii experiuntur se habere.’

My answer to this would be: Therefore you deny the existence of all human thought; for we cannot think without thinking something, in other words, without having an object before our mind; and to say *something*, an *object*, is the same as to say *being*. If then *being* is unthinkable, human thought is impossible.

Accordingly, our Sceptic could not utter a single word, nor perform the least intellectual act; since by speaking or thinking he would belie himself. The question is no longer as to whether our thought be true or illusory, but whether we think or do not think. If we think (no matter whether right or wrong, true or false), we think *something*, therefore *being*. We are here exactly at the point where *knowledge* and *certainty* become identical (1059, 1060).

1072. The Sceptic, then, cannot assail truth on so high a ground as this without contradicting himself. Therefore the possibility of thinking lies beyond reach of attack. To attack it, we must commence by not thinking; and if we do not think, what do we attack? Nothing. We only abdicate our right to membership with the human family, and sink ourselves to the level of minerals, vegetables, or brutes.

1073. Now the phrase 'Possibility of thought' is perfectly equivalent to 'Thinkableness of being;' because, as we have said, thought is nothing but an act of the mind having *being* for its object.

Being, therefore, considered under this aspect, namely, as the universal object of thought, stands safely entrenched in a position where nothing can touch it, for the simple reason that, to assail that position, thought must be employed. As, then, no one can at one and the same time *assail* and *not assail*, *think* and *not think*, so no one can deny the intuition of being in general.

The intuition of being is, therefore, admitted necessarily by all. Being, as thinkable, is a simple *fact*, not subject to our will. We contemplate it and admit it with our mind by the same necessity as that by which we exist. It does not require our assent or dissent: it is. We either do not think at all, or we think it. To think against *being* is an absurdity.

He who believes that he does so, does not understand the question at issue. He imagines himself as doing what he does not. Hence no man who knows what being taken universally is, can deny it; since he affirms it by his very denial. So also, no man can have doubts as to whether it might perchance be illusory. It could not be even illusory unless it were true. That cannot be pronounced illusory, which ends in itself and is absolutely simple.¹

§ 3.

Corollaries of the doctrine just expounded.

1074. Let us recapitulate in other words the doctrine just expounded, reducing it to certain simple principles which were established in an earlier part of this work (398-470). We have said that *being* is,

- (1) That element which enters into all our ideas;
- (2) That which remains in our ideas after we have performed on them all the abstractions possible; the last of which gives us precisely *being* pure and simple, so that if this also is taken away, no idea remains (410, 411).

Therefore we must either not think at all, or if we do think, we must think *being*. We cannot therefore deny the thinkableness of being, for in denying it we think it, and thus contradict our denial.

1075. The following propositions are corollaries of this doctrine:

I. If the idea of *being* is the constitutive element of every one of our ideas,² it must needs be, in all of them, the *im-*

¹ Hence the Pyrrhonists who, according to Sextus Empiricus, admitted appearances would have been in contradiction with themselves, if what is told us by Ænesidemus were true, namely, that they doubted everything, and even *being*. Nay, they held that 'there is neither truth nor falsehood, neither BEING nor NOT BEING, but that the identical thing is, so to speak, not more true than false, not more probable than improbable, not more *being* than *not being*, not more this thing than that thing, or this thing to one person, and another thing to another

person.' 'Immo neque falsum, neque ENS neque NON ENS, sed idem, ut sic dicatur, non potius verum esse quam falsum; aut probabile potius quam improbable; aut ens quam non ens; aut tum quidem tale, alias vero aliusmodi; aut uni tale, mox alteri etiam non tale.' This doctrine which Ænesidemus expounds in the first of his eight books on the system of Pyrrho is related by Photius, *Biblioth. c. 212*.

² I have demonstrated that the idea of being can exist in us even by itself alone.

mutable element ; whereas every other element may cease to be present to our mind.

1076. II. If in all our ideas¹ the conception of being is *immutable*, and the other elements are mutable, the differences of opinion which exist between men cannot fall on the idea of being, but only on the determinations which are attributed to being, or else on the subsistence of particular beings.

1077. III. For the same reason, when we speak of the uneducated as lacking exactness in their conceptions of things, or when we notice an inaccuracy or some other defect in the ideas of some person, our censure never does or can fall on the idea of *being*, which is invariable and essential, and one and the same in all who think ; but only on some other elements which enter into the ideas we happen to criticise.

ARTICLE IV.

Second sceptical objection : 'How is it possible for anyone to perceive what is different from himself?'

§ I.

Answer to the second objection.

1078. We have seen that the intuition of being in general, as also the conception of *a something* indeterminate,² is a FACT simple, undeniable, wherein the illusion or deception feared by Sceptics can have no place ; because here there is no question of a judgment, but only of an act of intuition in which we neither affirm nor deny, but merely see the possibility of affirming or denying (1069, 1070).

But when I think a something without determining anything about it, my thought may refer to two cases in which that something is possible ; namely, I may think it as existing in me, or as existing outside of me.

With regard to the second of these cases, the Sceptic says that I am mistaken, that it is impossible for me to know anything outside of me, because no man can go outside himself.

¹ Even in those of Sceptics.

² The phrase *A something indeterminate* is perfectly synonymous with

this other : *Some being not determined or specialised.*

1079. Well, perhaps it is so ; we will not discuss this point just now ; for the sake of argument I will for the moment grant that it is beyond my power to verify with certainty whether there really exists anything outside of me.

All I here wish to insist upon is, that I have the power to conceive and imagine a something outside of me. I shall not perhaps, as I have said, be able to ascertain if the thing be truly as I conceive or imagine it ; but the mere fact of my entertaining the question 'Whether there be such a thing as a being outside of me' proves to evidence that the notion of the possibility of a being as well outside as inside of me is in my mind. Let us recall the definition we have given of possibility. When I say 'A being can exist outside of me,' I simply express by it that I can conceive an object outside of and different from myself, even though I may not perhaps be able to ascertain whether it really exist outside of me.

When therefore the Sceptic denies the possibility of my being aware of the existence of a being outside of me, he, by his denial, shows at least this much : that the notion of a being outside or inside of, different from or identical with me, is in his mind no less than in my own.

Now the conception of being in general does not contain anything more than this notion.

So also when I think of an indeterminate being, I neither think nor affirm that something outside of me actually subsists. I only conceive the possibility of such being the case ; in short, I have purely and simply the notion of the *identical* and the *non-identical*, the *inside* and the *outside*, without as yet applying that notion by affirming or denying it of any one thing in particular.

The objection therefore of the Sceptic, 'How is it possible for you to know anything different from and outside yourself?' has no force whatever as against the idea of being ; nay, it establishes and supposes it, and thereby declares it to be a thing wholly beyond the range of controversy.

This confirms what I have stated above, namely, that in all disputations, not excluding those of Sceptics, it is never the idea of being which is assailed ; on the contrary, this

idea is tacitly admitted by all disputants as antecedent and superior to, and indeed proved by every one of their arguments, because it is nothing but the possibility of arguing; and the fact of arguing proves that possibility.

§ 2.

Continuation.—A further explanation is given of the notion of Object.

1080. The doctrine set forth in the preceding paragraph is summed up in the proposition I have elsewhere established, namely, 'That being in general is the *object* of the understanding' (539-557).

When I think an entity, that entity, in so far as I think it, is the *object* of my consideration.

Now, whatever that entity may be, to say that it is *object* is the same as to say that I consider it in its own self, wholly irrespective of me or anyone else.

This is nothing but the genuine statement of the manner in which our mental conceptions take place. For, to say that I conceive an entity is equivalent to saying that I conceive that entity in itself (in so far as it is,) and not in relation with any other entity.¹

Analyse the thought of anything you please, and you will find that the thing thought stands before you as independent of its relation with your own self, and that you do not consider that thing as existing in or forming part of yourself: in fact, by thinking a thing you do not think of yourself at all.

It is certain, then, that in our conceptions of things, we conceive them in so far as they exist in themselves.

We may possibly err when coming to apply those conceptions, but in the meantime we do really think the possibility of the things *in se* independently of ourselves.

Nor would there be any sense in replying that in these

¹ This fact must not be misunderstood; whatever *positive* elements we know in things, they are certainly due to an action which the things exercise on us; but the operation of the under-

standing is such that, from the *action* it conceives the *thing*, i.e. the *being* which does that action; and this is what I call *conceiving the thing in itself*, and not in relation to us.

conceptions we are deceived, namely, that although we think we know what it is for a thing to be different from or identical with ourselves, yet in reality we do not know it ; for, as I have already observed, if we did not know it, we could not speak or argue about it. There can be no room for deception here.

Whoever, then, calls this notion in question, does not understand what he is gainsaying. If he understood it, he would see that he is simply attempting the impossible.

The sceptical argument may perhaps have force as against the proposition, 'I know that a particular object subsists outside of me' ; but it cannot possibly affect this other proposition : 'I understand and conceive well enough what is meant by an object being different from and outside of myself.'

Now the conception of being does not contain the first of these two propositions, but it does in a certain way contain the second. For to conceive being is 'to conceive an indeterminate thing in itself,' and therefore not in me ; hence it is to have an implicit notion of what is different from me. At all events, it is to have an *object* of thought different by its nature from what is purely *subject*.

§ 3.

Important Corollaries.

1081. From the above doctrine we may draw the following corollaries :

I. The idea of being in general is that idea through which we conceive things in themselves.

To conceive a thing in itself, is to conceive it as independent of us, the thinking subject.

To conceive a thing as independent of us, is to conceive it as having a mode of existence different from our own (subjective).

The idea of being, therefore, is what constitutes in us the possibility of going, so to speak, out of ourselves, that is, of thinking things as different from us.

1082. II.—Therefore, to ask ‘How it is possible for us to go out of ourselves,’ or ‘What is the bridge of communication between us and the things external to us,’ is absurd.

Undoubtedly this question, when worded in such metaphorical language as *going out of ourselves*, and *bridge of communication*, does not present any clear meaning, and is impossible of solution; since it demands a material and mechanical solution of a fact which is purely spiritual.

No one can go out of himself: between us and that which is not in us it will never be possible to show that a *bridge* exists.

All metaphor must therefore be dropped, and the question be put in proper terms, thus:

‘We conceive things as existing in themselves;’ such is the fact: whether we are deceived herein or not, things stand before our mind as objects and not as subjects. How, then, can this be explained?

My reply is: ‘by means of the innate idea of being in general, which is the informing principle of our intelligence.’

To have this idea is the same as to have the power of seeing things in themselves.

The so-called *bridge of communication*, then, exists in us by nature, because by nature we perceive *being* in itself, and being is the common and most essential quality of all things, that which makes them to be what they are, independent of and separated from us, the thinking subject.¹

To recapitulate: Our intelligent spirit has, from the beginning of its existence, the power to conceive things as existing in themselves, and not in us; it has the notion of this

¹ I have said elsewhere that the phrase *outside of ourselves* expresses a relation of external things with our body (834, etc.), and that it is equivalent to saying *different from our body*. The question, ‘How can we be certain of the existence of what is outside of us,’ originated in the Sensistic philosophy. It was very soon transferred to spiritual things, and in consequence of the fashion introduced by that philosophy of applying metaphorical expressions taken from sensible things to things spiritual, it be-

came customary to say that *our thought went outside of us*, and so forth. Then came the transcendental philosophy, and Kant no longer asked: ‘How can we be certain of what is *outside of us*,’ (*i.e.* of external bodies), but generalising the question and transferring it to the spirit, he asked: ‘How can we be certain of the objects of our spirit, or, in other words, of what is *different* from ourselves?’ From this last question originated the *critical scepticism* which I am here refuting.

diversity, externality, or to speak more accurately, *objectivity* of things. It now remains to be seen how this spirit can pass from conceiving a thing *in se* simply as *possible*, to a thing really *subsistent in se*, and not in *it* (the spirit). Here deception may perhaps take place. This will be another question, and the way to solve it will be by examining whether the spirit can have an indubitably certain sign of something different from itself, and outside of its body; but as to the spirit simply conceiving such a thing, there cannot be any doubt, because the idea of being in general empowers it to do so by its own nature.

ARTICLE V.

Third sceptical objection:—Does not our spirit perhaps impart its own forms to the things it sees, and thus alter and transform them from what they really are?

1083. Here the Sceptic will return to the charge, and say, 'Even granting all you have stated about the human understanding having the property of conceiving things objectively, and therefore as they are in themselves, apart from the relations signified by the words *different from*, or *identical with*, *outside* or *inside* the thinking subject, our question is by no means settled. For you have yet to prove that this property itself is not, as we Sceptics think, purely subjective, that is to say, a pure form which the human spirit imparts to things.'

§ I.

Answer.

1084. We will assume, for the sake of argument, that the insinuation contained in this third objection is true—namely, that things are perceived by us, not as they are in themselves, but only in a form communicated to them by our spirit; and that therefore our perception of them does not authorise us to affirm that we truly know them.

My contention is, that if this illusion can be conceived to take place in the perceptions we have from our bodily senses,

it is absolutely impossible in the intuition our spirit has of *being*, either indeterminate or with determinations.

Doubtless, our corporeal organs have a certain determinate structure and configuration of their own, and owing to this fact, they have a certain part in the effects which are produced in them, so that these effects arise, not from one, but from two concomitant causes, *i.e.* the external agent, and the nature, quality, and disposition of the organs themselves (878-905).

But to argue by analogy from what takes place in corporeal perception to what might take place in the immediate and purely spiritual intuition of being taken universally, is opposed to right philosophical method, and leads to the very error we are here refuting—an error which would never have been heard of, if men, leaving mere analogies aside, had fixed their attention directly on the object of that spiritual intuition.

In fact, whoever duly considers the nature of being taken universally will at once perceive that it is a contradiction in terms to say that it can be a subjective product of our mind, or a thing receiving its form and determination from the mind itself. Because to say *being in general*, is the same as saying *that sort of being which is essentially exempt from all forms or modes* of any kind or nature whatsoever.

1085. If, then, we analyse the said sceptical allegation, what do we find it to include? The concept of two forms or modes of being, *i.e.* (1) the mode of the thing in itself, unknown to us; (2) the mode of the thing in so far as conceived by us, a mode emanating from ourselves, the perceivers, and (according to the Sceptics) the only mode known to us.

Now, these two modes of the thing—the one *real*, and the other *apparent*, the one necessarily unknown, and the other known—are both possible, that is, thinkable by us. Observe, I say *thinkable*, not *verifiable*, for to be *thinkable* is one thing, and to be *verifiable* is another. Even allowing that we cannot *verify* them in nature, *i.e.* ascertain whether they really exist in the thing, we can nevertheless know that their existence is possible, in other words, we can *think* them. Indeed, our

power of thinking the *apparent*, as well as the *real* mode of the thing, is assumed by the objection itself, for the Sceptic could not insinuate that the *mode* of the thing as conceived by us is not real, but only apparent, unless he had in him the conception of the one as well as of the other mode. Therefore did I say that the illusion feared by Sceptics cannot by any possibility apply to the idea of being.

This *idea*, being perfectly indeterminate, does not include any judgment whatever on the *mode* of being; and for this reason it is ever open to receive any one of all the modes of being that are thinkable. As therefore that *mode* which the Sceptics feared must remain hidden from our knowledge is thinkable, so it can be admitted by the absolutely universal nature of being, like all other modes.

Therefore, to doubt whether being taken universally as intuited by our mind, may not perhaps take a mode or form determined by the nature of the mind itself, is an absurdity, because this being presents itself to our mind divested of all modes; nor can such a doubt occur to anyone who properly reflects on what being taken universally is. Once more, then, this being has no particular mode, no particular form; but it constitutes the possibility of all modes and of all forms which we can think or imagine.

1086. This property of the idea of being, which informs our understanding, and which I call *indeterminateness* and *universality* (428 and 434), is also that which forms and proves the perfect *immateriality* of our understanding.

§ 2.

Corollaries.

1087. Hence the following corollaries:—

I. If the thinking subject is perfectly determinate (for that which subsists in the real mode must be *determinate*); and if the BEING naturally seen by us is perfectly *indeterminate*, it follows that being cannot in any sense be called a *subjective* conception, but must be acknowledged as *essentially objective*, nay not only as *objective*, but as the OBJECT which

constitutes our spirit intelligent, in contradistinction to the spirit itself (the SUBJECT), which is the opposite of its object.¹

¹ One may attempt to find the principle of certainty in one or other of these three things: (1) the *matter* of knowledge; (2) the thinking *subject*; (3) the formal object or *form* of knowledge.

I. Some philosophers have pretended to derive certainty from the *matter* of knowledge, that is, from the senses; and from this school arose the ancient Sceptics, who were the first to perceive that our senses could not be the source of apodeictic certainty. Hence Degerando, after describing the ten *τρόποι* or *εἰσοχαί*, to which the Pyrrhonists reduced their objections against certainty, with much acuteness adds: 'We must observe that the whole of this code (of the Sceptics), by attacking essentially the testimony of the senses, accepted as an admitted supposition, that our cognitions came from external or sensible experience' (*Histoire comparée*, etc. 2nd edit. vol. ii. p. 477-478). Such is the Pyrrhonism originated by the Sensists.

II. Other philosophers, seeing that knowledge could not come from the senses, pretended to derive it from within our spirit itself; and, as a consequence, placed it in our own selves, in the laws of our intellectual nature—in a word, in the thinking *subject*. To this system we owe the *modern Sceptics*, I mean the Critical or Transcendental philosophers. Such is the Pyrrhonism engendered by the *Scottish philosophy*, which gave rise to the absurdity of a *subjective truth*, that is to say, a truth which is not truth.

III. The third system places the foundation, the essence itself of knowledge in the *object*, namely, in the primal and indeterminate *idea of being*, which (1) is not *matter*, and cannot therefore, by reason of its essential simplicity (426), undergo any kind of change or alteration; (2) is not a limited *subject*, and therefore does not impose any partial forms on the cognitions (417), but being unlimited and indeterminate, is itself susceptible of receiving forms. This I firmly hold to be the only true system, and that which alone affords the immovable basis whereon certainty can rest and securely defy all the attacks of human rashness.

Christian antiquity had already ex-

cluded and repudiated the two first of the above systems, whence flowed those two species of Scepticism which have caused so much confusion and disturbance in modern times. But Christian antiquity was in its turn disowned by the later generations, which were seen to lead one the other, like blind leaders of the blind, and to throw themselves into an abyss of uncertainties and agitations, ending in that miserable intellectual lassitude and moral prostration which is so general nowadays, but from which it is to be hoped that human nature, impelled by its instinctive abhorrence of annihilation or ruin, will hasten to escape. Six centuries ago one of the brightest intellects of Italy emphatically rejected those two erroneous systems, and taught that the solid ground of certainty must not be looked for either in the *matter* of cognition (the sensations) or in the percipient *subject*, but only in the immutable and eternal nature of the *formal object*, namely, of IDEAS, which, as I have shown, are all finally reducible to one only. His words are worthy of the deepest consideration, and I will give them in the original: 'Illationis NECESSITAS' (i.e. *certainty*, which involves the concept of an absolute necessity) 'non venit ab EXISTENTIA REI IN MATERIA, quia est contingens' (the matter of cognition); 'nec ab existentia rei IN ANIMA' (in the percipient subject), 'quia tunc esset fictio, si non esset in re' (here we have the subjective or feigned truth of the Transcendentalists). 'Venit igitur ab EXEMPLARITATE in arte æterna' (the idea, exemplar, form of our cognition) 'secundum quam res habent aptitudinem et habitudinem ad invicem, ad illius æternæ artis representationem.'

Now what will those philosophers say to this passage who, having always felt an invincible repugnance to study anything written in past ages, date the wisdom of mankind from 1789? If they suspect it to be an imposture, let them read it for themselves as it stands in the little treatise entitled *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, chap. iii., and provided they understand it, they will, I am confident, fix at some centuries earlier the date of true learning.

So in like manner, if the thinking subject is limited and *particular*, whilst *being* is *unlimited* and *universal*, most assuredly the latter is not an effect or emanation of the former. To say that a thing can produce what is transcendently greater than itself, and of a nature contrary to its own, would be an absurdity.

1088. II. If the idea of *being* is the only one which we have by nature, and all other ideas are *acquired*, we must perforce admit that the notion of *being* pure and simple is all that our spirit adds to things.

But the idea of being is essentially exempt from error because it has no particular mode or form, therefore our spirit (in so far as it is purely intellective) adds no mode or form of any kind to the things perceived.

Therefore it does not counterfeit them, but perceives them just as they *present* themselves to it.¹

Therefore our understanding is not a fallacious and deceptive faculty, not only as regards the intuition of being taken universally, but also as regards all its other perceptions. It is essentially sincere, essentially truthful.

1089. III. Hence the manifest folly of the Sceptics in not being satisfied with the faculty of *Reason*, but pretending to institute a *Critique* of this faculty, as if above Reason there could be something which is not *Reason*, and could nevertheless pass judgment on Reason!

The Reason, or, to speak more accurately, the Under-

¹ I say that the *understanding* perceives things just as they *present* themselves to it, without altering or counterfeiting them; but I do not say that things *present* themselves to it perfectly as they are. What is it that presents things to our understanding? Originally the internal and external sense. Now how does the sense present them? Does it, in the act of *presenting* them, alter or counterfeit, restrict or adjust them to its own form and nature? These are questions I shall have to treat in the sequel when I come to speak of the *certainty of materiater knowledge*, that is, knowledge composed of matter and form. Here I speak

only of *formal* or purely intellectual knowledge; and with respect to this I think I have proved to evidence, against the Critical Philosophy, that the *intelligent spirit* has no restrictive form by which to alter and counterfeit the things it perceives, but has one only form, and that unlimited, the *form of all possible forms*, with no determinations in itself, open to admit of all possible forms indifferently, impartially, and, if I may use the expression, without fraud or deceit. This form, so universal, so genuine, is TRUTH itself, as I have demonstrated (1062-1064).

standing, cannot be transcended by reasoning ; therefore a *Transcendental Philosophy*, in this sense, is an absurdity.

To say that the truthfulness of Reason can be called in question, because this faculty may possibly be limited to some particular form, is manifestly a contradiction in terms. I ask : by means of what faculty do you conceive the possibility of another form different from that of Reason ? You can do so only by means of a superior Reason endowed with a more extensive form, embracing the form of Reason itself, and some other form also. According to you, then, the human Reason is at one and the same time less and more extensive than itself ! I say the human Reason, for human Reason is but one, and you, as men, have only this one.

We see by this that Kantism is based purely on a trick of the imagination ; which first dreams of a limited Reason, and then presumes to judge and criticise it. The Reason which judges or criticises is not, therefore, the complete Reason, because the latter embraces not only the faculty which it is pretended to submit to criticism, but the criticising faculty also. *Reason* embraces all the thinkable—*i.e.* all the possible.

ARTICLE VI.

The refutation of Scepticism is further confirmed.

1090. From what we have thus far said, the reader will understand what is to be thought of the celebrated question, ‘ How a being can perceive what is different from itself ? ’

This question, I maintain, is foreign to the argument of human knowledge and certainty, and he who seeks to push it further sins against intellectual sobriety.

In truth, what is the legitimate method of a sober philosophy ? This : to observe attentively the intellectual facts, to classify them into species, to arrange them in proper order, and lastly to reduce them, if possible, to one primordial fact on which they all depend. But if, having arrived at this primordial fact, the student is not content with it, but insists on seeking an explanation of it also, he runs a great danger of losing himself in vain hypotheses or barren speculations, and

induces at last a dreadful Scepticism even in regard to all the other portion of knowledge, solely from having failed to find what he was seeking, but ought never to have sought, because it does not exist.¹

1091. In our case, the primordial fact is the intuition of being taken universally.

This intuition is an act which terminates beyond ourselves (the *subject*) and fixes itself on an *object* perfectly indeterminate.

That to have the intuition of this object is the same as to see it in itself, irrespective of us, is also an incontrovertible fact.

Now, this fact once acknowledged, all the difficulty which can be found in explaining other innumerable particular facts of the same kind, is cleared away—I mean the difficulty involved in the question, ‘How can we perceive what is different from us?’ for the intuition of being taken universally shows, not only that it is possible for us to see things in themselves, but also that we actually do so, inasmuch as we actually see in itself that which potentially includes all things.

But the desire to explain this *primordial fact* by another prior to it and appertaining to the same logical order, is as unreasonable as would be the desire to simplify still further a number that has been reduced to the unit,—that is, to its first and simplest element.

1092. Such is precisely the abuse committed in this matter by the Sceptics. They argue more or less as follows: ‘We cannot understand how it is possible for a being to perceive what is different from its own self. When, therefore, a man or any other intelligent being seems to perceive something different from himself, it must be held that his perception is only apparent, and that what he really perceives is himself and nothing more.’

¹ I speak here of the *ultimate logical reason* which is supplied to us by the fact of the primal intuition. Now there cannot be in the logical order any reason higher than this, although there may be reasons of another species (that is *final* and *ontological*), in the series of which man does not arrive at seeing the

last. But in the series of logical reasons man does see the last, because this is essential to the faculty of *Reason*; and it is with reference to this order that we must understand the celebrated sentence of S. Augustine: ‘Quicquid super illam [rationalem creaturam] est, jam Creator est’ (*In Joan. tract. xxiii.*).

In this reasoning, we see *theory* assailing and denying fact ; ignorance cancelling truth.

I reply to the Sceptics thus : ' You say it is only in appearance that I conceive being as different from myself. Now if being *appears* to me different from myself, it is manifest that I *conceive* it such. For how can a thing *appear* to me without at the same time *being conceived* by me ? Take note that I do not at present decide whether what I conceive is really different from me or not : all I insist upon is the fact that I *conceive* it as *different*. In admitting this fact, you and I are perfectly at one. The difference between us consists simply in the different use we respectively make of the same fact. I say : since I conceive *being* as different from myself, I have therefore the power of conceiving things as different from myself, because, as a matter of fact, I do so conceive one of them, and that one of such a nature as implicitly to contain all the others. You, on the contrary, begin by laying it down *a priori* that it is impossible for my mind to go outside and conceive a thing independent of itself ; and from this you conclude that the *being* which my mind conceives as different from itself cannot truly correspond with that conception, and is therefore an illusion. But do you not see that this has nothing whatever to do with the question in hand ? The question, and indeed the whole difficulty is, not as to whether the thing conceived corresponds or not to its conception (this point we shall discuss later) ; but it is wholly and solely as to whether the mind is capable of conceiving anything as different from itself : and this you have already conceded by affirming that things appear to our mind ; for in the present case, *to appear* and *to be conceived* are one and the same.

Moreover, to say as you do that the objects, in so far as they remain hidden from your cognisance, do not correspond with such conception as you have of them, is a wholly gratuitous assertion. How can you pass sentence upon a thing which you declare to be utterly unknown to you ?

1093. But that you may see in an unmistakable manner how ill-founded are your fears of illusion in the matter we are discussing, I will ask you this question : When, having

perceived a certain object, you turn your thought to your own selves, the perceiving *subject*, do you not become the *object* of that thought? Undoubtedly you do: and yet does this make any change whatever in your subjective identity? No. Therefore a thing, by becoming an object of our thought, does not cease to be precisely what it was before. It can be an *object*, and at the same time remain a *subject*.

Such being the case, what do we mean by saying that 'Our mind conceives things as different from itself?'—Simply this, that 'they are objects of our thought.'

But how can these two expressions be synonymous? I answer:—

An *object* of thought signifies a thing present to the mind in itself, and a thing in itself signifies a thing in its existence: and since 'to exist and to be present' are different from 'being engaged in an action;' therefore to say '*object* of thought' is essentially to express a thing different from ourselves considered in so far as we are engaged in the act of thinking.

This is true even when I think of myself; because by this act I, the thinking subject, become the object of my thought: nevertheless, in so doing, I consider myself in so far as existing in myself, and nothing further. Thought, therefore, essentially terminates in an *object*, namely, in a thing different from the *thinking subject* as such. Consequently, the fact of the object of thought being different from the thinking subject, cannot militate against the authority and truthfulness of the thought itself. Indeed, so far are we from having no power to conceive things as different from ourselves, that we cannot intellectually conceive even our own selves, unless by considering ourselves in that way, that is, as objectivised.

1094. The argument of the Sceptics might hold good in the case of beings, if such there were, whose mode of conceiving was the direct opposite of ours, that is, who conceived things not in their objective existence, but as identical with their own subjective selves. For a being of this description it would be reasonable to say: 'We conceive everything as part of ourselves. Now this cannot possibly be the case. Therefore, the true version of the matter must rather be that

things, as conceived by us, are a mere creation of our own : in other words, our conceptions are illusory.'

But this reflection itself could never occur to any of these beings ; it would only be possible in an intelligence possessed of the faculty of seeing things *in se*, objectively. Hence the Sceptics themselves, in order to call in question the existence in us of the faculty of conceiving things objectively, must necessarily have that faculty. Besides, a *conception* which does not pass beyond the conceiving subject would be a contradiction in terms ; a conception and a non-conception at the same time.

1095. Lastly, the truthfulness of human thought must appear self-evident to anyone who attentively considers its nature. For its nature consists precisely in our conceiving things *in se*, or which is the same, in their own existence, and this is what we call the *truth* of our conceptions.

To sum up : according to the Sceptics, things have two existences, *i.e.* the one perceived by us, and another which lies entirely beyond our power of perception.

The first is illusory and false, and this is why, in it, the things appear to us *in se*, objectively.

The second is true and real, and we must therefore say that it is the contrary of the first, *i.e.* identical with the existence of ourselves, the perceiving subjects.

Are not these propositions manifestly contradictory ? If the *existence in se* or objective is that which is perceived by us ; and if the *existence imagined by the Sceptics as subjective* is that which is not perceived ; must not the first be accounted true, and the second pronounced false, or rather a vain and chimerical invention of the Sceptics themselves ?¹

¹ The error of the Sceptics arose also from their confounding the *existence* of a thing with its *specific essence*. By saying that I perceive a thing as existing *in se*, I do not by any means intimate that I perceive it in its real *specific essence*. Perfect objectivity consists solely in our perceiving the first of these two things, namely, *existence*, or, which is the same, in our applying to things the *idea of being in general*, which is the

source of, or, to speak more accurately, constitutes *objectivity* itself. On the other hand, in perceiving the *essence* of things, there may be some admixture of the *subjective* element ; and, in fact, there is, particularly in the perception of bodies, as we have seen in the 5th section. Hence it also happens, that the *essence known* by us is not always the *real specific essence* of the thing, in its entirety and purity, but is an essence

ARTICLE VII.

What has been thus far expounded is in accordance with Christian tradition.

1096. I have replied to the three fundamental objections of Scepticism by opposing to them three characteristics which the analysis of *being* (or *truth*) as present to our mind by nature reveals to us.

These characteristics of *being* are: (1) its absolute *simplicity*; (2) its essential *objectivity*; (3) its perfect *indeterminateness*.

By reason of its absolute *simplicity*, being represents nothing beyond itself, and contains no judgment of any kind. Our intellectual eye gazes on it, and that is all. Regarding it, therefore, illusion or deception is impossible. This solved the first objection.

By reason of its essential *objectivity*, being is different from and opposed to the *subject* which contemplates it, and so it constitutes the faculty of understanding, that is, a faculty which sees things irrespectively of itself as well as of all place and time. This solved the second objection, namely, 'How is it possible for the human mind to go outside itself?' an objection which is wholly founded on a metaphor taken from corporeal things, and falls of itself to the ground, in fact, ceases to have any meaning the moment it is translated into proper language.

By reason of its *indeterminateness*,¹ being cannot impart determinations to anything, although it can itself receive the determinations belonging to the various things presented to the understanding. Hence it would be absurd, as well as contrary to fact, to say that our understanding by cognising or conceiving things gives them a subjective mode or form

deficient in some points, as we see in the case of generic essences (653 etc.), particularly the *nominal* (*ibid.*), as also of those which are mixed up with some subjective element—an element, however, we can always discern and separate from the objective, precisely

because we have the faculty of objective perception.

¹ The reader must not forget that I am all along speaking of ideal being, or, which is the same, of the idea of being: not of subsistent being.

different from their real one. This disposed of the third objection.

Lastly, I have shown, that these objections could never have occurred to any philosopher who had proceeded on the plain ground of facts, and not abandoned himself to gratuitous suppositions and the vague suggestions of a confused imagination.

1097. And now it gives me unfeigned pleasure to declare that this refutation of modern scepticism is not my own, but taken from the deposit of the Christian traditions. And not only is the refutation itself to be found in Christian antiquity, but also that method which starts from primitive and certain facts, and reasons upon them, and by forsaking which modern philosophy¹ has unwittingly thrown us into the ignorance, the perplexities, and the agitations so general at the present day. This I shall prove by giving a brief summary of the Christian philosophy on the nature of the knowledge of truth, and on its relation with the human mind.

1098. According to this philosophy, the right method by which to arrive at the knowledge of the human soul is, (1) to set out from the fact of the existence in us of knowledge, and (2) from the examination of this fact to determine what the soul can or cannot do, or, in other words, what are its properties, faculties, etc.²

¹ I have observed in another place, that the great merit of modern times, which begin with Leonardo da Vinci and Galileo, consists in having brought into prominence and popularised the method based on facts. Their defect, on the contrary, lies in not having followed this method. In many writers, however, we see unmistakable evidences of an honest desire to act in accordance with it; and these are commendable for their intentions, although they often unconsciously deviate from them. Others, and these the majority, while continually boasting a rigid adherence to the method of facts, exhibit in practice nothing but the appearance thereof. Posterity will estimate such writers at their true worth, if it does not consign them to oblivion. It is a true saying that 'Man does not always do what he thinks he is doing, and much less what he says he has the

will to do.' And as regards the subject of method, I find that 'It is one thing to know this method in principle, and another to know how to reduce it to practice;' and that we must not too readily believe those who profess to follow it, but rather consider well beforehand whether they have the art, or whether perhaps their declarations are *vox et præterea nil*.

² S. Thomas establishes this method in *De Verit.* x. viii. The Sceptics of the Transcendental School, on the contrary, instead of saying: 'The mind does this thing, therefore it has the power of doing it;' say 'The mind has not the power to do this thing; therefore we must say that it does it only in appearance.' They begin by gratuitously restricting the power of the mind, and on this arbitrary assumption they set down the facts of the mind as *apparent* only; that is, not daring to

Thus its point of departure is the same as that from which I have started in this work, namely, the fact that we are possessed of cognitions, which the process of analysis reduces ultimately to a perfect simplicity, that is, to the knowledge of *being in general*, wherein no illusion whatever is possible.

By analysing knowledge, the ancients found, as I have done, that it was, in the first place, *objective*. 'Our knowledge,' says S. Thomas, 'extends also to those things which are outside of us.'¹ Such was the first fact admitted in knowledge. They did not say, like the moderns, 'This fact is impossible, therefore it is only an appearance,' but they said, 'This fact exists, therefore it is true and real.'

They did not ask, 'How is it possible that the cognitive subject should go out of itself?' but they said: 'We find that the cognitive subject goes out of itself, therefore it is possible for it to do so.' From this fact they proceeded to argue as follows:—

1099. If knowledge is *objective*, it is not restricted within the cognitive subject, but considers things irrespectively of its particular self, in their own existence. It must therefore be *universal*, that is, it can extend to all things which have, actually or potentially, an existence of their own, and therefore to all things that are possible. Hence they inferred that bodies are incapable of knowledge, because they are, each of them, determined to one particular form only; and that therefore the cognitive subject must be immaterial or devoid of all corporeal determinations and restrictive forms. 'By means of the matter,' says S. Thomas, 'the form of any (*corporeal*) thing is determined exclusively to one. Hence it is manifest that *cognition* and *materiality* are things of a totally opposite nature. We must therefore conclude that those beings which receive their form from matter alone, as for instance the plants, are in no way capable of knowing.'²

deny them openly, they deny them by means of ambiguous language, for if the fact exists, it is real and valid: to admit a fact of this sort and then to say that it has no value, is, as I have so often observed, a contradiction in terms.

¹ 'Cognoscimus enim etiam ea quæ

extra nos sunt' (S. I. q. 84).

² 'Per materiam determinatur forma rei ad aliquid unum. Unde manifestum est quod ratio cognitionis ex opposito se habet ad rationem materialitatis. Et ideo quæ non recipiunt formam nisi materialiter nullo modo sunt cognoscitiva, sicut plantæ' (S. I. q. 84, a. 2).

But the character of *universality* which is found by analysis to be involved in that of *objectivity*, can be seen also directly by examining what the intellectual knowledge is. We know things that are not merely *different* but also *contrary* to one another. Hence the saying of the ancients, that the understanding is capable of perceiving all things: *intellectus omnia cognoscit*; for in truth, he who can perceive the *yes* as well as the *no* of everything, is determined to nothing, since between two contraries no middle term exists. This fact was noticed even in the earliest period of philosophy, and Empedocles, who had observed it imperfectly, imagined that he could explain it by supposing the soul as composed of the elements of all things. I say he had observed this fact imperfectly, because, while noticing that 'the soul knows things that are different,' he had omitted to consider that the soul knows (1) not the elements only of things, but also the things themselves; (2) not merely things that are *different*, but also *contrary* things, and so is equally disposed to perceive the *yes* and the *no* of everything.

1100. The explanation proposed by Empedocles (I here speak of his teaching as it seems to have been understood by Aristotle) was an error common to all materialists, who imagine ideas to be something similar in substance to the things represented by them. Thus the idea of light would (as Robert Hooke imagined) be made of some kind of phosphoric matter, and so of the other ideas.

I do not, however, find that the ancients refuted Empedocles on this side. Their refutations were rather directed against the imperfect way in which he had observed the universality belonging to knowledge, and principally against his oversight in not reflecting that by cognition we know the things themselves and not their elements only. Accordingly they argued that if the soul required to be composed of all the (physical) elements which enter into the formation of things, because everything must be known by means of an image; the necessary consequence would be that the soul must have in itself not merely the elements, but also as many corpuscles, or minute beings, as there are bodies

capable of being cognised. From the absurdity of this consequence Anaxagoras, and afterwards Aristotle, concluded, in opposition to the philosopher of Agrigentum, that our soul, in order to be able to know all things, must be simple and immaterial, and have in it nothing corporeal and nothing determinate.

The question therefore was simply as to the mode of explaining a fact admitted equally by both parties, namely, the *universality* characteristic of knowledge; but the later Greek philosophers differed in their explanation from the earlier ones. All were agreed so far as this, that since knowledge is *universal*, that is, capable of extending to all things, it was necessary that the soul should be possessed of a corresponding universal virtue. But the more ancient among those philosophers could not conceive this universal virtue except in a material way; hence they placed it in a compound of all the elements. The later ones, seeing that this did not explain anything, felt convinced that the opposite must be true, and that the virtue of the soul is universal in this sense, that nothing *determinate* enters into its composition. They therefore defined this universality proper to the soul as a virtue not determined in itself to anything, but capable of being determined in its acts, thus being open indifferently to the knowledge of everything possible. Hence the *tabula rasa* of Aristotle.

1101. In modern times, on the contrary, the fact of the universality of knowledge has been pronounced impossible; but since it was too patent to be denied, it has been set down as a delusion, and the soul has been supposed to be both determinate in itself and determinative of its cognitions. Nothing could be more at variance with good sense than such a mode of reasoning. First, knowledge is allowed to be universal, and then it is asserted that the soul determines and limits its cognitions, and by so doing stamps them with universality, as if the giving of universality to the cognitions were not the very opposite of determining, restricting, *subjectivising* them.

1102. 'Since our understanding,' says S. Thomas, 'is

ordained for knowing all sensible and corporeal things, it cannot have a corporeal nature, even as the sense of sight has no colour in it, for the reason that it is ordained to perceive all colours. For if this sense had itself some particular colour, that colour would debar it from seeing the other colours. So in like manner, if the understanding had any determinate nature, that nature connatural to it would make its knowledge of the other natures impossible.¹

According to S. Thomas, then, the *universality* of knowledge is a fact which demonstrates the absurdity of the restrictive forms of Kant. And it is, as I have remarked, a manifest contradiction to say that this universality is the result of restrictive forms, because the forms which produce universality, far from creating restrictions and determinations, take them all away.

1103. Now, as every error is a truth distorted or misconceived, it is easy to see that the truth which was abused by Kant is this principle of S. Thomas, that 'The understanding makes the species or ideas such as it is itself, because every agent produces the like to itself.' 'Tales autem facit eas [intellectus agens species intelligibiles], qualis est ipse; nam omne agens agit sibi simile' (*C. Gent.* II. clxxvii.). But how could this truth wrongly understood produce the subjective forms of Kant? I answer:—

He assumed, that to affirm that the understanding communicates to ideas its own nature and gives them its own form, was the same as saying that the understanding gives

¹ 'Cum intellectus noster natus sit intelligere omnes res sensibiles et corporales, necesse est quod careat omni natura corporali, sicut sensus visus caret omni colore, propter hoc quod est cognoscitivus coloris. Si enim haberet aliquem colorem, ille color prohiberet videre alios colores. . . Sic intellectus si haberet aliquam naturam determinatam, illa natura connaturalis sibi prohiberet eum a cognitione aliarum naturarum' (*De Anima*, lib. iii. lect. 7).

The holy Doctor proves the same thing in the *Summa* (I. lxxv. 2):— 'From the fact that the understanding is able to know different things, it

follows that it can have none of them in its own nature; because that which was inherent in its nature would prevent it from knowing other things. Thus we see that the tongue of a sick person, when infected with a choleric and bitter humour, cannot perceive anything sweet, but all things seem to it bitter.' 'Quod (intellectus) potest cognoscere aliqua, oportet ut nihil eorum habeat in sua natura, quia illud quod inesset ei naturaliter impediret cognitionem aliorum. Sicut videmus quod lingua infirmi quae infecta est cholericis et amaro humore non potest percipere aliquid dulce, sed omnia videntur ei amara.'

to ideas a particular, restrictive, and subjective form. And he assumed this because, like all the materialists of our times, he drew his concept of form from corporeal forms, which are all restrictive and particular. That form, on the contrary, with which S. Thomas says that the understanding informs its perceptions, rendering them similar to itself, is of a nature directly opposed to all such forms as these. It is not a particular, but a universal form. It does not impose restrictions, but removes them. The act by which the understanding communicates this its form to our perceptions is no other than that whereby it *universalises* them (490), and thus considers things in their own existence, objectively and not in any way subjectively. Hence the *immateriality* of this form is for the holy Doctor what constitutes our power of understanding.

'The substance of the human soul is immaterial, and, as is manifest from what we have said, it is from this that it has its intellectual nature; for all immaterial substances' (*viz. exempt from restricted and particular forms*) 'are intellectual' (*C. Gent. II. lxxvii.*)¹ This form, then, is not *form* in the vulgar sense of the term, as modern philosophers seem to take it, but is a *form* in the sense of the ancients, and consists in the absence of every material and determinate *form*. If the form of the understanding is universal, *i.e.* perfectly *indeterminate*, and thus open indifferently to the perception of all possible beings, is, in fact, nothing but possibility itself contemplated by us,² it follows, thought the ancient writers of whom I am speaking, that from the same form our understanding receives a virtue which is *infinite*, *i.e.* bounded by no limits.

'In our understanding,' again says S. Thomas, 'there is potentially the infinite' (the form of the understanding being indeterminate, has not of its own nature the actual knowledge

¹ 'Habet enim substantia animæ humanæ immaterialitatem; et sicut ex dictis patet, ex hoc habet naturam intellectualem, quia omnis substantia immaterialis est hujusmodi.'

² 'The intellect regards its object according to the common notion of

being, because the possible intellect is that which can become all things.' 'Intellectus respicit suum objectum secundum communem rationem entis, eo quod intellectus possibilis est quo est omnia fieri' (*S. I. lxxix. 7.*)

of anything really subsisting, but can have it) . . . 'because our understanding can always know indefinitely more things than it does know.' And again, 'Our understanding knows the infinite in the same way in which it is itself infinite—that is, virtually. For its virtue is infinite inasmuch as it is cognitive of the universal . . . and, by consequence, its power of knowing is not exhausted by any individual thing, but, on its own part,¹ it extends to an infinity of individuals.'

1104. Having thoroughly mastered the fact that the intellective knowledge is universal, and therefore extending without limits to all things, infinite, the said writers observed furthermore that it is and must be *necessary*. 'Forma rei intellectæ' (writes S. Thomas) 'est in intellectu universaliter et immaterialiter et immobiliter; quod ex ipsa operatione intellectus apparet, qui intelligit, universaliter et per modum necessitatis cujusdam' (S. I. lxxxiv. 1). 'The form of the thing understood is endowed in the understanding with universality, immateriality, and immobility, as is manifest by

¹ S. Thomas says *on its own part*, because the understanding never actually attains the knowledge of an infinite number of individuals; indeed, the individuals in actual existence are never infinite in number. Moreover, the understanding, though *per se* not limited, comes to be limited by the *sense*, inasmuch as it is the sense that presents to it those indications whereby it comes actually to know the various beings, as I have said in *Teodicca* (150 etc.). 'In intellectu nostro invenitur infinitum in potentia . . . quia nunquam intellectus noster tot intelligit quin possit plura intelligere. Sicut intellectus noster est infinitus virtute, ita infinitum cognoscit. Est enim virtus ejus infinita, secundum quod . . . est cognoscitivus universalis . . . et per consequens non finitur ad aliquod individuum, sed quantum est de se (1) ad infinita individua se extendit (S. I. lxxxvi. 2).

That the understanding has the real terms of its operation *presented* to it by the sense, is also the opinion of S. Thomas. He observes that, inasmuch as the *universality* of the form of the understanding consists in the com-

plete absence of particular forms, so it does not by itself alone suffice to give us the knowledge of real beings. 'From this' (viz., from the form of the understanding being universal or immaterial), 'the understanding has not as yet that which renders it similar to this or that determinate thing, as is necessary in order that our soul may know this or that thing in a determinate manner. In respect, therefore, of the determinate similitudes of the things knowable by us—that is, of the nature of sensible things—the soul itself remains potentially intellective; and these determinate natures of sensible things are in truth PRESENTED to us by the phantasms, etc. 'Ex hoc nondum (intellectus) habet quod assimiletur huic vel illi rei determinatæ, quod requiritur ad hoc quod anima nostra hanc vel illam rem determinate cognoscat. Remanet igitur ipsa anima intellectiva in potentia ad determinatas similitudines rerum cognoscibilem a nobis, quæ sunt naturæ rerum sensibilium; et has quidem determinatas naturas rerum sensibilium PRÆSENTANT nobis phantasmata,' etc. (C. Gent. II. lxxvii.).

observing the operation itself of this faculty, which understands universally, and by way of a certain *necessity*.'

1105. That these two qualities, *necessity* and *universality* flow the one from the other, we shall easily see if we consider that *universality* is nothing else than the *possibility* of things. Now whence is the *necessary* but from the *possible*? That is called *necessary* which absorbs in itself all possibility, so that a thing contrary to it is impossible.

Take, for instance, the following proposition: 'Our friend Maurice is either alive or dead.' This is a *necessary* proposition, and why? Because between the two opposite alternatives of a person being alive or dead, there can be no middle term. *Necessity*, then, is that which absorbs in itself the whole possibility of a thing, so that nothing contrary thereto is possible. Now the form of the understanding is precisely the whole of possibility. This faculty therefore understands *necessarily*, that is, sees the relation which everything understood has with possibility, and the vision of this relation gives its intellection the characteristic of necessity.

1106. Hence the Fathers of the Church declare also that the intelligent spirit is furnished with an *uncircumscribed light* (that is, a light which has no particular and restrictive form), or with a form which is (1) *universal*, indeterminate, immaterial, infinite (all which terms express much the same meaning), (2) *necessary*, and hence immutable and *per se* eternal.

Again, in the *universality* and *necessity* of knowledge, the Fathers saw and noted the characteristic of *unity*. For *universality* is founded on this, that by means of *one* sole species we know an essence or a quality repeated in an indefinite number of individuals, so that the *unity* of the species gives unity to the multiplicity of things. So in like manner *necessity* is simply the result of that one supreme *species* or form which represents, if I might so term it, the most common quality of things, that is *being*, which gathers to itself and reduces to unity all special possibilities.

Thus, by analysing human knowledge, the Fathers of the

Church discovered that in its ultimate form¹ it is perfectly *one, universal* or uncircumscribed, *immaterial, infinite, necessary, immutable, eternal.*

1107. From all these premisses² they concluded that knowledge could be derived neither from the senses, nor from the soul itself, namely, the thinking subject.³

Not from the senses, because sensations have neither *unity*, nor *universality*, nor *necessity*, nor *immutability*, nor any of the other characteristics enumerated above.

Not from ourselves, the thinking subject, for we also are limited, contingent, mutable; and we cannot give that which we have not.

The attributes of our knowledge are, therefore, the direct opposite of our subjective attributes, and surpass in dignity not only our powers, but those of all finite beings.

¹ Hence S. Thomas says: 'If we consider the universal reasons of sensible things, all the sciences are about the necessary; but if we consider the things themselves, then some sciences relate to the necessary, and some to the contingent.' 'Si attendantur rationes universales sensibilibus, omnes scientiæ sunt de necessariis, si autem attendantur ipsæ res, sic quædam scientia est de necessariis, quædam vero de contingentibus' (*S. I. lxxxvi. 3*). We thus see that S. Thomas ascribes the *necessity* of our cognitions to their *universality*. Therefore, they are necessary, not in their material, but only in their *formal* part. This is more fully expounded by the Angelical Doctor in the following words: 'Necessity results from that which is formal in our cognitions; because whatever is consequent upon the form, is in our cognitions necessarily. Now a universal as such consists in the form considered abstractedly from the particular matter. But we have said above, that the intellect, *per se*, and directly, has *universals* for its object. It follows, therefore, that contingent things, in so far as contingent, are known, directly indeed by the sense, but indirectly by the intellect.' 'Necessitas consequitur rationem formæ; quia ea quæ consequuntur ad formam, ex necessitate insunt. . . . Ratio autem universalis accipitur secundum abstractionem formæ a

materia particulari. Dictum est autem supra, quod per se et directe intellectus est universalium. Sic igitur contingentia, prout sunt contingentia, cognoscuntur directe quidem a sensu, indirecte autem ab intellectu' (*ibid.*).

² Aristotle ridiculed Plato's method of establishing his theory of ideas, because it seemed to him that this philosopher, instead of setting out from the known to explain the unknown, preposterously adopted the opposite course. S. Thomas repeated the same censure, from which, however, the great Athenian could very well have defended himself. 'Derisibile videtur, ut dum rerum quæ nobis manifestæ sunt notitiam quærimus, alia entia in medium afferamus,' etc. (*S. I. lxxxiv. 1*). But with how much greater reason could not this be said of Kant, who quite unnecessarily introduces forms which are unknown, and not merely incapable of accounting for the manifest fact of the existence of knowledge, but contrary thereto, because they are of a subjective and restrictive nature, whilst knowledge is essentially objective and absolute.

³ See the beautiful passage from the *Itinerarium mentis*, etc., which I have quoted in the note to no. 1087, where the senses as well as our soul are excluded from all share in the origin of formal knowledge.

1108. S. Augustine, having by the analysis of cognition found that it consists essentially in a judgment,¹ discovers also that there is in it a fundamental *unity*, because it is by *unity* alone that judgments are formed. Thence he draws the conclusion that cognition cannot be derived from the senses; 'For,' he says, 'who, if he has diligently reflected on the matter, can be bold enough to say he has discovered a body to be truly and simply *one*; seeing that all bodies are subject to change, either of species or of place, and are made up of parts, each having a separate place to itself, and thus being divided from all the others? Most certainly, a true and fundamental *unity* is not discernible by the eyes of the flesh, nor by any other of the bodily senses, but by the understanding only.'²

¹ S. Augustine, in his book *De vera Religione*, establishes the important proposition, that the specific difference between the sense and the understanding consists in this, that the latter has the power of judging, while the former has not. 'To judge of bodies is the attribute, not of a being which has the feeling of life only, but of a being which is moreover rational.' 'Judicare de corporibus non sentientis tantum vitæ, sed etiam ratiocinantis est' (xxix.). From this principle he infers, that in every *intellective cognition* there is a judgment. Then he analyses this judgment, and finds that not all men judge equally well, but those only who have the art thereof. It becomes necessary, therefore, to submit this art itself to examination. 'But it being clear that this nature which judges is mutable, namely, that it sometimes knows more and sometimes less; and again, that it judges better in proportion as it is more expert; and it is more expert in proportion as it has gained a certain art; it follows, that the nature of this art itself must be investigated.' 'Sed quia clarum est eam [naturam judicantem] esse mutabilem, quando nunc perita nunc imperita invenitur; tanto autem melius judicat, quanto est peritior, et tanto est peritior quanto alicujus artis . . . particeps est; ipsius artis natura quærenda est' (xxx.). Analysing the art of judging, he discovers that it depends on a *rule*

superior to man, namely, on *truth*, which is essentially conjoined with all intellects. Having thus brought out into full distinctness, and severed from everything else, the formal element of knowledge, *i.e.*, this rule, this first form, this *truth*, according to which man judges, he shows how transcendently superior it is to man, and independent of him, and therefore not subjective, but essentially objective and divine (*ibid.*).

² 'Quis est qui . . . audeat dicere, cum diligenter consideravit, quodlibet corpus vere et simpliciter unum esse; cum omnia vel de specie in speciem vel de loco in locum transeundo mutantur, et partibus constant sua loca obtinentibus, per quæ in spatia diversa dividuntur? Porro . . . ipsa vera et prima unitas non oculis carnis, neque ullo tali sensu, sed mente intellecta conspicitur' (*De vera Relig.* c. 30). Soon after the time of Locke, the problem was proposed, 'How is it that the soul unites many sensations in one only subject?' (66). I have accounted for this fact (1), by the *identity* of space as regards the sense (941 etc.), and (2), by the unity of *being* as regards the spirit (961 etc.). Besides this, however, there is always required on the part of the spirit the simplicity and unity proper to itself. This truth seems to be recognised by philosophers nowadays, and I think it is generally admitted that the unity of a perception

1109. The great thinkers to whom I refer go on to demonstrate that the formal element of intellectual knowledge cannot be an emanation of our limited nature.

The author of the *Itinerarium mentis, etc.* infers this from the *immutability* of knowledge and the mutability of our nature, as follows: 'Our mind, being mutable, cannot see the truth thus shining *immutably*, except by means of some other light which irradiates altogether immutably, and cannot by any possibility be a mutable creature.'¹

From the perfect *indeterminateness* and *universality* of formal knowledge, S. Thomas finds that it is impossible for it to be the essence of any limited nature, or to be a *finite* and *determinate* being; so that not even the angelic essence, still less the human, can emit from itself a knowledge possessed of these two characteristics: 'That through which anything is known must be an actual similitude of the thing known. If therefore the power of an angel could know all things through its own self, that power would necessarily be the similitude and the act of all things;' but this is inadmissible. 'Wherefore it is necessary, that to the intellectual power of the angel some intelligible *species* should be added, to act as similitudes of the things understood.'²

Hence he concludes, that to draw formal knowledge from one's own *essence* itself is an attribute reserved exclusively to

arises, not from the external sense, but from the internal nature of our spirit. Thus, for instance, in an article entitled *Essai analytique sur le phénomène de la sensation*, inserted in the *Bibliothèque Universelle*, published at Geneva (March 1820), C. Victor Bonstetten, speaking of the perception of a tree, says: 'The action of the internal sense modified by our organisation produces the sensation which occasions the idea of the tree; for it is the sensation which on the surface of the retina selects those rays which give the image of the tree: and it is also the sensation which gives to the image of the tree that *unity, wholly spiritual, wholly immaterial*, which makes it one whole, and enables us, by means of language, to deal with that whole at will, so as to form with it thoughts,

relations, abstractions, and principles, and whatever the soul can do by the aid of sensation.'

¹ 'Sed cum ipsa mens nostra sit commutabilis, illam (veritatem) sic incommutabiliter relucentem non potest videre, nisi per aliquam aliam lucem omnino incommutabiliter radiantem, quam impossibile est esse creaturam mutabilem' (c. iii.).

² 'Id quo aliquid cognoscitur, oportet esse actualem similitudinem ejus quod cognoscitur. Unde sequeretur, si potentia angeli per seipsam cognosceret omnia, quod esset similitudo et actus omnium. Unde oportet quod superaddantur potentie intellectivæ ipsius aliquæ species intelligibiles, quæ sint similitudines rerum intellectarum' (S. I. II. l. i. 1 ad 2^m).

God, Whose essence is infinite, as well as the universal principle of all things. 'All creatures have a finite and determinate being. Hence, although between the essence of a higher creature and that of a lower there is a certain similitude, inasmuch as they both fall under some common genus, nevertheless that similitude is not complete, because the higher is determinated to some species which lies outside that of the lower' (*and hence the essence of a creature cannot give the knowledge of things*). 'But the Divine Essence is a perfect similitude of all things in respect of all that they contain inasmuch as it is the universal principle of all' (*and hence God alone can understand all things by His own essence*).¹

From this passage it is clear that the keen intellect of S. Thomas perceived beforehand that consequence with which I have charged the Critical Philosophy of our times, namely, that by making the form of knowledge to emanate from the human spirit, it 'changes man into a God.' Thus divinised, the impotent but ever rash spirit of man will be the new God of the universe, like to that king whom the frogs of the fable, unhappily for themselves, asked and obtained of Jupiter.

1110. S. Augustine deduces the impossibility of formal knowledge emanating from the essence of man himself, by considering (and this is another point from which we ought to start) that the form of knowledge is the *rule* by which man judges, not only every other thing, but himself as well; so that he cannot be either the cause or the judge of that rule, nor is the rule in any way dependent on him, but he receives and must submit to it; and the name of this form or supreme rule of judgment is no other than *truth*. 'Since this rule of all the arts is altogether *immutable*, whilst on the other hand the human mind, which has the privilege of seeing that rule, is subject to the mutability of error, it is quite manifest that the said rule, which we call *truth*, stands

¹ 'Quælibet creatura habet esse finitum ac determinatum. Unde essentia superioris creaturæ, etsi habeat quamdam similitudinem inferioris creaturæ, prout communicant in aliquo genere, non tamen complete habet similitudinem illius; quia determinatur ad aliquam

speciem præter quam est species inferioris creaturæ. Sed essentia Dei est perfecta similitudo omnium quantum ad omnia quæ in rebus inveniuntur, sicut universale principium omnium' (S. I. lxxxiv. 2 ad 3^m).

above our mind.'¹ Again: 'Since the soul feels that it does not judge of the beauty and motion of bodies in conformity with its own self, it must necessarily know that that nature according to which it judges, and on which it cannot in any way pass judgment, is much more excellent than itself.'² Again: 'As we and all rational souls judge aright of inferior things when we judge according to *truth*, so are we ourselves judged by truth alone when we adhere to it.'³

Now it must be observed that this exalted *truth*, according to which we judge of things, and which judges us while it is itself placed beyond the possibility of being subjected to judgment, is precisely that same *form* wherein, according to S. Augustine, all things are known, and which by the analysis of human cognitions we have discovered to be the *idea of being* taken universally, being in general. 'If both of us see that what thou sayest is true, and both of us see that what I say is true, where, pray, do we see this? Certainly not I in thee, nor thou in me; but both of us in the same unchangeable *truth* which stands above our minds.'⁴

IIII. The reader will now understand why it was that these sages took such special pains to impress on their fellow-men the fact that their own nature could not be the cause of truth, and to keep them far removed from the most profound and absurd of the errors into which modern philosophy has at last thrown itself, the error which despoils truth of its attributes to bestow them on the human spirit; which makes the mutable immutable and the immutable mutable; a most monstrous form of man-worship, which the spirit of darkness

¹ 'Hæc autem lex omnium artium cum sit omnino incommutabilis, mens vero humana, cui talem legem videre concessum est, mutabilitatem pati possit erroris: satis apparet supra mentem nostram esse legem quæ veritas dicitur.'

² 'Itaque cum se anima sentiat nec corporum speciem motumque judicare secundum seipsam, simul oportet agnoscat. . . . præstare. . . . sibi eam naturam secundum quam judicat, et de qua judicare nullo modo potest.'

³ 'Ut enim nos et omnes animæ

racionales secundum veritatem de inferioribus rectè judicamus, sic de nobis, quando eidem cohæremus, sola ipsa veritas judicat' (*De vera Relig.* c. xxx. xxxi).

⁴ 'Si ambo videmus verum esse quod dicis, et ambo videmus verum esse quod dico, ubi, quæso, id videmus? Nec ego utique in te, nec tu in me; sed ambo in ipsa, quæ supra mentes nostras est, incommutabili veritate' (*Confess.* xii. 25).

has, alas! succeeded in reviving amid the light of Christianity.

From this error, however, all those will be secure who listen with attention and love to the unanimous voice of the great Christian tradition, which, in the words of S. Augustine, incessantly repeats to man: 'Do not think thyself to be the light'; 'Confess that thou art not a light to thyself' ('Noli putare te ipsam esse lucem,' *In. Ps.*; 'Dic quia tu tibi lumen non es,' *Serm. viii. De Verbis Domini*).

CHAPTER II.

ON THE IDEA OF BEING IN SO FAR AS IT IS THE MEANS OF KNOWING ALL OTHER THINGS¹—THAT IS, ON TRUTH.

ARTICLE I.

Connection between the doctrines expounded till now, and those which are to follow.

III2. Hitherto I have considered the idea of being in itself, and have shown against the Sceptics that in this idea no error or illusion of any kind is possible. Having found this immovable basis of the intellectual world, I must now show how the whole certainty of things rests on and derives its validity from it.

I must, therefore, consider the idea of being in its application to things.

I will begin by considering it in the aptitude it has of being applied ; and since it is from this aptitude that it receives the name of *truth*, *truth* will form the subject-matter of the present chapter.

¹ We see *being* by nature. But in order to know that this being is the light which causes us to know all things—that it is *truth*—we must bring our attention to bear on it, and by long reflection observe this its most singular property, this relation it has with all things, a relation in virtue of which it illumines and manifests them to us. Only when we have come to know this can we say that we know the *truth* shining within us. We therefore conceive being by a *direct* and natural act, but we do not conceive it *as truth* except by a reflex act, and one which comes much later than the first. Hence

S. Thomas has remarked, with great acuteness : ‘ We cannot apprehend *truth* without apprehending *being*, because *being* is involved in the notion of *truth*’; but not conversely. He continues : ‘ It is the same as when the *intelligible* is compared with *being*, for being can be understood only because it is intelligible ; and yet we can understand being without reflecting on its intelligibility. So, in like manner, *being understood*, is *truth* ; but it does not therefore follow that by understanding *being* we understand *truth*’ (S. I. xvi. ad 3^m).

ARTICLE II.

Divers uses of the word TRUTH.

§ 1.

The most general meaning of the word 'truth.'

1113. When a certain word is taken in different significations—not by an impropriety of speech peculiar to this or that individual writer, but by the unanimous consent of mankind, with respect to which the charge of impropriety of language would seem to be wholly inadmissible—in such case we may be certain that there is, underlying those various significations, something in which they all agree; and this will be found to consist in the most general of them, in the fundamental essence of the thing designated by that word.

On examining the different meanings attached by common usage to the word *truth*, it appears to me that the most extensive of all—the general idea, the one essence properly signified by it—is that of *Exemplar*. For this reason I have defined truth as the *Exemplar of things*.¹

§ 2.

Distinction between 'truth' and 'things true.'

1114. The concept of *Exemplar* involves a relation with that which is drawn from the exemplar—that is, with its *copy*. When the copy is perfectly *similar* to its exemplar, we call it *true*.

We must distinguish, therefore, between *truth* and *things true*. *Truth* is the *exemplar*; things are *true*, or partake of truth, in proportion to their conformity with their exemplar.

¹ See *Saggio sull'Idillio e sulla nuova Letteratura Italiana* (Opuscoli Filosofici, vol. i. p. 321, &c.). A similar meaning will be found given to the word *truth* in some passages of ancient authors, e.g. in the following

sentence of Cicero: 'In omni re vincit imitationem veritas' (*De Orat.* iii. 57). Here we have the *imitation* contrasted with the *truth*, the copy with the original or exemplar.

§ 3.

Various meanings of the expression, 'the truth of things.'

1115. We also use the expression, 'the truth of this thing,' to signify the *similarity* of the thing to its exemplar, because this similarity is its truth; that by which it is true being, as I have just said, a participation of that which exists in the exemplar whence it has been copied.

Thus we see that, in order to have a clear concept of truth, we must first have in our mind a clear concept of what is meant by *similarity*. And this shows how superficial were those philosophers who supposed on the one hand that the *similarity* of things was most easy to understand, and, on the other, that it was extremely difficult to assign the origin of universals, and especially of the truth of things (180-187). It is, on the contrary, only by having a proper concept of *similarity* that we can understand how it is that some things are true and others false. We must therefore dwell a little on the consideration of this concept, availing ourselves of what we have already established on the nature of the *similarity* of things.

1116. It would seem that all *objects*—even those which are external—may be regarded as *exemplars*, provided we consider them in so far as they have the aptitude to serve as models or types on which other beings similar to them are to be formed.

On this account we are wont to say that nature is the *exemplar* for the various works of the artist; that the social events and the manners of men are *exemplars* to the tragic or comic bard; and that a book translated from one language into another may fitly be called an *exemplar* in respect of the rendering, which ought to agree perfectly with the original.

Hence *nature* is the *truth* of the works of the artist, who has imitated and reproduced it; and so we say 'This is a true likeness'; 'This painting is done with great truth'; 'That scene in such a tragedy or comedy is true to the life'—namely, when it faithfully portrays things as they really happen. With a like propriety of expression S. Jerome,

wishing to intimate that he had compared his version of the Holy Scriptures with the Hebrew text, says that he had rendered them conformably to the Hebrew *truth*: 'Quamquam mihi omnino conscius non sim mutasse me quidpiam de Hebraica veritate' (*Prolog. Gal.*); and again: 'Quamquam juxta Hebraicam veritatem utrumque de eruditis possit intelligi' (*Epistle to Paulinus*).

§ 4.

Truth signifies, properly speaking, an IDEA.

1117. But here an observation is necessary, to which I bespeak the attention of the reader.

I have elsewhere shown that external things, or things in so far as they subsist outside our mind, do not compare with one another, but each stands by itself, their similarity or dissimilarity being only a relation they have with the mind which perceives them.¹ That relation consists in this, that through one sole idea or *species* we perceive many real things; so that the similarity which exists between things may be defined as 'their aptitude to be conceived by a mind through one only species'² (I mean of course in that part in which they are similar). Thus when the carpenter brings two boards together to see whether they are of the same size and shape, it is not exactly by that external or mechanical act that he makes the comparison, but by the spiritual act which takes place at the same time within him, and in respect of which that external and mechanical conjunction is a help, but nothing more.

In fact, when I for instance compare a fine landscape

¹ To understand well this most important truth, the reader should recall what has been said on it in the note to no. 107 and at nos. 180-187.

² It may be asked, how one idea can suffice us for knowing many things? I reply: by adding to it *the judgment on the subsistence of the thing*. This judgment refers to each thing in particular, and thus, if I may so express myself, individualises the species, since by it we make an interior affirmation

which may always be reduced to the following formula: 'The thing I conceive with such or such idea *subsists*,' and 'subsists this many or that many times' (number of individuals) (402 etc.) Now it is by our *sensations* that we are moved to make this judgment (528 etc.). As therefore each sensation is distinct from all the others, so we are able, by means of one and the same idea, to form many distinct judgments, *i.e.* have many distinct *intellectual perceptions*.

painting with the actual scenery in nature, and find that it represents it perfectly, is it outside my mind that I make this comparison? Can I place the painting in the real landscape? or identify the one with the other, or even bring the two close together as the carpenter does his two boards? Nothing of the sort. Therefore, it is not with nature in so far as existing in itself, outside of me, that I confront this picture, but with the idea and the images which I have of the scenery, or at all events with the scenery in so far as thought by me. So true is this, that I could, if I liked, make the very same comparison even in the dark, or in a place where the whole scenery around me is wild and savage in the extreme, and therefore in widest contrast with the soft beauty of the painting, that so much charmed me with its swelling hills and flowery meads glowing beneath the hues of sunset. Clearly, then, the comparison is always the work of my thought, which, albeit most simple in itself, is capable of comparing several perceptions together, and noting in what part they belong to the same species, and in what part their species differ. And the identical reasoning applies to every external thing we may choose to take for an *exemplar*, which, to be entitled to that name, must be in our mind, in short be an idea, often accompanied by its image.¹

1118. By means of this observation we can perfect the

¹ I have already observed (648 etc.) that any contingent thing may be conceived in a state more or less imperfect. Now by comparing the ideas which I have of a thing in two different states—the one of perfection, the other of imperfection—I find this difference only, that with the idea of the thing as imperfect, I think the very same which I thought in the idea of the thing as perfect, less some of its perfecting qualities. Therefore, in their positive part, these ideas are not two, but one only. Assuming, then, that I have the idea of a thing in its state of perfection, I can by means of that idea think the thing in all the states in which it may exist, since the perfect idea already supplies me with all the positive qualities which the said thing can possess; so that in order to think it as imperfect I have only to take away some quality from what is already in my mind. Hence

the term *exemplar* applies principally to the idea of the thing in its perfect state. Nevertheless, when we are unable to obtain this typical idea, we take as exemplar the nearest approach to it we can have. The capacity to conceive the perfect type can be found in artists of the highest order only; and so also in proportion to the degrees of perfection in the exemplar which we form in our minds and by which we judge, will our taste be more or less exquisite, and our judgments in matters of art more or less discriminative. Now *truth* is, properly speaking, this exemplar in so far as it contains all the perfection of things; and thus we can understand the definition of truth given by Avicenna: 'The truth of a thing is the being proper to and appointed for that thing'—'VERITAS CUJUSLIBET REI est proprietas sui esse quod stabilitum est rei' (*Metaphys.* l. xi, c. 2).

definition we have given of truth, reducing it to this most simple formula: 'Truth is the idea considered as the exemplar of things.'¹

§ 5.

What do we mean by the word TRUTH, when we say that truths are many?

1119. There are, then, as many *truths* as there are or may be exemplar-ideas of things. And it is in this sense only that the word *truth* is used in the plural number; as when the Psalmist says, 'Truths are become fewer.' 'Diminutæ sunt veritates a filiis hominum' (Psal. xi.), or when, speaking of a particular truth, we say, 'This truth is very important.' Thus Dante sings:—

. . . Di bella *verità* m'avea scoperto,
Provando e riprovando il dolce aspetto (*Par.* iii.)
. . . Had of fair truth unveiled the sweet aspect,
By proof of right, and of the false reproof. (*Cary's translation.*)

1120. Now the exemplar-ideas, considered in themselves, are as many as are the perfect *specific ideas* (646-656), by which we know things positively and fully; but relatively to us they may be said to be as many as are the most complete ideas we can obtain of each thing.² Therefore it is usual to

¹ Hence S. Thomas observes that, accurately speaking, truth is in the understanding; and that to speak of it as being in things, is to use the same kind of metaphor as when we say that a medicine is healthy, whereas in reality the healthy condition is only in the animal (*De Verit.* q. i. iv.). Besides this testimony of the Angelical Doctor, I might, in confirmation of the doctrine I have laid down, quote a much earlier authority, that of S. Augustine. I have said, that the *essence* of a thing is what we think in the idea of that thing (648). Now S. Augustine teaches, that the essence of a thing is precisely its *truth*: 'Truth is not a property of the essence; because, if it were, in the same manner as we say, "truth is a property of the essence," we could say the con-

verse of this, since TRUTH AND ESSENCE ARE ONE AND THE SAME THING.'—'Veritas non est proprium essentia, quia si sic, qua ratione dicitur: veritas est proprietas essentia, posset dici e converso, CUM OMNINO IDEM SINT.'

² The perfect exemplar (or archetype) of things considered *in se*, is simply the *specific idea* in its *absolutely* complete state. But as this cannot be attained by us, so we are obliged to take as the *exemplar*, or *rule* for judging of the truth of things and propositions, the best idea (specific or generic) available to us. And if all we can have is purely a *negative generic idea*, whereby we think a *nominal essence* only, we shall, for want of a better, have to be content with this in our judgments on the things relative to it. Nevertheless all these

say that everything has its truth in the species to which it belongs; and S. Thomas, in agreement with the great thinkers of old, teaches that 'Of many true things, the truths are many; but of one thing only, there is only one truth' (*De Verit.* q. i. iv.). So in like manner we must say, that all the individual things belonging to one species have one truth only, because, as I have before observed, they have only one exemplar, one idea, which perfectly represents them and makes them known (501 etc.).

§ 6.

What do we mean by truth, when we use this word in the singular and in an absolute sense?

1121. Now all these truths are either *specific* or *generic*,¹ each having reference to the class of things determined and constituted by it.²

But in ordinary discourse the word *truth* is also used in an absolute sense, and then always in the singular number, in which sense even the Sceptics say, 'Truth cannot be known,' or, 'There is no such thing as truth,' or they make use of other similar expressions. Now what is the meaning which men attach to the word *truth* when used in this way?

imperfect ideas are always *true*; that is, they are part of the perfect idea, which is the *truth* or supreme exemplar and rule of things, as I have already stated (648 etc.). Therefore our capacity to judge of the true and the false, is more extensive in proportion as the rule we follow in our judgments comes nearer to the highest exemplar.

¹ Considered in themselves, the *truths* of finite things are always *specific*; but relatively to us, when we have only a *generic* idea of the thing, this idea, in default of a better, holds the place of truth, is the exemplar according to which we judge. In such case, however, in order that our judgments may be secure from error, they must fall within the sphere of the generic characteristics, and are of no value as regards the specific ones, for which we have no exemplar or *rule* to guide us in judging.

² The expression the 'truth of a

thing,' has three meanings, which should be kept clearly distinct. It may signify the *exemplar-idea of the thing*; and this is its proper and more natural meaning. But it may also signify 'The truth which is contained in a thing;' in which case, 'The truth of a thing,' is precisely synonymous with a 'true thing,' that is, it expresses the perfect agreement or correspondence which the *thing* has with its exemplar, its idea, in a word, its *truth*. Lastly, if that true thing is, or is taken as an exemplar, then the expression 'The truth of this thing' means precisely the same as, 'This truth.' Thus when Boccaccio says, 'Niun però alla verità del fatto pervenne' (*Gior.* viii. p. 4), the *fact* is taken for the exemplar, for the truth itself, and the meaning is: 'No one could arrive at the discovery of this truth—namely, of this fact.'

The specific idea is an *exemplar*, but restricted to one class of beings, which it represents to us, or enables us to know.

Now the individuals of the same species have a given mode and grade of being which limits and distinguishes them from those of other species. Nevertheless, no matter of what species they may be, they all have one thing in common, *i.e.* being (considered abstractedly from all grades and modes), since they all are. Therefore the idea of being is that which represents all beings of every species, and empowers us to know them all. To this idea therefore all possible species are reduced, so that we might term it the *species of species*.¹

Moreover, the *idea of being* is distinguished from all species and genera by this also, that they are but that same idea with certain limitations.

Since, then, each species and genus of things has its own proper exemplar or truth in the respective specific or generic idea; and since besides this there is also, above all others, the idea of pure being, which is the exemplar, and therefore the truth of all possible species and genera; it necessarily follows that this idea is *the truth* of all things.

The idea of being, then, acquires, as I have said elsewhere, the name of *truth* when we consider it in the relation of *exemplar* of things in so far as they are cognisable by us.

The one universal, absolute *truth*, therefore, by means of which we know all things, lies in the *idea of being*; for this idea is the universal exemplar representing that in which all things are equal.

1122. S. Augustine considered truth in this absolute sense when he defined it: 'That which reveals being.' This is the same as saying the *idea of being*, because it is by this idea we are made to see that which is: 'Veritas est qua ostenditur id quod est' (*De vera Relig.* c. xxxvi.). This agrees with the definition of S. Hilary: 'Verum est declarativum aut manifestativum esse' (*Lib. v. De Trinit.*), *i.e.* 'Truth is *being*,

¹ The thought of *being* may be found in two modes, that is, either *imperfect*, in which case we have only a simple *notion* of being, and this is the mode in which we have it in us by nature; or else

perfect, in which case we should know also all the properties consequent upon notional being; and in this mode it is not found in us. But this distinction will be made clearer in § 7.

considered as the principle whereby things are shown or manifested to us'; which is again the idea of being ever present to our mind.

So when S. Anselm says: 'As time stands to all temporal things, so does truth stand to all true things' (*De Verit.* c. xiv.), he speaks of this one and absolute truth, designated by S. Augustine as that 'Incorporeal light in which the mind sees all the things it knows' (*De Trin.* xii c. xv.).

ARTICLE III.

That the idea of being is truth, is proved by passages from the 'Itinerarium' and from S. Thomas.

1123. Truth, then, is the means by which we know. If therefore we can ascertain what that means is by and in which we know things, we shall have found what truth is.

On this point the author of the *Itinerarium* expresses himself as follows: 'The operation of the intellective power consists in the perception which the understanding has of terms, propositions, and inferences. Now the understanding perceives the meaning of terms when it comprehends what each of them is, as expressed in its definition. But that definition requires to be made by means of higher ideas, and these by means of still higher, and so on, until we arrive at the highest and most universal ideas, without knowing which it is impossible to define the inferior ones. Unless, therefore, we know what *being per se* is, we cannot fully know the definition of any particular substance.'¹

Thus according to this great authority all knowledge finally resolves itself into the knowledge of *being* pure and simple (*ens per se*): and it is by the knowledge of this that we know all things else; the means therefore by which we

¹ 'Operatio autem virtutis intellectivæ est in perceptione intellectus terminorum, propositionum et illationum. Capit autem intellectus terminorum significata, cum comprehendit quid est unumquodque per definitionem. Sed definitio habet fieri per superiora,

et illa per superiora definiiri habent, usquequo veniatur ad suprema et generalissima, quibus ignoratis, non possunt intelligi definitive inferiora. Nisi igitur cognoscatur quid est ENS per se, non potest plene sciri definitio alicujus specialis substantiæ' (*Itin.* cap. iii.).

know things is the idea of being, therefore the idea of being is truth.

Let us now hear S. Thomas: 'As in scientific demonstrations it is necessary to stop at last at some principles known to the intellect through themselves, even so in the investigation of the nature of each particular thing: otherwise we should, in both cases, have to go on *ad infinitum*, and thus there would be an end of all science and of all knowledge of things. Now that which the intellect conceives primarily as the thing most known of all, and into which it resolves all conceptions, is being.¹ Wherefore it is necessary, that all other conceptions of the intellect should be taken from some addition made to being. But to being nothing can be added, as though it were a nature foreign to being, in the way in which a difference is added to a genus, or an accident to a subject, because *every nature is essentially being*.² But certain things are said to be an addition to being in this sense, that they express a mode of it which is not expressed by the word being taken by itself. Now the conformity which being has with the intellect is designated by the term³ truth.⁴

1124. Then he proceeds to demonstrate that truth is the cause of cognition: 'Every cognition is brought about by a

¹ I think it right to cite for my purpose a variety of weighty authorities, that it may be seen how this important and capital truth of philosophy was known generally by the most acute intellects of antiquity. For the same reason I shall not omit to mention that a like observation is found in Avicenna, as may be seen from his work on Metaphysics (Lib. I. c. ix.), to which S. Thomas refers here.

² That which is not being is nothing, and cannot therefore, *per se*, constitute an object of cognition. All knowledge has therefore no other object than *being*, either indeterminate or determinate.

³ The word *true* expresses properly a *true thing*, and consequently the conformity which the subsistent individual being has with the understanding; the word *truth*, on the contrary, signifies *ideal being* or the *idea of being*.

⁴ 'Sicut in demonstrabilibus oportet fieri reductionem in aliqua principia per se intellectui nota, ita investigando quid est unumquodque; alias utrobique in infinitum iretur, et sic periret omnino scientia, et cognitio rerum. Illud autem quod PRIMO intellectus concipit quasi NOTISSIMUM, et in quo omnes conceptiones resolvit, est ENS. Unde oportet quod omnes alie conceptiones intellectus accipiantur ex additione ad ens. Sed enti non potest addi aliquid quasi extranea natura, per modum quo differentia additur generi, vel accidens subjecto; quia QUÆLIBET NATURA ESSENTIALITER EST ENS. Sed secundum hoc aliqua dicuntur addere supra ens, in quantum expriment ipsius MODUM qui nomine ipsius entis non exprimitur. Convenientiam vero entis ad intellectum exprimit hoc nomen VERUM' (*De Verit.* q. i. art. i.).

conformity¹ of the knower² to the thing known, so that this conformity has been called the *cause* of cognition. The first comparison, then, of the being to the intellect is, that the being corresponds to the intellect: and this correspondence is called *Equation between the thing and the intellect*,³ and herein the *concept of truth* is formally completed.⁴ This, then, is what the meaning of the word *truth* adds to that of the word *being*, namely, the conformity or equation between the thing and the intellect; upon which conformity, as was said above, the knowledge of the thing follows. Wherefore, the entity of the thing (*i.e.* the being in so far as it is in itself), precedes the concept of truth; but KNOWLEDGE⁵ is *a certain effect of truth.*⁶

¹ In fact, the idea of being expresses and represents to us, or causes us to know, that which is in every real being. There is, therefore, a similarity between being in so far as *subsistent*, and being in so far as *ideal*, and the similarity consists in this, that the one is *being as possible*, and the other is the same being, but as in *act*. Herein lies the origin of the famous distinction made by all antiquity between *potentia* and *actus*. This is, no doubt, a thing mysterious and recondite; but are we on that account to deny it? It is a fact acknowledged by every age, by all peoples, and by all schools of philosophy. We must, then, start from it as from a primordial fact. However singular and obscure it may appear, it is not the less a fact, and therefore indubitably true. A false philosophical method, a self-satisfied ignorance, an affected modesty, may disown it to its own injury, but cannot make it non-existent.

² Of the *knower*, that is to say of the *idea* which is in the knower. This idea being intimately and formally conjoined with the human spirit, the spirit was credited with what belonged to the idea. Hence the saying of Aristotle, that 'the soul is, after a certain manner, all things' (L. iii. *De Anima*, ch. ix.). The uncertainty of this expression reveals itself by the qualification contained in it, *after a certain manner* (*quodammodo*), which betrays a certain hesitancy in the concept thereby indi-

cated. The sentence, therefore, reduced to proper and clear terms, would run thus: 'The idea of being, innate in the soul, and essential to it as intelligent, is, or rather becomes, all things in their state of possibility.'

³ That is to say, the idea of the thing which is in the intellect.

⁴ The relation of a subsistent being with the idea, in so far as that idea is occasioned or determined in us by that *being*, is what forms the 'true,' that is, causes the object to be *true*. But the *idea* itself, in so far as it is specific and perfect, considered in relation with the beings which refer to it, is their *truth*.

⁵ Things in so far as they are metaphysically *true*, that is, in so far as they correspond to the *exemplar idea* (in the Creator) whence they have proceeded, give us the knowledge of themselves. Nevertheless, though *true*, they could not be known to us, unless they were *true* relatively to us, that is, unless there were in our mind an *exemplar idea*, A TRUTH causing us to know them, and this is the *innate idea of being*.

⁶ 'Omnis autem cognitio perficitur per assimilationem cognoscentis ad rem cognitam, ita quod assimilatio dicta est causa cognitionis. Prima ergo comparatio entis ad intellectum est ut intellectui correspondeat: quæ quidem correspondentia adæquatio rei et intellectus dicitur: et in hoc formaliter RATIO VERI perficitur. Hoc est ergo quod addit verum supra ens, scilicet

ARTICLE IV.

A new demonstration that the idea of being is the truth.

§ 1.

The varieties of expression multiply in appearance the species of scepticism.

1125. When a concept happens to be presented under a new form of expression, it is easily taken for a new concept.

This explains why the Sceptics have seemed to impugn truth with many different kinds of objections, and have divided themselves into sundry different schools; whereas on close examination we find that in reality the concept embodied in scepticism, as well as the philosophy which upholds it, is always one and the same, even as the truth which it combats, or rather imagines and professes to combat, is one.

Wherefore, in order to refute this erroneous system, or, to speak more properly, this pitiable mental hallucination, we must strip it of all the mere verbal trappings and seeming varieties which it has assumed, reducing the expression of its central concept to the simplest terms.

§ 2.

Apparent forms of scepticism.

1126. Scepticism has appeared under four principal forms. They are as follows:—

First form: Some Sceptics have maintained that there is no such thing as truth.

Second form: Some have limited themselves to saying, that truth cannot be known.

Third form: Some have asserted that all the truth we can know is purely relative to ourselves, *i.e.* subjective.

Fourth form: Some, without committing themselves to any positive statement, have said that everything must be considered as doubtful, the existence of truth included.

conformitatem, sive adæquationem rei et intellectus; ad quam conformitatem, ut dictum est, sequitur cognitio rei. Sic

ergo entitas rei præcedit rationem veritatis, sed COGNITIO EST QUIDAM VERITATIS EFFECTUS' (*De Verit.* i. 1).

§ 3.

Properly speaking, there can be but one form of scepticism.

1127. The third of the above forms of scepticism asserts that truth is merely *subjective*.

Now *subjective truth* is not truth. To call it so is an abuse of language; and an abuse of language cannot constitute the foundation of a system.

Again, to say that truth is subjective is the same as to deny that man knows any truth at all. The third system must therefore be reduced to one of the first two, from which it differs only in appearance; that is, we must either deny that man has any knowledge of truth, in which case we fall into the second system, or else deny the existence itself of truth, and then we have the first system.¹

¹ The *subjective truth* of the modern Critical Philosophy is a revival of the system put forward in ancient times by Protagoras, and described by Sextus Empiricus thus: 'Man is the measure of all things. Protagoras makes man' (the thinking subject) 'the criterion by which to estimate the reality of beings in so far as they exist, and nothingness in so far as it is non-existent. Protagoras therefore admits only that which appears to the senses of each individual. Such, in his opinion, is the general principle of our cognitions' (*Pyrrhon. Hypotip.* Lib. I. c. xxxii.). Now could Protagoras really have been in good faith when he said that truth is subjective, or (as Sextus Empiricus calls it) *relative* (*ibid.* and *Advers. Logicos*, 60-64), that is, can we believe that he really did not know that relative truth is not truth at all? Or rather may we not reasonably suspect, that he used the phrase *relative truth* in order to avoid shocking common sense, by leaving it to be supposed that he was saving truth, whilst in reality he intended to deny and annihilate it? This want of candour has always been the characteristic of Sophists. Disingenuousness, the using of terms in an equivocal sense, an attempt to insinuate doctrines which fear the light of day, while pretending to convey quite a contrary impression, is the usual trick

employed by those deadly foes of human reason. As regards Protagoras, this is no rash judgment; his bad faith is attested by all antiquity. Suffice it here to quote the testimony of Plato, who in his *Theætetus* makes Socrates speak unreservedly on the subject. After setting forth the teaching of Protagoras on subjective or relative truth in the same sense as had been done by Sextus Empiricus, Socrates adds, that although Protagoras presented his doctrine in this form to the people, with his own disciples he was more explicit, and denied straightway the existence of truth. Let us hear Plato himself.

'Socrates.—By the Graces! is not Protagoras supremely wise? This truth which he only obscurely hints at when speaking to us simple people, he revealed openly to his disciples.

'*Theætetus*.—How is this, Socrates? Pray explain.

'Socrates.—I will, for this is not by any means a matter of small account. Protagoras meant to say, that there is nothing in itself true, nothing real. That which you call great, might be little; that which you call ugly, might be beautiful, and so on. For there is nothing that is one, *i.e.* fixed to a determinate quality. That which by an erroneous way of speaking we affirm to exist, is nothing but a certain ever-

1128. But neither do the first and second system differ in substance, but only in expression.

In fact if, with the second system, I say that truth is a thing about which I know absolutely nothing, it is clear that I cannot legitimately affirm its existence. Therefore this system, when sifted to the bottom, amounts simply to a doubt as to whether truth exists or not. The only affirmation it makes is, that truth lies beyond our power of knowing.

Now the first system comes to the very same; for he who affirms that truth does not exist, affirms also that he knows nothing of it; and if he knows nothing of it, he is not in a position to deny it. Consequently his system also amounts in reality to affirming that truth is not known, and to doubting its existence.

1129. But this system, composed of an affirmation and a doubt, could easily be refuted, since it involves a contradiction in terms. Hence we find in antiquity such a refutation of it as no one has ever been able to say one word against. Lucretius puts it in the following elegant lines:—

Denique, nil sciri si quis putat, id quoque nescit,
An sciri possit, quum se nil scire fatetur :
Hunc igitur contra mittam contendere causam,
Qui capite ipse suo instituit vestigia retro.
Et tamen hoc quoque uti concedam scire ; at id ipsum
Quæram, quum in rebus veri nil viderit ante
Unde sciat, quid sit scire, et nescire vicissim.¹

shifting mixture of things, a continual change; nothing is permanent, all comes and goes without a moment's pause.'

In this passage we see, (1) that what Protagoras really and truly intended was the annihilation of all truth; (2) that not daring to speak out his mind plainly before the public, he reserved this for his disciples alone; (3) that publicly he wanted to pass for a defender of truth, making it, however, relative to each man, or subjective—a mode of expression which not all understood to imply the absolute proscription of truth; (4), and lastly, that Protagoras had fallen into this error in consequence of having exclusively confined his attention to the knowledge of sensible things,

which contain, as I have shown, much that is subjective, or dependent on the nature and state of the percipient subject (887 etc.). He had not therefore risen with his reflection to the formal part of knowledge, nor penetrated into its essentially objective nature; but without knowing what it was, he involved it in the proscription of the material and sensible element. Thus the sophism of Protagoras is the same as that to which I have reduced the error of the Sceptics (1066 etc.), and which may be expressed by the formula, 'To extend to the whole of human knowledge that which applies only to a part.'

¹ L. IV. This last reason of Lucretius is subtle, and well worthy of

This ancient refutation of the Sceptics is, as I have said, unanswerable, and we might well feel astonished at seeing scepticism continually reproducing itself, if we did not know that it is not a philosophy but a mental disease, or rather a frenzy to which poor humanity is subject.

1130. In fact, the formula to which we have reduced scepticism, 'Truth cannot be known,' is incapable of being amended; it must go altogether; for, express or modify it as you will, it still remains essentially absurd and self-contradictory. I will try to make this clear.

Let scepticism be reduced to the celebrated formula: 'No truth can be known save this, that truth cannot be known.'

The one truth which you here except, is that 'Truth cannot be known.' But if we know this one truth, it is false to say absolutely that truth cannot be known. In order that the excepted proposition might be true, it would have to contain also the exception by which you pronounce it true. But if so, we shall then have a formula which can never be completed, because involving an *ad infinitum* process. It will be the following: 'No truth can be known save this that no truth can be known, save this that no truth can be known, save this' . . . and so on with the same repetition for all eternity. Thus we see that scepticism stands essentially on a formula which is impossible of conception. I say *impossible*

special attention. It comes to this: If you deny truth, you deny knowledge as well. Not only is it a manifest contradiction for you to affirm that you do not know truth, since to *affirm* is to present a proposition as true; but you also contradict yourselves by simply using the terms *truth* and *falsehood*, *knowing* and *not knowing*; because if you understand the value of these words, you already know what truth is and what falsehood, what it is to know and what not to know. But how can you know all this, when, according to your own statement, it is impossible to know what is truth or falsehood, knowing or not knowing? In fact, truth is not something outside the understanding; it is *in* the understanding and, if so, you have therefore

some knowledge, you are in possession of some truth. To do away with *truth* is, therefore, to do away with *knowledge*, and consequently with speech; and so you would remain stupid and mute as fishes. Thus you could no longer contend either for truth or against it: you would cease to form a philosophical school; from human beings you would be metamorphosed into mere animals, or, if you prefer it, into stumps of trees. Such is the only result of scepticism if consistent with its own principles. The Sceptic is interdicted from asking any question or uttering a single syllable. His system can act only on himself. Self-degradation, self-annihilation, and scepticism, are synonymous terms.

of conception, for what does not admit of being pronounced cannot be an object of thought. The Sceptic therefore, being condemned in virtue of his system to spend his whole life in the useless attempt to enunciate a formula which can convey no meaning until it has been finished, is *ipso facto* debarred from the possibility of thinking. We may say that he is always *trying* to think, but *think* he never does, for no one is said to have a thought, unless he has something definite before his mind.

1131. Now it was when this observation had been made, and the ancient scepticism had disappeared in consequence, that Pyrrho arose and attempted to set up a more refined scepticism, the scepticism of *doubt*.¹

He therefore said, 'I affirm nothing, and I deny nothing; but I doubt everything.' His object was to save himself from the contradiction charged on the Sceptics who had preceded him.

Now this theory of *universal doubt* is the only form of scepticism that can in any way put in a claim for apparent consistency; we must therefore say something on this also.

§ 4.

What the sceptical theory of universal doubt would require in order to be consistent.

1132. First of all I wish to observe, that the fact of Pyrrho having proposed his system for the express purpose of avoiding the charge of self-contradiction, is proof palpable that he

¹ The term *Sceptic* (derived from σκέπτω) signifies, according to its etymology, a person who *observes* or *inquires* without coming to any definite conclusion. Now, considering that the subjects about which philosophers dispute belong to a *very advanced order of reflection*, that the faculty of *reflection* is subject to be led astray from an infinite variety of causes, and that this must have been particularly the case in pagan times, we need not wonder if it was in those times that scepticism arose. We may say that it consisted in the exaggeration of a right principle, the principle which recommends a

certain diffidence in oneself, a reasonable fear of the insufficiency of one's own powers, a prudent suspension of judgment; all which is presented in Socrates as the very acme of wisdom. So also Pyrrho's *Practical Reason*, whereby man determines himself to act according to necessity and the probable prospects of utility, is a disguise of that right principle which teaches that 'We must often decide on taking action upon mere probabilities,' a fact which proves that we are free agents, and that our practical assent to a proposition, *i.e.* the adopting of it as a rule of our conduct, depends on our own will.

believed at least one truth—the truth of the principle of contradiction. Therefore his fundamental axiom, ‘Nothing can be positively affirmed as true, but everything must be considered as doubtful,’ is itself a glaring contradiction.

1133. But to show still more clearly the absurdity of this system, I would speak to one of the modern Pyrrhonists thus: you say that in order not to be inconsistent, you will never commit yourself to a positive affirmation, but that concerning every point on which your opinion may be asked, you will uniformly answer, ‘This is doubtful.’ Now pray look at the matter calmly, and you will see that every such reply is directly opposed to your own principle. For by saying, ‘This is doubtful,’ you make a judgment, and therefore an affirmation. To exclude the affirmation, you might try and say, ‘It is doubtful whether this be doubtful.’ But what would this be? The very same affirmation, only removed one step back. Go on, then, and say, ‘It is doubtful whether it be doubtful that this is doubtful :’ alas! your formula is again affirmative; for you have begun by positively declaring that ‘the thing in question is doubtful.’ In short, the only possible way to set yourself right would be to invent a doubting formula actually composed of an infinite series of links. Until you can do that, *i.e.* until you can do the impossible, you will always have to begin with an affirmation.

Thus our refined Sceptic could, with the mere definition of his system, fill up all the books in the world, and when he had done so, he would still have to write an *et cætera*; and the disciples of a Professor of this school of thought may rest assured that they never will, to the end of their lives, succeed in hearing stated in full even so much as the title of the philosophy they desire to learn.¹

¹ The subjective truth of Protagoras and of Kant, admits of precisely the same process of reasoning; for in the system of subjective truth, doubt is a necessity. You tell me that man can know nothing of things as they are in themselves, but that all he knows is merely a subjective appearance. Let me ask you, then: Is this doctrine true in itself, or in appearance only? To be

consistent you must answer, ‘In appearance only.’ Now suppose I agree with you; I should then say, that the system of subjective truth is not true except in appearance or subjectively. But would this be sufficient? No, because consistency would bind me to say the same thing of the judgment by which I affirm the subjectivity of truth. But now the question arises; how do I know that

I sometimes fancy that were some divinity to come down amongst us and summon all the philosophers of the world to judgment respecting the merits of their various systems, the Sceptics would present a singular spectacle. The first question asked of the followers of each school would naturally be: 'What system do you profess?' Now to this question all the others would be able to give some definite answer, and a verdict of acquittal or condemnation would follow accordingly. But what when the Sceptics should be called upon for their statement? Obligated to speak without evasion, they would begin with the only true formula of their system: 'I doubt, whether I doubt, whether I doubt, whether I doubt' . . . continuing their interminable series of dubitations, until the judge, seeing plainly that he had to deal with maniacs, would vacate his seat, leaving them to continue their ludicrous outpourings, while the spectators, convulsed with laughter, would at last disperse, and go still laughing to their homes.

§ 5.

Scepticism makes thinking an impossibility.

1134. It is clear, then, that scepticism, when brought to its ultimate expression (and to that it must come, unless it be prepared to own itself vanquished by affirming the truth), makes thought an impossibility.¹

this judgment itself has no other than an apparent or subjective truth? Certainly not by means of an absolute truth; for, by the hypothesis, there is no such thing as absolute truth for me. Do you not see what a strange system this is? In it, we are always at the beginning, always in a veritable see-saw, with no more chance of gaining ground than we should have in a mathematical calculation if we kept on perpetually repeating 'Once one is one.'

Let us apply this reasoning to some particular proposition of the Critical Philosophy. This philosophy teaches that we have in us subjective forms, which render all our knowledge purely subjective. But how does it prove the existence of these forms? It cannot prove it otherwise than by the *principle*

of causation. It sees that our cognitions are invariably distributed under a certain limited number of heads, and hence it concludes, that there must be in our soul as many causes, which therefore determine subjectively our cognitions; and these causes it calls *forms*. Excellent! And pray what is the value of the principle of causation in the Critical Philosophy? No other than subjective; this principle is itself a form of the understanding. Therefore, the reasoning by which Kant came to that conclusion is a mere quibble, a begging of the question, an irretrievably vicious circle. I may observe, that an objection somewhat similar to this was urged against Kant in Germany by the elegant author of *Enesidemus*.

¹ Hence the sentence of S. Thomas,

The reason is, that the Sceptic admits of no thought save one, and this one thought can never be reduced to its act.

§ 6.

The idea of being¹ and the truth according to which we judge of things, are one and the same.

1135. This thesis is a logical outcome of the things already demonstrated in the previous chapter.

I there treated first of the *idea of being* (1065 etc.), and then of *truth* (1112 etc.); and in both cases the disquisition led to precisely the same result, although by roads apparently very different.

The consideration of the *idea of being* ended in the conclusion that this idea constitutes the *possibility* of thinking (1090 etc.), and that therefore those Sceptics who have denied *being*, have made thought impossible, thus contradicting themselves by the very first act of thought they were presuming to make.

A similar conclusion was arrived at through the consideration of *truth*, inasmuch as the sceptical denial of *truth* was seen to amount in ultimate analysis to a denial of the possibility of thinking (1134).

If, then, to deny *truth* is to make thought impossible, and if to make thought impossible is to deny the *idea of being*, it follows that the idea of being is truth. Therefore the idea of being and the truth by which we judge of things, are one and the same.

that 'It is impossible for any one to think the non-existence of truth,' '*Nullus potest cogitare veritatem non esse*' (*De Verit.* q. x. art. 12). To think, and at the same time to deny truth, is a contradiction. There cannot be, therefore, such a thing as a true

Sceptic; and those who call themselves Sceptics do not understand what they say, or they speak falsely, as will be seen more clearly further on.

¹ Objectively considered, the same as *ideal being*.—(TRANSLATORS.)

CHAPTER III.

OF THE USE WHICH CAN BE MADE OF THE IDEA OF BEING.¹

ARTICLE I.

The application of the idea of being generates the four first principles of reasoning.

1136. No sooner is the idea of being applied to things, than it becomes the principle of their cognition (558 etc.).

The different aspects under which this application is considered, and the diversity of the application itself, cause this self-same idea to assume the forms of various principles, so that it seems in a certain way to multiply itself (570 etc.).

The first four principles were deduced from the idea of being in the preceding section. These are (1), the principle of Cognition; (2) the principle of Contradiction; (3) the principle of Substance; (4) the principle of Causation.

It was shown that all these principles are nothing but the idea of being variously applied.

Hence the justification given of the idea of being holds good also for these principles, and the certainty of the one is the certainty of the others.²

ARTICLE II.

General principle of the application of the idea of being considered in its objective value relatively to the things outside our mind.

1137. The principle to which the title of this article refers is included in what has been already established; and what

¹ Be it observed, that in this chapter I do not yet speak of the actual application of the idea of being to external things, but only of the *possibility* of such application.

² S. Thomas has somewhere observed that there is, between the *first principles* and *being*, a most intimate connection. Sometimes he says, that

the understanding cannot err about the first principles, in the same way that it cannot err about the *being* of things. 'Intellectus semper est rectus, secundum quod intellectus est principiorum, circa quæ non decipitur EX EADEM CAUSA qua non decipitur circa quod quid est' [viz. the *quiddity*, the beingness of things'] (S. I., XVII., iii., ad 2^m).

I am now about to say is not anything new, but merely a more clear and explicit declaration of previous statements. In fact, when I demonstrated that the idea of being is *objective*, I also, by implication, proved against Kant and his followers, that we can, without any fear of error, affirm the existence of all such external things as are cognised by us in that idea.

Certainly the principle which causes the application of the idea of being to be valid also in regard to things not apparent to the senses, but considered purely in themselves, was not observed by Kant.

This principle is the following: 'That which our internal reasoning concludes about external things by a necessary inference, must be true also in regard to the things themselves, because, if it were not true, that internal reasoning could not have taken place.'

1138. This is the same as to say: the reasoning does actually take place, and it is characterised by intrinsic necessity. Kant admits as much, but then asserts that this intrinsic necessity is exclusively confined to the *ideal order*, and cannot therefore be applied to the things considered in themselves (*per se spectatas*). Now to this I reply, that if our reasoning had no force relatively to the things considered in themselves, it could not be true and necessary even in the order of pure ideas.

We are therefore certain of external things, because this certainty is a *necessary condition* of and already included in the certainty we have of the ideal relations. Since, then, the second of these certainties is conceded, the first cannot be denied.

What produced in our Philosopher the contrary impression was the erroneous supposition that there are two separate kinds of certainty, the one internal and the other external. He did not observe, that internal certainty exists only because what we interiorly pronounce is verified exteriorly, so that there is but one certainty, and it consists in the correspondence between that which we think and that which is.

1139. This arises from the fact already stated, that knowledge is essentially *objective*. What is the meaning, let me

ask again, of the expression 'Knowledge is essentially *objective*'? The meaning is that knowledge terminates essentially in an object, that it does not end in itself, nor in the act of the knower, but in another entity, whether that entity be ideal or real. Hence in the objectivity essential to knowledge the truth of the object known is necessarily included. Therefore there are not two certainties, one being the certainty of the cognition, and the other that of its object; but the object and the cognition *synthesise*; and when, by a judgment, we affirm that our cognition has that object which it has, then certainty is the attribute of our judgment. To say, therefore, that 'Our knowledge is characterised by necessity,' is the same as to say that the object which we know by it must *necessarily* be such as it is there presented to us, and cannot be otherwise. Thus the intrinsic and essential *necessity* which we find in our knowledge is the certain proof of the truth of its objects.

1140. The principle of cognition,¹ and that of contradiction,² suppose *possible being*, and suppose it as an essence distinct from that of ourselves, the thinking subjects, as a something set opposite to us. The intrinsic necessity, therefore, which our intelligence perceives in these two principles, is valid for concluding with reference to things considered in themselves and apart from any affection of our own. This simply means that our knowledge, characterised by *necessity*, deposes that 'the act by which we subjectively exist, is wholly distinct from the act by which things exist as objects of thought'; therefore the necessity characteristic of our knowledge implies also the necessity of this essential distinction between *being* and *ourselves*.

1141. The same must be said of the other two principles, of Substance and of Causation.

From the accidents perceived, I infer the real existence of a substance; from an event or operation I infer the real existence of a cause. The actual subsistence of this substance

¹ I have formulated it thus: 'The object of thought is being' (559 etc). *not being* cannot be an object of thought' (*ibid.*).

² '*Being* and at the same time

or of this cause is involved in the necessity of these principles. Granted that I have not perceived immediately with my senses either the substance or the cause; it suffices that I have perceived the accident, or the event or operation. My certainty of that which my senses have perceived makes me certain also of that which they have not perceived (namely, the substance or the cause), since what they have not perceived is a *sine qua non* of my knowledge. The truth, therefore, of external things, being a necessary condition of my internal knowledge, is as certain as this knowledge itself; nor can the latter be admitted if the former be denied. In fact, if the substance and the external cause were not true and real, my internal proposition, 'given the accident or the effect, the substance or the cause must necessarily subsist,' would be false. But this proposition is as true and necessary as are the principles of contradiction and cognition; and these are as necessary as the idea of being—the source of necessary certainty. If, then, we admit that these principles are necessarily true, we must likewise admit them to be valid when applied to real things outside the mind and considered in themselves: since this second conception is identical with, or certainly indivisible from the first.

1142. It may be said that the whole of this reasoning supposes the veracity of the *perception* of sensible realities. This is true. But that veracity cannot be impugned by those who admit the internal validity of knowledge, because the perception is internal; and it is in the modification produced within us by the action of sensible realities, that we find these two things at once, (1) ourselves as modified, (2) something which is not ourselves. This second or extraneous element is therefore revealed to us in a fact internal to ourselves, I mean in the consciousness we have of suffering a *passion*.

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE PERSUASION MEN HAVE CONCERNING BEING OR TRUTH, AND CONCERNING THE FIRST PRINCIPLES OF REASONING.

ARTICLE I.

All men feel necessarily persuaded that truth exists, and that the first principles of reasoning must necessarily be true.

1143. Certainty is 'a firm and reasonable persuasion in conformity with truth' (1044).

In this definition two principal elements are contained : 1st, truth ; 2nd, persuasion.

Hitherto I have spoken about truth, I will now speak about persuasion.

Not all persuasions are subject to the human will ; there is one which has been implanted in us by nature itself, and this by the same act whereby nature has infused into us, and as it were affixed to our souls¹ ideal being, or the truth according to which we judge of things.

¹ I have already stated that the *spiritual vision we have of being* is the primordial fact from which philosophy should start (1071). Undoubtedly this is a marvellous fact, and quite unique of its kind ; but we must not plead its singularity and mysteriousness as a pretext for refusing to admit it. We must not say as many do : 'I cannot understand how this fact can be, therefore it does not exist.' We must, on the contrary, with a truer and more reasonable modesty say : 'This fact is indeed a mystery to me ; I do not find anything like it in all nature ; its character is such that the laws which govern the other facts of sensible experience are utterly inapplicable to it ; nevertheless I cannot deny that it exists.' In truth, all we can do with this fact is to analyse it,

and then marvel at it. Such analysis, if made carefully and without prejudice, will show us that the root of things is in ideas, in the intelligence ; that the same *essence* which is thought in the idea, is also that which subsists ; only that in the idea it is in a *potential*, whilst in the subsistence it is in an *actuated* state. Such is the great and solemn teaching of antiquity. The ancients taught (1) that 'the essence is what we think in the idea' (646), and (2) that the subsistence is the essence actualised. 'Oportet . . . quod ipsum ESSE comparetur ad essentiam—sicut actus ad potentiam' (S. Thomas, S. I. III. iv.). According to this doctrine, then, the essence which we think in the idea is the same as that which subsists, excepting this, that the first is the

Now this persuasion of the first truth is not imposed or forced on us against our will ; neither is it a blind persuasion,

possibility of the second, and the second is the *act* of the first. Hence S. Thomas teaches, 'That it may be said with propriety, that the being also (not merely its truth, its idea) is no less in the things than in the intellect,' because in the idea that same *being* is contained, though only potentially. If therefore we consider the being as *possible* (in which state it is seen in the idea), we can say that the essence is in the things as well as in the intellect ; but if we consider the idea of the being in its totality [*i.e.* as actualised. TR.] it will be more accurate to say, that in the intellect there is the *truth* of the being rather than the *being*. Let us hear the Angelical Doctor: 'Ipsa natura, cui advenit intentio universalitatis, puta natura hominis, habet DUPLEX ESSE, unum quidem materiale secundum quod est in materia naturali, aliud autem immateriale secundum quod est in intellectu' (In Lib. II. *De Anima*, Lect. xii.). And in another place, after having said that truth, properly speaking, is in the intellect, he subjoins : 'Quamvis posset dici, quod etiam ens est in rebus et in intellectu, sicut et verum, licet verum principaliter sit in intellectu, ens vero principaliter in rebus' (S. I. xvi. III). Every thing, every (finite) essence has, therefore, according to this ancient doctrine, two modes of being, two states, the one *potential*, the other *actual*. In so far as it is potential, it constitutes the *idea*, it is in the intellect, and the relation which it has with itself as actual, is called its *truth*. In so far as it is actual, it is the subsistent thing, has its own proper existence outside the mind, and is more properly called *being*. Herein lies the first origin of the distinction between *potentia* and *actus*, one of the most simple and necessary distinctions derived from the original nature of our knowledge. Hence it is very little susceptible of explanation, owing to its being immediately conjoined with the primordial fact of human knowledge, which fact does not admit of an explanation anterior to itself. Here I cannot help noticing a sagacious remark of Aristotle and of S. Thomas. In investigating the cause of the materialism which is found

in the early Greek philosophers, they discovered it in the fact of these philosophers not having known this distinction between *potentia* and *actus*. Who would have supposed that the want of such a distinction would lead to materialism? Superficial thinkers would be apt to look upon this distinction as a mere Scholastic subtilty, of no practical importance. It is, on the contrary, characteristic of the loftiest intellects to detect the relations between facts seemingly the most unconnected, to point out the remotest causes of what takes place in the vicissitudes of human things and in the minds of men ; to foresee in the principle of a doctrine those ultimate consequences which it must infallibly develop, but which the great majority does not see until time has actually worked them out and thus enabled men to judge of the principle itself by that most common and the most clinching of arguments, the argument called *reductio ad absurdum*. It was by such sagacity as this that Aristotle and S. Thomas traced materialism to the want of distinguishing between *potentia* and *actus*. In fact, if we think only of the *actual*, and not also of the *potential existence* of things, we can indeed form a just concept of that mode in which things materially subsist, but not of that in which they exist in our intelligence. For the *act* by which things subsist is identical with their material subsistence ; whereas their *potentiality* is synonymous with their existence in the mind. If, then, only the actual subsistence of these things is known, the nature of the mind remains unknown. There remain only the things in their materiality ; and this is materialism. Wisely therefore did S. Thomas write: 'Quia antiqui naturales nesciebant distinguere inter *actum* et *potentiam*, ponebant animam esse corpus' (S. I. lxxv. I ad 2^m). *Potential essence* and *essence in the mind* are perfectly equivalent expressions. I have elsewhere shown that *potential essence*, *essence in the mind*, *idea*, *truth* (all phrases having the same meaning), are also identical with *representation*, or *similitude of subsistent things* (106 etc. and

but proceeds from the light of truth present to our mind, and so evident that whoever sees it knows it, *ipso facto*, to be true, for there could be nothing truer than truth. This follows from what we have said about the character and proper nature of being in general, which needs no corroboration from us, but is as a fact which goes without saying, a fact perfectly one and simple.

1144. If proof be needed that there is no man who is not persuaded by nature of the first principles of reasoning, you have it in the history of scepticism. As we have seen, the Sceptic who denies these principles places himself, logically, in the impossibility of thinking and of reasoning. And yet Sceptics think and reason; nor can they help doing so while they have an opinion to maintain. Therefore they unconsciously admit in fact what they profess to impugn in theory.

ARTICLE II.

The first principles of reasoning are also called 'Common notions.'

1145. Since, then, all men admit by nature the first principles of reasoning and follow them in practice, it comes to pass that these principles receive also the name of *Common notions*.

It must however be observed that they are *common*, because their intrinsic force of evidence is such as to cause every human being to know and accept them at once; but it would be an error to maintain (as a well-known living writer¹ seems to have done), that their invincible power of persuasion arises from the fact of their being common.

ARTICLE III.

What is 'Common sense'?

1146. Hence the said principles—together with those consequences which flow so obviously and proximately from

1020 etc.). I shall again have occasion to refer to this subject.

Now the *potential essence*, the *representation*, the *similitude*, present to our mind, is what constitutes the informing

principle of *knowledge*, the *intellectual light*. Thus do all these things receive a clear and intelligible definition.

¹ La Mennais.

them that any one who has the use of reason, however illiterate he may be, can draw them for himself¹—constitute what we call 'Common sense.'

Common sense, therefore, is nothing but that kind of reasoning which comes of itself to every human individual. The word *sense* here has no other meaning than this.²

1147. Therefore, common sense must not be confounded with the *common beliefs* or with the *traditions true or false* (for error also has its traditions), which come down from generation to generation, and are received on the authority of our fathers.

Hence the stigma implied by saying of a man that he has no common sense, is not at all the same thing as to say of him that he does not adhere to the common beliefs.

He who reasons against what is affirmed by common sense, necessarily unreasons, or rather has lost the proper use of reason, because he does not see that which everybody else, how small soever be his mental capabilities, sees as soon as he

¹ Reid, the first author of the philosophy of *common sense*, thus defines it : 'Common sense is that degree of judgment which is common to men with whom we can converse and transact business' (VI. *Essay on the Powers of the Human Mind*, Ch. II.).

And a little further he says : 'All knowledge and all science must be built upon principles that are self-evident ; and of such principles every man who has common sense is a competent judge when he conceives them distinctly. Hence it is that disputes very often terminate with an appeal to common sense' (*ibid.*). This appeal is also made as a means of steadying the wavering good faith of an adversary who shows himself unwilling to yield to evidence accepted by all. It is like crying shame on his obstinacy : in short, it is an *argumentum ad pudorem*.

Taken in this aspect, *common sense* is not even an *authority*. We do not use it as an argument for convincing the understanding, but as a penalty imposed on a man's unwillingness to confess the truth. In another place I will consider *common sense* under the aspect of an *authority*. For the present it

is enough to observe that it would be inaccurate to place common sense in a judgment pronounced by men on any kind of subject. In philosophical language, those judgments only fall under the name of 'common sense' which not merely most men, but all men, form on the first principles of reasoning, and on their proximate consequences. The other portions of human knowledge, which are remote consequences of those principles, are wholly foreign to *common sense*. We should indeed be in a bad plight if all that we can be certain of were reduced to those things which all men know, and know with certainty !

² The immediate intuition which our intellect has of truth, is a *spiritual sense* (553 etc.). In this case the word *sense* has not, properly speaking, the same signification as the *common sense* referred to in the text, because the latter includes only those truths which everybody sees immediately, or almost immediately. As regards the general use of the phrase *common sense*, I may remark that it confirms the doctrine respecting that *sense* which I attribute to the human spirit.

begins to reason. The habit of drawing conclusions opposed to those of the common sense of mankind, constitutes the state of *insanity*.

On the other hand, a man who opposes himself to the *common beliefs* is not called insane, but is set down simply as a bad reasoner if those beliefs are based on solid grounds, and also as guilty of impiety if, furthermore, they relate to sacred subjects. But if the beliefs, though common, are false or impious, such as were the idolatrous superstitions of old, he would deserve praise for his courage in declaring himself against the common prejudices.

ARTICLE IV.

An objection against the universal persuasion of the first principles of reasoning.

1148. Against the statement that man, by virtue of a law of his nature, cannot but see the truth of the first principles of reasoning, the following objection naturally presents itself:—

‘You find in certain times, and particularly in our own, men who absolutely deny these principles; therefore they are not persuaded of them, nor feel respecting them that conviction of which you speak.’

ARTICLE V.

Answer to the objection: distinction between direct and reflex knowledge.

1149. I admit the fact as stated; nay, I believe that men may be found who are in a certain way persuaded that they exclude in their speech and reasonings even the first principles of reasoning. I must therefore explain this fact, and the explanation will show that it affords no argument against that universal persuasion which I claim for the said principles.

We must distinguish two kinds of knowledge, the *direct* and the *reflex*. This distinction is of the most vital importance, and has been often indicated in the course of the present work.¹

¹ See especially 469 etc. and 547 etc. every act of the human mind is unknown to itself, and that to know any S. Thomas did not fail to observe that

1150. When I am asked: Do you know such a thing? Do you admit such a principle? and I give a reply; through what kind of knowledge do I do this? Certainly not through the *direct*, but through the *reflex* kind. In fact, in order that I may be able to say whether or not I admit a certain principle, I must reflect or turn my attention on myself, and examine the state of my mind. Thus and thus only can I find out the truth of the matter. The knowledge through which I was simply assenting to the principle was *direct*, the knowledge through which I discover that I was assenting is *reflex*.

So much for the distinction between these two kinds of knowledge.

1151. Now it is necessary to consider that the second or *reflex* knowledge is not always in agreement with the first or *direct*, but may be deceived in its judgment concerning it.

This happens when the reflection or examination of which I have spoken is made inaccurately, or in a hurried manner, or else under the influence of some prejudice, from whatever cause conceived, and which has the effect of distorting one's judgment. In such cases a person may be deceived, and believe and assert that he does not admit a principle which he in reality admits, or contrariwise. Strange as this limitation affecting the knowledge of ourselves may at first sight appear, it is an undeniable fact.

1152. We can thus very well account for the continual self-contradiction of the Sceptics. The fact that in their ordinary as well as scientific discourses they constantly make use of the principles of reasoning like other men (for how else could they discourse or reason?) is proof palpable that they admit those principles, although they are not aware¹ of doing so, nay, believe themselves to be doing the contrary. In so far, then, as they make this implied admission, they draw upon their *direct knowledge*; ² but in so far as they openly profess

of our mental acts whatever, we must make a new act, a *reflex* one, upon it. 'Alius est actus quo intellectus intelligit lapidem, et alius est actus quo intelligit se intelligere lapidem' (S. I. lxxxvii. 3).

¹ For example, Kant, after denying

the objective force of the *principle of causation*, makes use of it unawares for establishing his *forms* of the human spirit, as I have remarked above.

² The best thinkers of antiquity always taught that it is impossible for man to think the first principles of

to refuse assent to the same principles, they follow their *reflex knowledge*, which, by being in opposition to the *direct*, proves itself to be false and illusory.

ARTICLE VI.

We must be wary in believing those who say that they are not persuaded of the first principles of reasoning.

1153. It will be seen from the above, that those who tell us they are not persuaded of the truth of the first principles of reasoning, are either labouring under a deception, or seeking to deceive others.

We must therefore be very cautious how we give credence to such assertions.

Once allow that the first principles, instead of being, as they are, absolutely secured to every one of us by nature itself, may be fairly open to doubt, and you will find yourself not only unable afterwards to defend the cause of truth, but also inevitably drifted into some erroneous system.

Your admission will involve you in the necessity of conceding that human reason has really no one fixed point to start from. There will be nothing in the whole domain of truth which may not be called in question; you will be led to doubt the existence of everything, of your own self, of God. Even God himself, did He wish to reveal supernatural truths to man, would be unable to give him any infallible proof of the veracity of that revelation; for man would always have the dread upon him of being the victim of a fatal illusion, an *ignis fatuus*, since he would no longer have any eternal rule in his mind, any ineffaceable light, but only such lights as he could extinguish in himself. With all your abhorrence of scepticism, nay, while honestly intending to combat it, you would in spite of yourself be carried along by its current. To secure a firm footing for your reasoning, you would, like the Sceptics, be compelled to look out for something more satisfying, more certain than truth itself. Your supreme

reasoning as false. 'Ea quæ naturaliter rationi sunt insita, verissima esse constat, in tantum ut nec ea esse falsa

SIT POSSIBILE COGITARE' (S. Thomas, *Cont. Gent.* S. I. c. vii.).

principle of certainty would consist in some blind instinct, in some blind necessity, in an inevitable need of believing, in a mere suggestion of nature, in a mere authority which, because unsupported by reason, would be without value. Thus the new criterion, having no light of truth to vivify and justify it, might indeed produce in you a forced and sullen assent, but never that rational conviction which is engendered by the gentle persuasive force of truth alone.¹

ARTICLE VII.

The first means for correcting the reflex knowledge of those who deny the first principles of reasoning, is to show them that they are in contradiction with their direct knowledge.

1154. When a man has fallen into so extreme a delusion as to believe that he does not assent to the first principles of reasoning, nay, that he impugns them, the proper way of dealing with him is to make him see that he is in habitual contradiction with himself.

His *reflex knowledge* may be thus rectified through his observing more accurately in himself what his *direct* and natural knowledge is, to which his reflex knowledge, as being only its expression, ought to be conformed.

ARTICLE VIII.

The second means for correcting the reflex knowledge of those who deny the first principles, or reason amiss on the most obvious things, is the authority of their fellow men, which authority may therefore be called a CRITERION OF REFLEX KNOWLEDGE.

1155. It will also be found very useful for rectifying reflex knowledge, to appeal to the authority of our fellow men, thus utilising the natural inclination we all have to give credence to others.

Moreover, this kind of appeal may be further strengthened in the case of two persons differing in opinion upon even the most obvious things. For one may always say to the other: 'You will admit that all men are rational like ourselves.

¹ It is the case of De La Mennais.

Now here is my reason telling me one thing, and yours telling you the very opposite. Clearly, whichever of us is right, the other must be wrong. Would it not be well, then, to see how the point on which we are disputing is viewed by the great bulk of our fellow men? We shall thus be able to find on which side lies the error.'

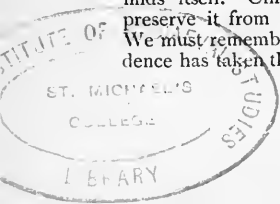
1156. If both accept this test, the error will instantly be corrected. In such case, authority is not the criterion of certainty in general, but only *the criterion of reflex knowledge*. The use of this criterion does not give the first principles of reasoning, but removes that prejudice which impeded the open and explicit recognition of their truth, and caused the natural and *direct* knowledge one had of them to be erroneously, though unconsciously, superseded by *reflex* knowledge. Thus the authority of others in those elementary notions which form the *common sense* of mankind (1146, 1147), is an excellent means for preserving man from error in his first intellectual steps. Wherefore nature herself, after giving man existence, does not leave him in a state of isolation, but that he may, in the earlier developments of his rational, as of his bodily powers, find help and guidance, places him in the bosom of society.

1157. But if the principle of authority were entirely discarded, the case would be much more serious. In confirmation, however, of what I have said, I will refer to what we are told about the mode of treating those lunatics whose insanity consists in wrong-headedness on the most obvious things of daily life. Their state is said to be much improved, and sometimes a complete recovery to be effected, simply by compelling them to conform to the regular habits and to the reasonings of other men.¹

¹ What I have said here supposes that mankind as a whole has not so far degenerated as persistently to deny the first principles of reason. This is impossible under the particular and supernatural conditions in which it now finds itself. Christianity will always preserve it from universal scepticism. We must remember that Divine Providence has taken the human race under

its special care, and in this sense it is quite correct to say that in mankind, taken as a whole, the truth never ceases to exist.

On the other hand, a careful study whether of the condition of the individual or of the race will lead to the conclusion that man, left to himself and without supernatural aids, is very much worse off, intellectually and morally,



than is commonly supposed. What leads our judgment astray in this matter is, that we forget that the humanity we have before our eyes is in point of fact divinely sustained by miraculous agencies. For my own part, long meditations on this question have convinced me that humanity without a supernatural revelation is bereft of moral force sufficient to preserve it from falling *en masse* into the most abject idolatry; that it is subject to such

mental feebleness, that, if scepticism is an impossibility for it, this is only because scepticism is a philosophical school, and therefore requires a certain exercise of the reasoning powers. Humanity would not have time to become wholly sceptical, because before that time could arrive it would be brutalised, and man in the savage state, more hapless than the brutes, would have, so to speak, annihilated himself.

PART III.

APPLICATION OF THE CRITERION OF CERTAINTY TO
DEMONSTRATE THE TRUTH OF MIXED OR MATERIALIZED
KNOWLEDGE.

CHAPTER I.

OF FACT IN GENERAL.

ARTICLE I.

Connection of the doctrines we are expounding.

1158. I have shown that the intuition of *being* is an undeniable fact, free from all possibility of error, and constituting our power of knowing what is different from and independent of ourselves.¹

I have remarked, however, that in this intuition taken by itself alone no affirmation of anything actually subsistent is contained, but only the apprehension or conception in general of the possibility of such, and that this apprehension or conception is what constitutes our power of knowing things in their own mode of being, independent of ourselves (1078 etc.).

It remains therefore to see how the simple apprehension or conception in general of the possibility of subsisting things outside ourselves can lead us to the affirmation of their real subsistence ; in other words, how, from the simple power of knowing given us by nature in the idea of being, we can pass to actually cognising real beings even different from us.

¹ See 1065—1111. Our knowledge is composed (1) of *being*, which we conceive in all our cognitions, and is the formal part of knowledge ; (2) of the *determinations* of being, which are

the material part. I affirm that our knowledge is perfectly objective in its *formal* part ; but, as I have often pointed out, I do not extend this affirmation to the material part.

I have already prepared the way for this by establishing an incontrovertible *principle* regarding the connection which passes between things considered in themselves and the necessary judgment we form on their subsistence.¹ It was the following: 'Those things, which we by a necessary inference judge to subsist, must of necessity really subsist in themselves, because if they did not, our interior judgment, and consequently the intuition of being we have by nature, and on which that judgment is based, would not be, as it unquestionably is, true and necessary' (1137-1142).

Hence I said that the necessity intrinsic to *being* produces the necessity of the external things being exactly as we judge them, *i.e.* subsistent in themselves, independently of us.

This principle which constitutes the *possibility of the application* of the idea of being to subsistent things considered in themselves, has its root, as I have also explained, in that marvellous property of being, absolute *objectivity*; nay, to speak correctly, it is only that objectivity exhibited in its particular relation with the things existent outside of us. For the objectivity of being, to express it again in other words, consists in this, that the *being* seen by our mind differs essentially from the *act* by which the mind sees it. The *act* by which we see, and the *object* seen by that act, are the two elements which an accurate analysis finds in the fact of our original intuition. These elements are of totally different, and therefore inconfusable natures. If, then, being presents itself to us as altogether different from and independent of us, we must needs admit that in this intuition (of which alone I am now speaking) there are already two acts given from the first, namely, the act of the intuiting subject and the act of being; and this second act keeps *being* present to the subject, and obliges the same to intuite it, so that, in this intuition, being *informs*, and the intuiting subject is *informed*.² Now in this manifestation of *being* on the one

¹ I do not say between *things* and *ideas*, because ideas alone do not contain the subsistence of things, but only their possibility. I say, therefore, between *subsistent things* and the *judgment we form on their subsistence*.

² For this reason I have said that the faculty of the intuition of *being*, is a *spiritual sense*, because the sense perceives by way of passivity, *i.e.* by *receiving*.

hand, and on the other this acceptance on the part of the intuiting subject, an acceptance, however, most congenial and free from all violence, lies necessity at once natural and logical.

Logical necessity, then, springs from a thing which is essentially different from, although seen by our mind. It refers to the *object* and not to the *act* of the mind. And now how does it come to pass, that we judge by a necessary inference that an external object actually subsists? I answer, through *logical necessity*, which, as I have shown, is but one, and that wholly comprised in being taken universally. What, then, does this judgment mean? It means that if the external thing did not subsist as we judge, *being* would not be. But being *is*, essentially and necessarily. Therefore the external object (the substance, the cause) must also subsist, because that intrinsic necessity demands this as its condition; and the vision of this relation between the two, is what makes us pronounce the judgment. The principle of the *possibility of the application* of the idea of being to subsistent things is therefore firmly established, and has in it the same certainty as the idea of being itself.

1159. But this principle, to be of practical value and service, requires and supposes several data. It supposes that we see that the same intrinsic necessity which belongs to *being* belongs also to the judgment by which we affirm that a substance or a cause subsists. Now how will it be possible for our mind to grasp this connection between subsistent things and the idea of being, a connection so intimate and necessary, that the subsistence of the former is proved by the necessity of the latter? In what circumstances must we find ourselves in order that we may see the logical necessity of affirming the subsistence of a thing external to us? Certainly, by the idea of *being* we have already gone out of ourselves, because *being* is a thing set opposite to our intellectual eye, but, so long as we remain with that idea alone, we have not reached beyond the sphere of simple possibilities. To cause us, therefore, to pass from the domain of things purely possible to that of things subsistent, some change

must take place in us, or at least some other element must fall under our consideration. What shall this change be? What new element will have power to bring about such a transition? What is the link connecting this element with the idea of being and with subsistent things in such a manner as to make us affirm that these subsist, and do so in virtue of the necessity originally inherent in being?

Such is the inquiry we have now to enter upon.

But this inquiry supposes another. By it we seek to find out the *principle* which authorises the judgment we form on the subsistence of things. But this judgment presupposes the idea of those things; or at least the idea must be coeval with the judgment, as I have shown to be the case in intellectual perception (405-407). And this gives rise to another question whereby the subject of the application of the idea of being is brought to a close—namely, how do we acquire the ideas of things? This was treated in Sec. V., to which I beg to refer the reader. But here I must show the relation of this with the three previous questions, indicating the place it holds in the investigation of the criterion of certainty.

The object of those three questions was, to explain 'How the mind (supposing it already possessed of ideas) can perceive things outside itself?'

The fourth, on the contrary, asks 'How external things can be so presented to the mind as to be perceived by it?'

Such is the inquiry on the origin of acquired ideas: the three former questions constitute the investigation of the criterion of certainty.

1160. They may be expressed in another form, thus:

First question: 'What is the *principle* whereby we know in general the *different from ourselves*?' My reply to this was: 'The idea of *being taken universally*; because what we see in this idea is essentially *object* or *set opposite to us*, and therefore virtually containing all that is *different from ourselves*, the knowing *subject*.'

Second question: 'What is the *principle* whereby we come to know with certainty that a particular thing different from ourselves really subsists?' To this I answered: 'This

principle consists in the link or relation of identity seen by our mind between the real subsistence of that thing and *ideal being*.' By saying *link* or *relation of identity*, I mean that the subsistence affirmed by a necessary inference partakes of, or is involved in the necessity essential to ideal being itself, and must therefore necessarily be true.

Third question: 'What is the principle whereby our mind comes to see that the real subsistence of an external thing is linked in the manner aforesaid with the necessity intrinsic to ideal being?' And to answer this question is the aim of the present chapter.

1161. It is evident, that this third question supposes, as I have said, that the idea of the thing which we judge to subsist is in our mind; and consequently it assumes the question of the origin of ideas as already solved. We must therefore revert to the origin of acquired ideas, and there find the justification of our judgment on the subsistence here spoken of.

By every acquisition of a new idea we lay hold of a fresh partial determination of being taken universally.¹ This partial determination is what I have hitherto called the *matter* of our cognitions. The two first questions, therefore, regarded *formal* knowledge only; by the third we pass to *materiated* knowledge, the legitimacy and validity of which kind of knowledge it will now be my duty to establish.

All *matter* of knowledge is a particular, a 'determinate,' or something therein contained. I shall include it under the general denomination of *fact*.

Let us, then, at once proceed to speak of the certainty of our knowledge of fact in general, *i.e.* of everything which is or happens; and first of all,—

¹ If we could have a positive idea of God (a thing impossible by natural means in this life), we should not thereby have acquired any materiated knowledge, but only increased our formal or objective knowledge. Whatever we know positively of God, is pure form and pure object of our mind as

well as of our knowledge; and so is that which the heavenly comprehensors know of Him. Hence the beautiful sentence of S. Thomas: 'Cum aliquis intellectus creatus videt Deum per essentiam, ipsa essentia Dei fit forma intelligibilis intellectus' (S. I. xii. v.).

ARTICLE II.

On fact in itself, neither felt nor known.

1162. It is evident, that if a fact falls under neither our sensitive nor our cognitive powers, we have no knowledge of it, and therefore no certainty ; since, in order to be certain of a thing, we must first know it. About a fact so considered, therefore, we cannot ask the question, how can we be certain of it?

Nevertheless, it will not be out of place here to make an observation.

When we know a fact, there are in that knowledge two elements : (1) the act by which we know, and (2) the object of that act, namely, the fact known. We can by an abstraction separate the first from the second, and thus understand that the fact exists in itself, even though it were not known by us. This plainly shows, that the act by which a thing (a fact) exists is (with respect to our mode of conceiving) of a nature altogether independent of the knowledge of it. The cognitive act and *the act of existing* are, therefore (with respect to us), two elements separate and incommunicable ; and this separation and incommunicability is a necessary condition of our *knowing* ; that is to say, without it knowledge would be impossible to us. Such is the result given by the analysis of our *knowledge*. This knowledge protests, as it were, that it is not the *being known* through it, and testifies that that being must necessarily be distinct from it.

1163. By reflecting on this we shall easily see (1), how vain are the efforts of the German Transcendental School to make out a compenetration and identification of *knowing* with *being*, of the intellectual act with the object of that act ;¹ (2) and hence that Transcendental Idealism is an absurdity, inasmuch as by taking away the essential separation between

¹ The *intellective act* (intuition), the *idea* (the ideal object, the possible), the *sensitive act* (sensation, sense-perception), the *term of the sensitive act* (matter), the *rational act* (intellective

perception), and the *real being* (the real object to which the idea relates) ; are six things distinct from one another ; and we must be very careful not to confound one with the other.

knowledge and *existence*, it renders knowledge impossible, because it destroys being *in se*, and therefore truth.

ARTICLE III.

On fact felt, but not cognised.

1164. The fact felt but not cognised consists either in our fundamental feeling or in its *corporeal matter*, if the feeling is of the material kind (1005 etc.).

Since the fact is here supposed to be felt only, and not cognised, it follows that it is not as yet the object of any knowledge. Therefore, here also the question, 'How can we be certain of this fact?' has no place, because certainty is only an attribute of *knowledge*, and where there is no knowledge there can be no certainty.

Feeling is unknown to itself, as I have often stated. We come to understand that a feeling *per se* unknown exists, through an abstraction by which we separate from it all knowledge, and consider it in its own self alone.

Now by considering *feeling* in this way we arrive at the same conclusion as we did with respect to *being* (1162), namely, that *feeling* is an element entirely separate from knowing. This separation is another necessary condition of our knowledge. Feeling is not by itself an *object*; it only becomes such through being cognised. If the *act* by which we cognise and the object of that act were not essentially distinct, knowledge would be impossible, because both these things are essentially necessary thereto.

It is not possible, therefore, to identify the act of *knowing* with that of *feeling*, or to make *knowledge* a mere development of *feeling*, and the attempts made in this direction by Schelling and others of that school have simply originated in a want of accuracy in analysing the fact of cognition.

1165. The result of these considerations is that our knowledge is essentially conditioned by the presence of three distinct activities, (1) the *insensitive*, (2) the *sensitive*, (3) the *cognitive*. But as to how these three activities are conjoined in one only being, and so linked together as to form one only

substance, is a question of a much higher order than the nature of the present treatise would permit me to enter upon.¹

ARTICLE IV.

How the matter of knowledge is presented to our spirit.

1166. *Being* has two modes, the *ideal* and the *real*. *Ideal being* or *being in the ideal mode* is the *form* of knowledge; *real being* or *being in the real mode* is its *matter*, which I have designated by the general name of *fact* (1161).

We have just said that the *fact* which constitutes the matter of our knowledge is distinguished into two primitive species, the one consisting in the activity of *insensitive* being, and the other in the activity of *feeling* (1162, 1164), which may properly be called two species of *real being*.

Neither of these two activities, however, can be made the subject of any question regarding its certainty so long as it has not become an object of the third above-named activity, that of *knowing*; because, as I have already stated, certainty is an attribute of knowledge only, and, by the hypothesis, there is as yet no knowledge here.

How then does the *matter* of knowledge (*insensitive being* and *feeling*) come to be presented to our intelligent spirit, so as to become an *object* of our knowledge?

1167. I answer: it is so presented by our own feeling, and this arises from the circumstance that we, the identical human subject, are at once *sentient* and *intelligent*.

Being endowed *ab initio* with (1) a fundamental feeling, and (2) the vision of being taken universally, we have by nature itself the *first matter* as well as the *form* of our cognitions (722).

The matter acquired afterwards is only a modification of the first and original matter (the fundamental feeling) (705).

1168. But it will be said: this explanation may serve for that part of the matter of our cognitions which consists in feeling, but not for that which consists in the simple activity

¹ The author has treated fully of this question in his *Antropologia, Psicología*, and other works (TRANSLATORS).

of real being devoid of feeling. How, then, do we form the idea of inanimate beings ?

My reply is, that this idea comes to us from the *matter* in which our own feeling terminates. The idea of inanimate beings resolves itself (1) into the matter of our feeling, and (2) into those forces which, by their action, modify that matter, and do not therefore suppose in them an activity different from that contained in the said matter itself ; since, according to the old adage, 'every agent does something similar to itself.'

ARTICLE V.

Universal principle by which the form of human reason is applied to the facts exhibited by feeling.

1169. The universal principle of every application of human reason to the facts presented by our feeling is as follows :

'The fact cognised must make an equation with the form of reason.'¹

Now it is evident that if the cognition of the fact makes an equation with the form of knowledge, the first will be truthful and certain, because the second is so.

It remains for us therefore to see how the principle is actually verified, but it will be necessary to premise some explanations.

ARTICLE VI.

Explanations concerning the above universal principle.

1170. The equation which, as I have said, must exist between the *matter* of cognition (considered in the cognition itself), and the *form* of all knowledge, lies in this, that whatever is *explicitly* and particularly contained in the materiated

¹ This is the same as I pointed out above (1160 etc.). It is the second of the three questions there mentioned, but treated here with greater fulness. S. Thomas caught a glimpse of it when he wrote : 'Ens quod est PRIMUM per communitatem, cum sit IDEM PER ESSENTIAM REI CUILIBET, nullius proportionem excedit, et ideo in cognitione cujuslibet

rei ipsum cognoscitur' (*De Verit.* q. x. a. xi.). 'Since that being which is the first by community' (*i.e. is predicated of all things*) 'is, by essence, identical with everything' (*see here the equation*), 'it does not exceed the proportion of any ; and therefore in whatever thing we know, we know it' (*being*).

knowledge, is already comprised in the form *implicitly*, and in a general manner.

1171. Let us try to make this clear by a syllogism.

'All men have the faculty of reason. Andrew is a man, therefore Andrew has the faculty of reason.'

The major of these three propositions, by declaring in general that all men have the faculty of reason, affirms implicitly that this particular man, Andrew, has this faculty; because if all men have it, each man, by whatever name he may be called, has it also. The third proposition therefore is included in the first in a general and implicit manner. In this sense I say that between the two propositions there is an equation, inasmuch as what is asserted in the third was already asserted in the first, and no new assertion is added. The particular proposition therefore identifies itself with the general.

1172. I will explain myself more clearly.

By the first proposition something is affirmed in general, viz. that all men have the faculty of reason. This affirmation contains a number of particular propositions, without, however, singling them out in detail. But since we do not think of any one of these propositions distinctly, and the subjects to which they refer are unknown to us, we are said to know them only implicitly. Now when our sense presents to us the individual subjects, those particular propositions are completed and become clear and distinct, and this through the same light by which we knew them before in the aggregate. The proposition, therefore, when materiated and completed, makes a perfect equation, not indeed with the general proposition as such, but with that particular proposition which was one of the number therein contained, though from our not being cognisant of the subject of which it was predicated we could not distinguish it.

In the case of the above syllogism, knowing by the first proposition that all men have the faculty of reason, we also know implicitly that an individual man called Andrew is possessed of it. But how can we know this in an explicit and distinct form until we know the man himself? Till then the proposition will remain absorbed in the general affirmation,

unseen, indistinct, confused—will have in it a virtual but not an actual existence. Now the general proposition makes a perfect equation with the particular so far as this, that after we have the perception of Andrew, and thus know distinctly the particular proposition, or rather in the very act of knowing it, we know in like manner that it was, unawares to ourselves, already contained in the general.

Hence the general proposition, by reason of its virtuality, can at one and the same time make equation with innumerable particular propositions: because in each equation the general proposition is taken in that peculiar relation which it holds to the particular proposition with which we confront and compare it.

1173. All therefore depends, as I previously observed, on the intellectual *perception*; for, given this perception, we know the individual subject, and consequently the particular proposition which makes equation with the general. But we have already shown that the intellectual perception is essentially truthful; and we have also shown that it is completed wholly within ourselves, and likewise, by examining the nature of a modification (*passion*) experienced in our sense, we found that not all which is *in* us belongs to us, but may be an element essentially *extraneous* to ourselves, as is exactly the case in perception. Therefore, as in *intuition* there is nothing to prevent our knowing what is different from us in an *ideal* mode, so in *perception* there is nothing to prevent our knowing what is different from us in a *real* mode.

ARTICLE VII.

An objection answered.

1174. But here a grave difficulty presents itself: 'How can the *matter* of cognition be identified with the *form*? and if the matter is not identified with the form, how can we say that it is contained in, and makes a perfect equation with it?'

I reply: The matter considered in itself is never identified with the form of cognition.¹ On the contrary, as I

¹ Hence arose the *dictum* of the ancients, that 'contingent things are not; God alone is.'

have already shown, the matter in itself (the fact, the thing considered simply as existent, or as felt) differs, not only from the form of cognition, but even from the cognitive act (1164 etc.). Hence I said, that the matter of cognition, separated from the cognition itself, remains unknown, so that no question of certainty can be raised concerning it (*ibid.*). What is identified therefore with the form of cognition is not the matter considered purely in itself, but the matter *in so far as it is cognised*. By cognising it, we simply consider it in relation to being, and see that it is contained in being as an actuation and term thereof; and we predicate being of it accordingly. Through this predication the matter receives a relation, a form which it had not before; it is objectivised: behold the identification. Antecedently to this the *matter* was, for us, such that we could not speak of it, because we knew it not; but we can do so now that the cognition, and therefore the identification, has taken place. On the other hand, this very circumstance exposes us to an error against which we ought to be on our guard. Thinking, as we always do, of the matter already *known*, we are very apt to imagine that the most common quality which we have predicated of it (*being*) is inherent in itself, forgetting that this quality, in so far as it is *common*, accrues to it from our mind, is a relation which it has with our cognitive act—a relation therefore existing, not in the matter itself, but in our mind only. It was by such an oversight as this, that Aristotle, and others of his school, were deceived into the belief that the mind could obtain the idea of the most common of all qualities (*being*) by the exercise of abstraction on particular things, whereas in truth it was the mind itself which placed this quality in the things, and hence in taking away the same from them was only taking back its own: for, as I have already said, what is *common* in things is simply the result of the relation they have with the intelligent spirit.¹

¹ From certain passages in S. Thomas, it appears to me that he had seen these two most important points:—(1) that *universality* is not drawn from things, but is placed in them by the mind; (2) that the essence of cog-

niton lies in the addition which the mind makes of *universality* to the things which fall under the senses. All this seems to be clearly expressed by the Angelic Doctor in the following extract:—“The phrase an ABSTRACTED

1175. And here be it observed, that when I laid down the principle that 'the certainty of the particular proposition which has reference to real beings, is the same as the certainty of the general proposition which has reference to possible beings,' by reason of the equation the two propositions make between them (1172), I was speaking of propositions composed of both *form* and *matter*, and therefore not of an equation between the matter and the form separately considered.

To all this it will perhaps be rejoined that, if such be the case, the matter of cognition, the fact taken by itself alone, is a thing mysterious and occult. And to this I entirely assent, and I add, that this mysterious and occult activity lying in the *fact*, is the root of knowledge itself; because knowledge itself is, in ultimate analysis, a fact originating from that supreme necessity which has its beginning in the Highest Nature of all, before which the philosopher must humbly bow down in adoration.

UNIVERSAL has two meanings; first, it means the nature itself of the thing; and, secondly, it means the abstraction or UNIVERSALITY' (according to the holy Doctor, then, abstraction is the same as the universality of the thing). 'Therefore the nature itself which happens to be understood, or abstracted, or universalised,' (observe here how 'intellection,' 'abstraction,' and the 'universality' of the thing are used synonymously) 'is in the singulars only, but the INTELLECTION itself, or ABSTRACTION, or UNIVERSALISATION, IS IN THE MIND.' 'Cum dicitur universale abstractum, duo intelliguntur, scilicet ipsa natura rei, et abstractio seu UNIVERSALITAS. Ipsa igitur natura cui accidit vel intelligi, vel abstrahi, vel intentio universalitatis, non est nisi in singularibus; sed hoc ipsum quod est INTELLIGI, vel ABSTRAHI, vel INTENTIO UNIVERSALITATIS, EST IN INTELLECTU (S.I. lxxxv. II. ad 2^m.)'. Here, however,

those who remember the distinction made by S. Thomas between the two operations which he assigns to the understanding, and which he sometimes calls *illustrari phantasmata* and sometimes *abstrahere phantasmata* (I explained this in the note to no. 495), may find a difficulty. Let them bear in mind, then, that S. Thomas, in this passage, uses the term *abstrahere*, to signify the operation which he elsewhere designates by the words *illustrari phantasmata*. For he distinguishes two species of abstraction (*ibid.* i. ad 1^m), the first of which he calls *per modum simplicitatis*, and this is perfectly synonymous with *illustrari phantasmata*, in which sense he takes *abstrahere* in this place: the second he calls *per modum compositionis et divisionis*, and this is the *abstrahere* properly so called, and which, in other places, he uses in contradistinction to *illustrari*.

CHAPTER II.

A FULLER EXPOSITION OF THE PRINCIPLE BY WHICH THE TRUTH OF MATERIATED KNOWLEDGE IN GENERAL IS JUSTIFIED.—THE FORMAL PART.

1176. Since the primordial fact of human knowledge (the intuition of being taken universally) does not admit of being justified by any reason extrinsic to itself, it will not be beside the purpose for us to continue our analysis of it in order to find its justification within itself.

This we will do in the present and following chapters, speaking, first, of the formal part of perception and cognition, and then of perception itself.

ARTICLE I.

In what the imperfect state which the innate idea of being holds in the human mind consists.

1177. I have already said that *being* is present to our spirit in an imperfect manner.¹ Let us by the analysis of this first and fundamental intuition try to ascertain in what the said imperfection consists.

It is easy to perceive, that what is wanting to the perfection of the being we see by nature, are its *terms*.

We conceive the activity called *being*, but do not see in what that activity ends, wherein it terminates. It is as if we knew that a man was at work, but did not know in what particular kind of work he was occupied; whether in making a statue, or a painting, or some other thing.

¹ I do not mean to say that the *being* present to our spirit by nature can, with respect to itself, be in an imperfect state. What I mean is that it is present to us in such a way that we

cannot catch full sight of it, but are under the necessity of perceiving it only imperfectly. The limitation and imperfection is all our own.

1178. Hence it comes to pass that,—

(1) The intuition of the said activity cannot by itself alone cause us to know any particular real thing, because real things are so many terms of it.¹

(2) The being seen in this intuition is *indeterminate*, that is, devoid of its terms; *universal*, inasmuch as it is capable of receiving all those terms which it has not; *potential* or *possible*, inasmuch as it has not a terminated or completed act, but only an initial one. Briefly, in the simple fact that 'What we see by nature is the first of all activities, but destitute of those terms by which alone it becomes constituted into a particular nature, and results in a real subsistence,' are implied all those properties which in the course of this work I have attributed to being in general, the foundation of human reason as well as of human knowledge.

(3) Were this *being*, by unfolding itself more openly before our mind, to emit from within its hidden depths its proper activity so as to be terminated and completed, we should see God. But so long as our present state endures, and the proper term of the activity of the being we see by nature remains hidden from us, we can only repeat what has been so admirably expressed by S. Augustine, namely, that in this life '*certa, quamvis adhuc tenuissima, forma cognitionis, attingimus Deum*'² (*De Lib. Arbit.* l. ii. c. xv.).

(4) Lastly, as regards the other activity which is presented to us by our sense, and does not issue forth from within being itself (the form of our intelligence), but comes from another source, we are clearly bound to admit that it is essentially separate and distinct from being.³ Nevertheless,

¹ Hence if we knew *being* perfectly, that is, with all its terms, we should, as S. Thomas says, know all things; for (I quote his words), 'Quicumque cognoscit perfecte aliquam naturam universalem, cognoscit modum quo natura illa potest haberi,' and 'Ex diverso modo existendi constituuntur diversi gradus entium' (*Cont. Gent.* l. i. c. l.). 'He who knows any universal nature perfectly, knows the mode in which that nature can be possessed.' 'The different mode of existing

gives rise to the different grades of beings.'

² From this we clearly see the absurdity of Pantheism.

³ *Creation*, as I shall elsewhere demonstrate, is essentially beyond man's power to explain. (On *Creation* itself the author has said splendid and profound things in several of his works, but particularly in his *Rinnovamento della filosofia*, &c., and in his *Teosofia*.—TRANSLATORS.)

it is by means of being itself that we judge of that activity, and know it to be dependent on being—know it, that is to say, as a partial contingent term of being, inconfusable with it; a term, of which, when considered in itself, we cannot explain the origin, but which, from the relation it has with *being*, the form of our reason, receives a new condition, enters into the class of beings; is, in a word, seen to partake of being in an ineffable manner.

1179. Concerning, therefore, all that is presented to us by the sense, namely, all the *matter* of our cognitions, we can say, 'That it is not an activity issuing forth from the essence of being (the *form* of knowledge) as though it were a term essentially necessary to it; but yet, albeit external to the essence of being, it does not subsist, nor can it be perceived as subsistent, except as a term of the activity of being itself.'

From this it necessarily follows that the *being* which constitutes the form of knowledge must be considered as endowed with a twofold activity: the one *essential*, whereby it constitutes and completes itself, but whose term is hidden from us; the other, not essential, whereby it terminates outside itself in contingent beings distinct from it, and which are presented to our perception by the sense.¹

All these things are the result, not of reasoning, but simply of the observation and analysis of our knowledge; and the reader who wishes to understand them well, must not involve himself in any long and difficult argumentations, but concentrate his attention on himself, in order to see and note accurately all that is contained in human cognition.

ARTICLE II.

On similitude.

1180. We have by nature the vision of being.

This vision is imperfect, inasmuch as that activity which we call being is seen by us in its initial state only, and not in the terms wherein it is completed and perfected (1177 etc.).

¹ Hence creation is not necessary, as has recently been asserted in France.

Hence, *being* in this state receives the appellation of *most common* (*ens communissimum*), that is, such that it can terminate in an infinity of things, either essential to it or also not essential. The terms not essential to being which fall under our perception are the finite realities.

Our fundamental feeling, or any modification we happen to experience in it, is one of the terms of the being naturally seen by us. It is, therefore, by means of our own feeling that we know real things, *i.e.* the terms of that being.

1181. But we find by experience that the same kind of feeling comes and goes and returns again. This proves that being can in some cases repeat the identical term an indefinite number of times.

When we see being actually terminated in a feeling, we have, through that feeling, what I call the intellectual *perception* of a real being. But when we consider that same feeling (term of being) simply as capable of being repeated an indefinite number of times, we then have the *idea* or species of the thing. By that *idea* we know a given term in which being can be actualised, but we do not know that such term is actualised in fact: our mind sees the (knowable) *essence* of the thing and nothing more.

The knowable *essence* is the thing, but in an ideal state: it is an actuation and determination of being, but not yet completed; for it can itself terminate in one real individual, and sometimes in an indefinite number of real individuals. These actuate and complete the essence as well as the being determined by it; and speaking of finite and contingent realities, they are presented to us by our feeling alone.

Logically considered, therefore, the first step made by the activity of *being* is towards that kind of determination which I have designated as the *full specific essence* (650, note 1); afterwards it reaches its ultimate term, *subsistence*. The subsistence is the completed act of the essence. The *ens communissimum* is the thing *in potentia remota* only, the *initial being* of things; and the *determinate essence* is the thing *in potentia proxima*.

1182. If in making excavations we discovered an antique

torso, and then happened also to dig up a head and a pair of arms and legs, all we should have to do in order to see whether these parts belonged to the torso or not, would be to confront them with it. In like manner, having by nature the *initial being* present to us, whenever we happen to experience in ourselves any sensible action, we at once perceive in it a completion and term of the being we already knew. In this confronting and perceiving lies the nature of *cognition*.

The idea of a thing, therefore, is the thing itself less that act which causes it to subsist. But just as by the torso we come to know its hands and feet when found; so by the ideas of things we know the reality and subsistence of those things when we *feel* their action in us: we recognise them as subsistent beings; that is, as actuations of the being known to us by nature. The identical thing, then, which was previously known as possible (in the mind), is afterwards recognised as in act (outside the mind), *i.e.* as really subsistent in itself, and this because the feeling (sensation), being on our part a *passion*, necessarily implies and contains 'the different from ourselves.'

Now in this twofold mode of being which things have—*i.e.* in the mind and in themselves—lies, as I have elsewhere pointed out, the first origin of the concept of *similitude*, and the explanation of that most ancient saying, 'Every cognition takes place by way of similitude.'

1183. That the *similitude* to which the ancients ascribed our cognitions of real things, is that which intervenes between an essence *in potentia* and an essence *in act*, so that it is always one and the same thing, but in two different modes, is manifest from their expressions, based upon a most exact analysis of the nature of similitude. In proof of this, it may suffice to quote those two great luminaries, Saint Bonaventure and Saint Thomas of Aquin, by whose teachings so many noble truths have already been illustrated in these pages.

Saint Bonaventure writes: 'Between a thing and its similitude there is neither such an identity as to make them numerically one, nor such a diversity as to make them numerically different; and therefore the similitude of a

thing is, by reduction, in the same genus as the thing of which it is the similitude. For, inasmuch as the similitude goes outside the thing, it differs therefrom; but it does not pass into another genus. And I here speak of similitude considered as similitude, and not of the intention of him who uses it; that is, I speak of it in so far as it goes beyond the subject without at the same time parting from it, as we find in the case of the light and its shining.¹

In this passage we see that, according to the Seraphic Doctor, the similitude (the thing existing in the mind) does not differ numerically (note this well) from the thing (subsisting outside the mind), and yet it does differ from it. The explanation will be found by considering the subsistent thing as an actuation, a completion, a term of its potential essence existing in the mind.

1184. S. Thomas holds precisely the same view. Let us hear him:

‘The intelligible similitude, by which something is understood in its substance, must necessarily be of the same species as the thing, or, TO SPEAK MORE PROPERLY, THE SPECIES ITSELF.’²

These last words throw great light on our subject. The idea by which we know the thing is the *species* itself; for it is the thing, specialised indeed, but not as yet completed in that mode which makes it really subsistent outside the cognitive act. Hence the idea, considered by itself, is not the *real individual*, but the *species*, inasmuch as its act can be renewed and repeated in an indefinite number of individuals.

1185. Hence that perfect unity of which S. Thomas so often speaks as existing between the knower and the thing known, is the unity between the idea and the subsistent thing, which subsistent thing becomes conjoined with us

¹ ‘Res non habet tantam identitatem cum sua similitudine ut sint unum numero; nec tantam diversitatem ut differant numero. Et ideo similitudo rei in eodem genere est per reductionem cum eo cujus est similitudo. Quia enim egreditur, ideo differt: sed non transit in aliud genus. Et loquor de similitudine secundum rationem simili-

tudinis, non intentionis: id est, prout a subjecto exit et non recedit, ut splendor a luce’ (*In I. Sentent.* Dist. iii. P. II. q. 3).

² ‘Similitudo intelligibilis, per quam intelligitur aliquid secundum suam substantiam, oportet quod sit ejusdem speciei, VEL MAGIS SPECIES EJUS’ (*C. Gent.* l. iii. c. xlix.).

through its action in our sense, and, thus conjoined, can be interiorly seen by us conjoined with its similitude or *possibility*, that is, with the being of which we have by nature the intuition. S. Thomas says: 'That which is understood must be in him who understands';¹ and again: 'the intelligible in act is the intellect in act' (*namely, is the IDEA which is in the intellect, is the ESSENCE seen by the intellect*), 'even as that which is sensible in act is the same as the sense in act' (*in the passion suffered by the sense there is the extraneous entity which the understanding perceives as distinct from the sensitive as well as the cognitive act*); 'in so far, however, as the intelligible is distinguished from the intellect, the intelligible and the intellect are both *in potentia*, even as is manifestly the case in regard to the senses. For the eye does not actually see, and the visible object is not actually seen, unless when the eye is informed by the visible species in such a manner that the visible object and the vision are made one.'²

All this is the result of the analysis of the act by which the mind knows and the sense feels.

1186. And it was precisely by most sagaciously analysing the act of cognition and scrutinising its nature, that the great thinkers to whom I am referring came to the conclusion that the *similitudes* above described are the *intellectual lights*, and that the *universal similitude*, that is, *being taken universally*, is, to use the words of the author of the *Itinerarium*, 'the light of truth shining like a lamp before the mind.'³

¹ 'Intellectum oportet esse in intelligente' (*Cont. Gen. I. li.*).

² 'Intelligibile in actu est intellectus in actu, sicut et sensibile in actu est sensus in actu: secundum vero quod intelligibile ab intellectu distinguitur, est utrumque in potentia, sicut et in sensu patet: neque enim visus est videns actu, neque visibile videtur actu, nisi cum visus informatur visibili specie, ut sic ex visibili et visu unum fiat' (*Ibid.*).

³ . . . 'Ubi [in intelligentia] ad modum candelabri relucet lux veritatis, in facie nostræ mentis' (*Itin. Mentis in Deum*). S. Bonaventure says also, in confirmation of what had been said before him by the author of the treatise

De Cælesti Hierarchia, that the intellectual substances, precisely because intellectual, are *lights* (*i.e.* have the lights in themselves), that 'the perfection and completion of the intellectual substance is the spiritual light,' that that power which is a consequence of the nature of the soul on the part of the intellect 'is a certain light in the soul.' And he explains by means of this light the celebrated *intellectus agens*, and declares that this teaching is 'founded on the traditions of philosophy and catholicity'—'Super verba philosophica et catholica fundatus' (*In II. Sent. Dist. xxiv. P. I. a. ii. q. 4.*).

1187. Now one great advantage of all this analysis of the way in which our cognition takes place, is that it simplifies the difficulty of understanding this singular fact (cognition), by reducing all its species and varieties to one ultimate fact only, which explains all the rest, although it remains itself shrouded in obscurity and mystery.

For the first question, 'How the mind can, through ideas, know subsistent beings,' presents no difficulty from the moment that these two points are clearly established, (1) that we have by nature the vision of *being*; (2) that the being thus seen is one with the beings themselves, considered however *in potentia*; so that those beings, in so far as they subsist, are nothing but so many terms and completions of that same *being*.

1188. Likewise the second question, 'How these terms and completions of *being* which we see as independent of ourselves, can be cognised by us,' receives great light from considering that each of us is himself a subsistent being, one of the terms and completions of the being present to us by nature; and that our personal identity is such that we who see being are the very same who have a substantial feeling of our own selves. Now we, as subsistent sensitive beings, come into immediate communication or union with the subsistent beings around us through the actions whereby they externally modify our own feeling, and thus enable us to know them as beings external to ourselves.

1189. All this is plain enough, but it supposes as its fundamental condition the vision of *being taken universally*, that primordial fact for the explanation of which we must not look to any antecedent fact. What then are we to conclude about such a fact? Undoubtedly this, that *being* is knowable through itself, that is, has this marvellous property that it can exist in minds and be their constitutive form. S. Thomas had already drawn the same conclusion, in which, as all who thoroughly understand this question must see, the inquiry into the nature of human cognitions finds its last and satisfactory answer.

'All the intelligible species' (says the holy Doctor) 'of

which our intellect partakes, are reduced as to their first cause to some principle WHICH IS INTELLIGIBLE THROUGH ITS OWN ESSENCE' (S. I. lxxxiv. iv.). The *essential intelligibility* of this formal principle of our intellect is precisely that primordial fact of which I speak, and wherein all inquiries come to an end and are satisfied. The words of S. Thomas may be translated into the following: 'By examining and analysing the nature of cognition, we find that all difficulties are reduced to the question how we can perceive being. But as the only answer to this question lies in the fact itself, which is, that we *do* understand being, and do not understand other things except through being, because they are beings; we must perforce conclude that *being* alone has such a nature that it can exist as the objective form of intelligences, which is the same as saying that it must be intelligible through its own essence.'

ARTICLE III.

A further refutation of the fundamental error of the German school.

1190. The fundamental error of the German school had three stages, namely, the absolute identification of things (1) with ideas, (2) with the understanding, and lastly with man himself. We will occupy ourselves with the first of these, as being the root of the other two.

1191. This error began with Kant,¹ owing to a difficulty which he saw but could not solve.

I will again state the difficulty in all the force of which it is capable.

The philosopher of Königsberg, in examining how our intellectual perception takes place, imagined he saw that the predicate which we apply in the act of perceiving an object is already contained in the object itself. For example, when in looking at a house we pronounce it to be a large building, the same *largeness* which constitutes the predicate of that judgment is already inherent in the house, and not added to

¹ I say *began*, because Kant identified things with ideas as to the *formal part* of knowledge only, leaving his readers in uncertainty as regards the

material part. Fichte completed the identification by making the matter also of our cognitions an emanation from the nature of ideas or of our spirit.

it by our thought. On the other hand, the concept of *largeness* being applicable to many other things, must necessarily be inherent in those things also, although they are not perceived until presented to the mind by the aid of the senses. When, however, thus perceived, they are seen to be so bound up with the concept of largeness that this concept would be simply void and meaningless without them.

From such observations as these, Kant concluded that the concept in the mind and the *attribute* of the thing outside the mind, are in every respect identical. The drift of his reasoning might be expressed as follows:—

‘How do I recognise an attribute in a given sensible object, for instance, the attribute of *largeness*? Through a judgment by which I apply to that object the concept of largeness which is in my mind. Now to do this is the same as to consider the concept of largeness as inhering essentially in the object itself. For example, by saying “this is a large object,” I attribute to the object that same largeness of which I was previously thinking separately from it.

‘But if the largeness which I attribute to a sensible object is the same as that which I had before in my mind, it follows that the *attribute* of the object is identical with my *concept*, and therefore that my concept is a necessary *ingredient* in the formation of the objects I perceive, and then believe to be things different from myself. Indeed, if the notional largeness and that which I see in an object were not precisely the same, of what use could my concept of largeness be to me for knowing that object? How could I know the object by means of a concept which has nothing to do with it, or by applying to the object a predicate which does not belong to it? In a word, how could the mind ever pass from that which is inside itself to that which is in the external object? It must therefore be admitted that our concepts, *i.e.* the qualities as existing in our mind, are a necessary part of the objects outside of us.’

1192. Such is the Kantian difficulty, and I cannot deny that it appears at first sight very specious; but it will be easily dispelled by anyone who has understood the doctrines

I have set forth, and is therefore duly conversant with the following facts revealed by the analysis of human knowledge, namely :—

(1) That every contingent thing has two modes of being, viz. one in the mind and one outside the mind (the ideal and the real mode).

(2) That the mode of being in the mind is the essence of the thing *in potentia*, and the mode outside the mind is that same essence in *act*.

(3) That there is therefore in the mind a full *similitude* with the thing outside the mind, and a similitude of such a nature that, although it is not identical with the thing relatively to its act of reality (subsistence), yet it does not differ numerically from the thing to which that act belongs, but is the commencement of it, and constitutes its *species* or *knowableness*.

(4) That if things (limited and contingent) are considered by themselves apart from the mind, they are unknown, nay *per se* unknowable; and their relation with the mind is not in them, but in the mind. And as to their similitude which is found in the mind, it is nothing but their ideal mode of being, a determination of universal being which is the only thing knowable through itself, and therefore the fount of all ideas and of all knowableness.¹

(5) That inasmuch as limited and contingent things are only so many actuations and terms of being taken universally (*ens communissimum*), they can be considered separately from it, and when so considered, they are said to subsist outside the mind, and are called *real things*.

(6) Lastly, even if the two modes (*real* and *ideal*) in which the thing exists were identically the same (which is not the case, because the identity applies only to the *thing*, and not to its *mode* of being), even then the thing could never be identified either with the cognitive act or with the thinking subject which has the idea of the thing, because that *idea* itself

¹ As finite things have not their *being* from themselves, so they have not their *knowableness* from themselves.

is essentially *objective*, and therefore distinct from, nay the very opposite of the thinking subject.

1193. Therefore *real things* cannot in any way, without transgressing the propriety of words, be identified with ideas, and still less with the mind that perceives those things. The separation and real distinction of these three entities is contained in their definition itself.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE CERTAINTY OF THE INTELLECTUAL PERCEPTION,
AND FIRST OF ALL OF THAT OF OURSELVES.

ARTICLE I.

Of the things which fall under our perception.

1194. Let us now speak of the validity of the intellectual perception itself. In this life there are only two species of real things falling naturally under our perception: (1) ourselves, and (2) external bodies. We will begin with the certainty of the perception of ourselves.

ARTICLE II.

The feeling we have of ourselves is a substantial feeling.

1195. I (*Myself*) am a being which is conceived as existing by itself. I am therefore a *substance*.

This substance is an act of feeling, for I feel: I feel always the same in all the various operations which I perform; and when I abstain from operating I have still the feeling of my own individuality, because I am alive, and feel essentially that I am alive.

1196. This *Myself* is therefore a *fundamental feeling*, inasmuch as all my other sensations have their foundation in it.¹

¹ The proof of this was given in Section V., where I also explained how the thing is brought about (692 etc.). By means of this *substantial feeling* we can understand the meaning of those words of S. Augustine: '*Substantialiter notitia [sui] inest menti*' (*De Trinit.* l. ix. c. 4). In fact, for the perception of itself, the soul needs nothing else than to turn its attention to the feeling it has of itself. But as this intellectual act is not innate in us, therefore S. Thomas does not admit in

the soul, as necessary and substantial, any other than an *habitual knowledge* of itself. He writes: 'The knowledge by which the soul knows itself is not an accident with respect to that through which it is HABITUALLY known, but only with respect to the *act* of the cognition.' '*Notitia qua anima se ipsam novit non est in genere accidentis quantum ad id quo habitualiter cognoscitur, sed solum quantum ad actum cognitionis*' (*De Verit.* ix. q. 41).

It has no need of those sensations; it stands by itself. I can never be without myself, but all the other sensations require my essential feeling, because they are nothing but modifications thereof.

By this feeling of myself I therefore feel a being, a substance, a subject; or which is the same thing, a living sentient principle.

Hence the thought of this feeling is the thought of a substance. There is therefore a substance of which we have immediate perception, and this substance is *ourselves*.

ARTICLE III.

We perceive ourselves without the aid of any intermediate principle.

1197. For intellectually perceiving *ourselves* we do not require the use of any intermediate principle (1196). This perception therefore is formed, not by any process of reasoning, but by a most simple judgment.

Being conscious of our fundamental feeling, we say to ourselves: 'I exist,' which is the same as to say: 'This *myself*, this feeling which is a substance, a being subsisting with an internal energy, exists.' In fact, in the feeling we have of *ourselves* we feel precisely that energy by which we subsist, and are distinguished from all other existing substances.¹

Our particular subsistence being therefore contained in this feeling, all that we have to do in order intellectually to perceive ourselves, is to turn our attention to the said feeling, and to recognise that real and subjective existence which is already therein actuated, and which, consequently, we do not require to supply by a process of integration or induction. This recognition is effected by means of the notion of objective being which we possess by nature.

¹ Nevertheless, by analysing the perception of ourselves (as well as of all other subsistent things), we find that pure *existence* is an activity different from *feeling*. Whence it follows that we, who are a substantial feeling, receive *existence* from a source other than ourselves. For this reason I cannot accept as accurate the expression

of those German and French philosophers who say that *we exist through ourselves*. On the contrary, the observation here made concerning the analysis of perception shows how perfectly true is the teaching of S. Augustine and other Fathers, who tell us that, absolutely speaking, creatures are not.

ARTICLE IV.

Certainty of the perception of ourselves.

1198. It is manifest that we could not ask the question whether the perception of ourselves is characterised by certainty, unless we had this perception.

Moreover, whether true or illusory, the said perception is given us by nature itself, because it is composed of two primordial facts, namely, (1) the *form* of knowledge or the idea of *being*, and (2) the *matter* or the fundamental feeling, which, when intellectually perceived by us, is usually termed *Ego, I, myself*.

Now is this perception so given by nature true and certain, or is it illusory?

With regard to its first element, the *form* of knowledge illusion is impossible, for as we have already seen (1065 etc.) the idea of being essentially carries its own proof.

As to its second element, the fundamental feeling, it is intellectually perceived through that act by which we judge it to exist. Hence the question: 'Is the perception of ourselves true and certain,' takes also this other form: 'Does our understanding judge rightly, or wrongly, in applying to our fundamental feeling the universal predicate of existence?'

1199. The answer to this question is contained in the general principle of the application of the 'form of reason' (the predicate) to the *matter* (the subject), and this principle was explained in the preceding chapter.

We there saw that every activity, every feeling, is only an actuation or a term of the actuation of *being*: therefore the predicate of *existence* is rightly applied to the feeling constitutive of ourselves, and the intellectual perception of ourselves is the most certain of all perceptions (of contingent things), because the most immediate, and likewise the condition of all the others.

ARTICLE V.

How S. Augustine took the certainty of the perception of ourselves as his starting point in refuting the Academical philosophers.

1200. So strongly impressed was S. Augustine with the certainty of the perception of *our own selves*,¹ that he made it the basis of his refutation of the Academical philosophers. His argument ran thus: 'In this judgment' (by which we affirm that we are alive) 'we need not fear being deceived by any false semblance of truth, for of a certainty, even he who is deceived is alive, nor can anyone allege here those objections which are brought against the truthfulness of objects seen by the eye; namely, that in this judgment we are perhaps

¹ It must not, however, be supposed (as has been done by Galluppi and other Subjectivists), that S. Augustine took the '*I exist*' of Des Cartes as the primal truth on which all the others depend. As I have demonstrated elsewhere (979 etc.), this proposition of Des Cartes has no force except as a deduction from its major proposition, '*I think*.' The holy Doctor in this place set out from the '*I exist*,' as from an evident truth, not denied by the Academicians, but not the first truth of all. When he came to speak of this, he lost sight of the thinking *subject* altogether, and fixing the gaze of his eagle intellect straight on the *object*, found himself face to face with the essence of truth itself, divested of all limit of time, of place, of things, and beheld its light, more certain and immovable than his own existence. Then it was that he uttered these memorable words: 'I could sooner doubt that I am alive than doubt the existence of truth, which is manifestly seen in those things that have been made.' 'Faciliusque dubitarem vivere me, quam non esse veritatem, quæ per ea quæ facta sunt intellecta conspicitur' (*Confess.* VII. x.).

Now as regards the two persuasions which man has, viz. of the primary truths and of his own existence, I may remark that the certainty of both is equally supreme, but there is this most notable difference between them, that, with

respect to the primary truths, it would be simply impossible to conceive them as non-existent, whereas it is not impossible for me to conceive my non-existence, but only to assent by *direct cognition* to the proposition that 'I am non-existent.' This difference between the primary and *necessary* truths, and the *certainty of the fact of my contingent existence*, is admirably set forth by S. Thomas. He shows the absolute impossibility of any man being truly a Sceptic in the sense of not believing the primary truths. Here are the words of the Angelic Doctor: 'The expression "to think of a thing as non-existent" may be understood in two ways: first, as signifying simply that the thing and its non-existence fall under the same apprehension; and in this sense nothing hinders a man from thinking of himself as non-existent, as he can think of a time when as yet he was not. But this kind of apprehension would not be possible with respect to the proposition, "the whole is less than its part" (*against one of the primary truths*), because each of these terms excludes the other. Secondly, it may be understood as signifying that the apprehension is joined with assent, and in this way no man could with true assent think that he is not in existence, because whatever other perceptions he may have, he always (habitually) perceives himself' (*De Verit.* q. x. art. xv.).

deceived in the same way that our eye is deceived when the oar in the water appears bent, or when, sailing in a vessel, stationary objects on the shore seem to us in motion. For be it remembered, that the truth of which we are now speaking is not seen by the eye of the body. The knowledge by which we are certain of being alive is an intimate knowledge, respecting which not even the Academical philosopher can say: perhaps you are dreaming without being aware of it. Certainly the things which appear to us in dreams are very similar to those we see when awake. Everyone knows this; but he who is certain of being alive does not thereby say: I know I am awake, but I know I am alive. Whether therefore he be asleep or awake, he is alive. Nor can this knowledge be subject to any such delusion as occurs in dreams, for only one who is alive can sleep or dream. And if the Academical philosopher should go on to say: perhaps you are insane, and do not know it, because the things seen by persons of sound mind are very similar to those seen by the insane; I would again reply, that a madman also is alive, and in arguing with this class of philosophers, no one says: I know that I am not insane, but I know that I am alive. Therefore he who restricts himself to affirming that he is alive, can in no case either be deceived or say what is false. No amount of objections grounded on the possibility of illusion can have any force against such a one; for even he who suffers from illusion is alive' (*De Trinit.* l. xv. c. xii.).

ARTICLE VI.

Of other truths which partake of the same certainty as the perception of ourselves.

1201. From the absolute certainty which we have of being alive, and therefore of existing, S. Augustine deduces many other truths in the following way:—

'But if these were the only things of which we have knowledge, they would be very few indeed. Such, however, is not the case. The things which we can know in each kind, far from being few, are so numerous as to authorise the

assertion that their multitude has no assignable limits. Thus, for instance, if a man says: I know that I am alive, he thereby intimates that he knows one thing. But if he says: I know that I know that I am alive, he already knows two things, and for him to know that he knows these two things is to know a third truth; so there might be added a fourth and a fifth, and indeed innumerable ones, if man were capable of it. But since he cannot comprehend an innumerable number by the addition of single things, or recite them innumera-ly, he is at least indubitably cognisant of this fact, and says that the series is true and has links so innumerable as to surpass his powers of comprehension. For suppose that we heard some one say: I wish to be happy, would it not be foolish to reply, "perhaps you are mistaken"? And if he said, I know that I wish to be happy, and I know that I know it; there would be nothing to prevent him from adding that he knows these two truths; and to this make a fourth addition, and indeed any number of additions without end.¹ So also, if a man says: I do not wish to err; whether in point of fact he errs or not, will it not always be true, that he does not wish to err? Would it not be very injudicious

¹ We must not imagine that these remarks of S. Augustine are vain subtleties, and that the truths he here enumerates differ in words only and not in reality. On the contrary, intelligent readers will perhaps find the remarks most acute and of great service for rightly understanding the nature of human cognitions. S. Augustine distinguishes the *different reflections* which the mind makes on its own cognitions, and shows that each reflection is a new act, distinct from that which has preceded it, and even produces a new cognition. It is of the highest importance to know this, especially when we apply ourselves to explain the facts of the mind. I have often in this work found it necessary to make use of the distinction between *reflex* and *direct knowledge*, and to show that the one is not the other, that the one does not know of the other, and that the *reflex knowledge* is sometimes found in contradiction with the *direct* (see amongst other places

nos. 1149, 1157). A reflection on a cognition we already have, to *know that we know*, is such an augmentation of knowledge, that the second stands to the first as the greater to the less, and even as the infinite to the finite. It is by reflex knowledge, and by it alone, that we acquire dominion over direct knowledge, and can dispose of it at will. The art of *writing* would never have been invented, but for the reflection bestowed on *spoken language*. So is the invention of *numbers* due to reflection on the *ideas* of them. The *algebraic signs* are the result of a reflection on numbers, and the *analytical functions* arose out of a third reflection on the algebraic signs. See, then, the importance of this little formula, which seems but a play upon words: 'To know that we know that we know!' It is the simplest way of expressing the order of ideas, and to it the world is indebted for the famous Analytical Functions of La Grangia.

to answer him, "perhaps you are mistaken"? For even should he be mistaken, it is certainly his wish not to be mistaken. And if he says, that he knows that he does not wish to be mistaken, he may add to this as many more statements of the like nature as he pleases, even *ad infinitum*. Because, whoever says, I do not wish to be mistaken, and I know that I do not wish it, and I know that I know that I do not wish it, can, by going on in this way, indicate clearly, although with an awkward diction, that the possible number of true statements is innumerable. Other arguments, also of great force, could be urged against the Academical philosophers who contend that man is incapable of knowing anything' (*De Trinit.* l. xv. c. xii.).

ARTICLE VII.

An observation on the intellectual perceptions of what is felt by the sense.

1202. As a conclusion of this chapter I will observe that it is impossible that what is presented to our understanding, and what is cognised by us, should be different things.

In fact, for a thing to present itself to us, is the same as for that thing to be felt by us; and it is of the thing in so far as felt that we have intellectual perception. Hence the thing in so far as felt cannot but be identical with itself in so far as known with direct knowledge, that is, intellectually perceived; since intellectually to perceive it is simply to affirm to ourselves that we feel it. Thus the intellectual perception has identically the same term as the sensation which is its proximate object. No discordance therefore and, by consequence, no error is possible here.

This new proof of the essential truthfulness of the intellectual perception flows from the simplicity of the human spirit, which being radically and substantially one, joins together in itself both feeling and intellection.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE CERTAINTY OF THE INTELLECTUAL PERCEPTION
OF EXTERNAL BODIES.

ARTICLE I.

*Difficulty of proving the certainty of the intellectual perception
of bodies.¹*

1203. In the intellectual perception of ourselves, the two terms of the judgment are wholly given us by nature, namely, the predicate or ideal being, and the subject (*myself*), a real and substantial being. These two terms, joined together in the unity of the percipient subject, constitute the intellectual perception of *ourselves*, in which there can be no error; because ideal *being* is, by its essence, truth; and as to the *myself* (the matter of the cognition), it undergoes no alteration by being perceived. For, that substantial feeling in which it consists is by its nature such as it appears, the appearance being the feeling itself. Hence for this most simple perception no process of reasoning, no use of an inter-

¹ As I have remarked above, it was against the perception of external bodies that the ancient Sceptics directed all their attacks. S. Augustine writes: 'The real things knowable by us are of two classes: first, those which the soul perceives by the aid of the bodily senses; and, second, those which it perceives through its own self' (*we here see the distinction accurately drawn by S. Augustine of the two kinds of perception, the two sources of the matter of our cognitions, which have been pointed out in this work*). 'Now the Academical philosophers have said a great many things in disparagement of the bodily senses; but with regard to cer-

tain most firm perceptions which the soul has through itself of true things—for instance, that contained in the above-named proposition: "I know that I am alive"—they have never been able to adduce a single argument in disproof of their certainty.' 'Cum enim duo sint genera rerum quæ sciuntur, unum earum quæ per sensus corporis percipit animus, alterum earum quæ per seipsum; multa illi philosophi garriverunt contra corporis sensus; animi autem quasdam firmissimas per se ipsum perceptiones rerum verarum, quale illud est quod dixi, Scio me vivere, nequaquam in dubium vocare potuerunt' (*De Trin.* XV. c. xii.).

mediate principle is required, but solely the application of the first or formal principle of all cognitions (1197).

1204. But the intellectual perception of bodies has not the same simplicity.

In the sensations received from bodies, we experience an *action* done in us, therefore an agent; but this agent does not present itself to us simply as a being or substance in itself, independently of all relation with something else. On the contrary, we feel it only in the particular relation which it has with ourselves, in the force it exhibits in us. In short, we feel it, not precisely in so far as it *is*, but in so far as it *acts* (627).

Nay, to speak correctly, this action of bodies is felt by us as *passion* only. The *sense* does not present it to us in any other form. It is the *understanding* which, following its own proper mode of operation, sees this passion, not on the side of the patient, but on that of the agent. Thus where for us as sentient there is a passion, for us as intelligent there is an action, and, simultaneously with it, an acting principle, a being, a substance different from us; for we cannot understand an action except as done by something.

Since then the being is known here purely by its action, it follows that our understanding supplies it as a thing the intrinsic nature of which is not known. The understanding assumes its presence on the evident principle that 'Whatever acts must have that first act which constitutes it a being; for an action exercised by one thing upon another is a *second* act, rooted in a *first*. This principle in fact belongs to the intrinsic order of being itself.

Wherefore, the validity of the intellectual operations of which we are speaking requires some proof.

ARTICLE II.

In the passions experienced by our sense, the understanding sees an action.

1205. I have already shown in an earlier part of this work, that the words *passion* and *action* express two rela-

tions of one and the same thing ; and that in the passion experienced by the *sense* the *understanding* perceives an action (666 etc.).

This may suggest the following objection : ‘ You say, on the one hand, that the sense perceives the passion and not the action, and, on the other, that the understanding cannot perceive the first without the second, because the second is included in the first. Now does not this seem to be a contradiction ? ’

I reply : It is true that the sense perceives the passion and not the action, for the first of these things has a mode of existence different from that of the second. But we must observe, that the understanding perceives the passion, not as the sense does, but through the *concept* of passion ; and the *concept* of passion necessarily involves the *concept* of action ; since these two concepts are correlative, so that each contains the other.

But it will be asked : What is the *concept* of passion ? How does the understanding form it ? A brief recapitulation of the doctrines established in the preceding section will furnish the answer.

ARTICLE III.

From the passion suffered by the sense our spirit is led to perceive and know a corporeal substance.

1206. The principle of cognition is this : ‘ The object of the mind is *being* ’ ; or, to put the same thing in other words : ‘ If the mind understands at all, it must understand something.’

Now when we, gifted with mind, become conscious of suffering a modification of our sense (a sensation), we naturally say at once :¹ ‘ Here is a something which is not myself.’ And this pronouncement is not only reasonable, but logically necessary ; because if we are modified, we must be modified by something, whatever that something may be. Sometimes the modification is disagreeable, at other times

¹ We are prompted to this by our wants and instincts, as was said at 514 etc., and 1030 etc.

agreeable ; but in every case we feel that force is brought to bear on us ; and a passion cannot be produced by nothing. It is therefore a something, a being that our mind perceives.

We say at the same time : ' If there is here a being, there must be a substance, or first act, which is the basis of the being ' ; because whatever exists is, in this sense, either a substance or the appurtenance of a substance : there is no middle term between the two.¹

We see, therefore, what that is which the mind perceives in the passion of the sense. It is an action done in us, therefore an agent, therefore a being ; since an agent cannot be conceived otherwise than as a being.

Thus the difficulty proposed above disappears. The sense, not being an objective faculty, could not perceive what took place in it, except as a passion. To perceive it under the *relation* of action, and therefore as caused by an agent, was simply outside its sphere. The mind, on the contrary, being an objective faculty, or the faculty of seeing things in themselves, necessarily sees, in the passion suffered by the sense, the being which acts so as to cause it : I say the '*being* which acts,' because an action necessarily supposes a *being*. Existence is that first activity on which all other activities depend.

It is therefore proper to the mind to see in the passion the action, in the action the agent, and in the agent the being existing in itself or the substance (578 etc.). One thing is implied in the other, and the whole is seen by a single act which is termed *intellectual perception*.

1207. The reader will now understand what the *concept* of passion is. It is nothing else than the action considered in relation to the being which is affected by it. In the *concept* of passion that of action is, therefore, included, since a passion supposes an action, even as an action supposes an agent.

To conclude : As the intellectual perception of ourselves is the result of two elements given by nature, and united

¹ In Vol. II. no. 597 etc., the apodeictic necessity of this inference was fully demonstrated.

together in *being* through the function of *synthesis* alone ; so the intellectual perception of external bodies is the result of two elements given also by nature, and similarly joined together through the function of *synthesis* supplemented with that of *integration*, which to the *agent* actually revealed in the sensible passion adds that first act which is conceived as the necessary basis of every being, and in fact constitutes it a being.

This first act, however, remains determined solely by the action which it produces in our sense.¹

ARTICLE IV.

The validity of the intellectual perception of bodies is demonstrated.

1208. In the perception of external bodies, then, (1) there is the perception of ourselves together with the modification or sensible passion we are suffering ; (2) the mind perceives that passion, and thus acquires the concept of it ; (3) the concept of passion includes that of action as its correlative ; (4) the concept of actual action comprises the agent ; (5) the agent is integrated by the mind, owing to the necessity under which this faculty is of conceiving it as a *being*.

The validity of the perception of ourselves and the modifications suffered by us was established in the preceding chapter.

As to the concepts of passion, of action, and of agent being involved one in the other, so that it is impossible for the mind to possess the first without at the same time possessing, at least implicitly, the other two, there does not seem to be any need of a demonstration.

¹ The word *body* expresses a *being* in so far as it exercises on us an action characterised by a certain mode (extension). Were anyone, therefore, to consider the being called *body* irrespectively of such action, he would no longer be thinking of the thing designated by that name. This observation should be carefully noted, because it is what accounts for the denomination of *perception of bodies*. I say *perception*, to indicate that *bodies* are *agents* or

forces entering into our sense by their action. Let not, therefore, *body* be transformed into an abstraction, or a thing hidden from our knowledge, or existing apart from any relation with sense ; for this would be to destroy the notion of it. Hence I have elsewhere set down the 'physical commerce' (*influxus physicus*) between body and spirit as a fact past questioning, because already comprised in the definition itself of *body* (721).

It remains to be seen how the mind passes from the concept of an *agent* to that of a *being*. But as we have already shown that *being* (the form of our reason) is the universal means of knowing, all we now have to do is to consider that the agent cannot possibly be cognised except by our conceiving it as a *being*, and consequently that in our intellectual perception of a body, the concept of a being is logically anterior to that of an agent, an action, and a passion.

I have said, however, that in this perception there intervenes an *integration*, and I will explain how this happens.

In virtue of the 'principle of cognition,' to conceive an *agent*, we must join *being* with it; for thus only can we apprehend it as a being. But in the mere concept of *agent* there is not all that constitutes a *being*; the first act (existence) is wanting in it; since a thing must *exist* before it *acts* upon another.

Therefore, to make the conception possible, we add not only *being taken universally*, but also that first act which forms the basis of the agent (the body), and makes it a being: and to do this is an integration.

It must nevertheless be observed that this first act added to the agent to make the conceiving of it possible, is not any thing *positive*; that is to say, we know that a being is there, because it *acts*, but *what* that being is we do not know. The only positive element known to us in the perception of bodies, is the *sensible action* they exercise on us; and it is from this sensible element alone, and not from the first act, added by the mind as just said, that the corporeal substance is, for us, determined or *specialised* as such, and receives its definition.

For this reason I abstain from saying, that in the intellectual perception of bodies there comes in any application of the *principle of substance*; for that which in them we take as substance is not supplemented by the understanding, but *perceived* by the senses; and this which we sensibly perceive is, therefore, the *first specific act* of bodies, there remaining the act antecedent to it, the pure form of being, which, as common to all beings alike, specialises none.

At the same time we can see that *body*, as perceived by us, is an imperfect being, since it does not present to us that act by which it would be a being in itself, but only that by which it is a being relative to the sense; on which account I prefer to call it *extrasubjective being*.

CHAPTER V.

ON THE CERTAINTY OF BEINGS WHICH DO NOT FALL UNDER OUR PERCEPTION, BUT ARE INFERRED FROM THOSE WHICH WE PERCEIVE.

ARTICLE I.

What those beings are which we know, not through perception, but through reasoning.

1209. As there are two species of beings which we know by perception, namely, our soul and bodies,¹ so there are two species of super-sensible beings, to the knowledge of which we can attain by means of reasoning, viz. the angels² and God.

ARTICLE II.

Distinction between the idea of the above beings and the judgment affirmative of their subsistence.

1210. Concerning our knowledge of these beings, two things require explanation: the concept or idea of them, and the judgment by which we affirm their subsistence.

¹ We have perception of ourselves, and from this perception we draw, by means of abstraction, the idea of the human soul in the way I have often described, namely, by separating the judgment on the subsistence of the thing from the *real apprehension* thereof. So also we perceive our own body, and the bodies which act immediately upon it, and from these perceptions we, by abstraction, draw the idea of *body*, whether organic and animal, or inorganic.

² The angels have afforded much matter for speculation to the ancient philosophers. It is not my intention to examine whether we can by pure reason make out a rigorous demonstration of the real subsistence of these spirits. For my purpose it is enough that we are able to form some idea of them, even though it were beyond our power irrefragably to establish their subsistence.

ARTICLE III.

Origin of the ideas of these beings.

1211. We obtain the ideas in question from two joint sources, namely, abstraction and synthesis exercised on the ideas of the things known to us by perception, and the idea of being in general.

The notion which comes nearest to these ideas is that which we have of the human intelligence. By mentally divesting this intelligence of its body, and conceiving an intelligence not ordained for informing any material organism, we obtain some idea of the angels.

By mentally divesting the same intelligence of all its limitations, we place ourselves on the way to obtain some idea of God.

ARTICLE IV.

On the judgment concerning the existence of God.

1212. It is not my intention to speak of the various reasonings by which one may try to establish the existence of angelic intelligences.

The existence of God is deduced in many ways; the most common is that which proves the existence of a *cause of the universe*.

I have already demonstrated the validity of the *principle of causation*, and shown how this principle makes a perfect equation with the *principle of cognition*, and with the form of reason (538-573).

It now remains to show the validity of its particular application to the Divine existence.

The truthfulness of the perception of the natures which compose this universe was proved in the preceding chapters.

These natures, however, *are* not being, but they *have* being, therefore they *receive* it, since whatever is not being and yet has it, must receive it from Him who is Being by essence.

Therefore He who is *Being* must give being to the natures which compose the universe, and of which we have perception.

But He who is *Being* and gives it to created things is their *cause*, is GOD.

This reasoning is based on the two following facts, disclosed to us by the analysis of intellectual perception : (1) that the created natures exist, that is to say, *have* being ; (2) that these natures are not themselves being.

By applying the idea of being to these two facts, we infer that being is a thing added to these natures, and consequently that the being proper to them has a commencement, for, to say that being is added to them, and to say that it has a commencement,¹ is one and the same thing.

But for the being proper to these natures to commence, or to be added to them, is an action (a change) and by the *principle of causation* (558-573) an action which has a commencement (a change effected) supposes an unchangeable being which produces it.

Therefore the *principle of causation* is properly applied for deducing the existence of God. The Divine existence thus deduced makes a perfect equation (1169) therewith ; that is, it is one of those numberless particular cases, which the principle had affirmed *in globo* from the first, and validly affirmed, not only as regards the order of ideas, but also as regards subsistent things.

¹ The reader must not misunderstand the true sense of this term *commencement*. To commence does not signify that the thing did not exist the moment before ; it refers, not to the previous instant, but to the instant on which the

thing begins. Hence if a created nature should go on enduring for ages, we can say that it begins at each instant, because at each instant it requires to *receive* the energy which causes it to subsist, the activity of existence.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF ESSENCES.

ARTICLE I.

In what sense we are said to know the essences of things.

1213. *Essence* is what we think in the idea of a thing (646).

We therefore know as many *essences* as there are things of which we have some idea.

To say that essences are known to us in this sense is strictly in accordance with propriety of language, as may be easily seen by the following observation.

When we want to know the 'essence' of anything, we indicate that thing by a name, saying for example, *tree, man, colour, size* etc., according to the thing whose essence we seek to discover. Now why have names been given to things? Purely 'to signify what they are in so far as known to us' (679). If then anyone were to take these names in a more extended signification than this, he would be making a wrong use of them, in fact he would be talking nonsense. Clearly, then, to seek to know the essence of a thing, is nothing else than to examine what meaning or idea men have attached to the name by which the thing is called. To proceed otherwise, would be to seek for the essence, not of that, but of some other thing not named, unknown, and about which therefore this inquiry would not even be possible.

1214. Here some one may say: if such be the case, then the 'essence' is nothing but what we express in the definition of a thing.

Exactly so: and it was in this sense that the term *essence* was taken by the ancients. 'Essentia' (says S. Thomas)

'comprehendit in se illa tantum, quæ cadunt in definitione speciei.'¹

Hence we see how inconsiderate were the philosophers of the school of Locke in ridiculing the ancients for having said that man knows the essences of things; and this perhaps without caring whether they understood those writers or not.

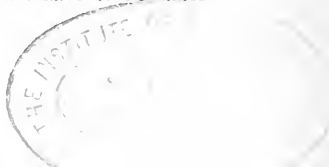
1215. Some again might say that the *essence* is not what we think in the idea of a thing, but rather what we conceive in the thing as that primary property whereon all the others depend. And this is also quite true, but it does not disprove the fact that the essences of things are known to us, nay, it rather confirms it. Besides, whoever considers this matter attentively will find the definition I have given both more simple and more exact. For when are we said to possess the idea of a thing? Certainly when we first come to form some concept of it: thus, for instance, we have the idea of a tree as soon as our mind has seized hold of that property which men have agreed to designate by the name of *tree*; not sooner, and not later. Not sooner, because having then no conception of that property² we did not know what a *tree* was; not later, because all that is added to that same property does not enter into the meaning of the word *tree*; it may constitute other essences, perhaps *accidental*, which have indeed the effect of determinating and actuating the essence called *tree* in a particular tree, but are not the *tree* pure and simple, or considered in general. Every simple idea therefore contains an essence, and so does every composite idea; and to that composite idea (be it noted) all its component elements³ are essential in order that it may be what it is.

¹ *Summa Theologica*, I. iii. 3.—The *species* is nothing but the *idea*.

² Hence all *essences* are simple, and, as was observed by the ancients, there is no alternative between knowing and not knowing them. S. Thomas says: 'He whose mind does not seize hold of the *essence* of something simple' (*and the things as conceived in our first apprehension of them are such*), 'does not know that essence at all. Because he cannot know a part of that essence

and be ignorant of a part, for the essence is not a composite thing' (*In Metaph. Arist. L. ix. Lect. II*).

³ Even those which, considered apart, would be accidental; for instance, 'the essence of a red cloth' requires not merely that it should be cloth, but also that it should be red, otherwise it would no longer be red cloth, but something else, which would have to be differently defined.



ARTICLE II.

How it happened that modern philosophers came to deny that we know the essences of things.

- 1216. I have already said that this arose from these philosophers having taken the term *essence* in an improper sense (1213–1215).

By *essence* they understood, not what is known to us in a thing, but what there might be in it even unknown: for example, in bodies, besides the properties which we know, there might be some property on which the others depended, but as to whose nature we are left entirely in the dark. This I have termed, not *corporeal essence*, but *corporeal principle* (855).

I will explain myself more clearly.

We know bodies by an action which they exercise on us; we know therefore an *activity* determined by a certain effect, and this *activity* it is which in our idea of body constitutes the *essence*. Now, may it not be that this same activity is but a partial power of another activity unknown to us? We can neither affirm nor deny it: that activity, not being known to us, has no name; yet as it could not be pronounced an absurdity, some were led to say, that we do not know the *essence of bodies*, whereas they should have said that we do not know whether or not that *essence* which we know under the name of *body* depends on and is rooted in some other essence unknown to us, as a special power thereof. Between these two opinions there is a wide difference; for he who maintains the second of them does not assert that the corporeal essence is unknown to us, but only that it is dependent on some other thing of which we do not know the nature.

1217. Here we can see another instance of that intellectual intemperance which causes philosophical inquirers, through excessive haste and eagerness, to pass by and leave behind them the very thing for which they were seeking. I have already noticed in a general way, how from this cause some turn Sceptics, and others come so near the Sceptics that it might seem as if there were a league between

them; because, instead of resting content with the truth when found, they still go on in search of something else more to their satisfaction. Even so, those who, instead of stopping at the definition of *essence*, set it aside, forming to themselves a whimsical and arbitrary notion of *essence*, become engaged in a quixotic combat against a phantom of their own imagination, and strive to prove that essences are unknown to man, when the plain truth is that they are the only things man does know.¹

ARTICLE III.

On the truth of known essences in general.

1218. The essences known by us are nothing else than those activities which are severally contained in the ideas we have of things.

Now all ideas are contained in that of *being*.

But *being* is the same as *truth*.

Therefore every idea is a determinate truth.

Error can only introduce itself into the *judgment* we pass on our ideas; that is, we may err by judging that our ideas contain more than they really do. Let us see therefore what is required in order not to commit error in this judgment.

ARTICLE IV.

On the limits affecting our natural knowledge of essences.

1219. Concerning the knowledge of essences two sets of questions may be instituted: the first regards the knowledge possessed by the individual, and the second regards the knowledge attainable by human nature.

¹ If in any object, for instance in bodies, we happened, by whatever means, to discover some new principle heretofore unknown, and not perceivable by the senses, but from which all the other properties flowed, we should then know a new essence, different from that which we now designate by the term *body*: and if to this newly-discovered principle we were still to

give the name of *body*, the word would have changed its meaning. Nevertheless, owing to the identity of the radical act of being, it would in this case seem to us as if we had gained, and in fact we should have gained, a fuller knowledge of the nature of *body*. Hence it is no wonder if the Infinite Mind knows all things in one sole essence.

About my particular knowledge I may ask: 'How much do I know of this or that thing? Is my knowledge of it as full as it is possible for human nature to have?'

About the knowledge attainable by human nature it may be asked: 'What means of knowing does human nature possess? What is the power of each means in furnishing the ideas of things? What are generally the impediments owing to which even things knowable in themselves are not always known by us? How far does the knowableness of the things themselves extend?'

The first set of these questions does not belong to philosophy, but to the prudence of each individual, who must therefore beware of presumption and be guided by a just estimate of his own attainments.

The second set falls within the province of philosophy; and I will touch briefly on each of the above questions, condensing here what I have said at greater length in other parts of this work.

1220. *First question*: What means does human nature possess of gaining the knowledge of *essences*, or forming the ideas of things?

Answer: It possesses four means: (1) *perception*; (2) *analysis* and *synthesis*; (3) *signs*, natural or conventional, and, amongst the latter, chiefly *language*; (4) *integration*.

1221. *Second question*: What is the power of each of these means in furnishing the ideas of things? In other words, by which of them are the most *perfect* ideas obtained?

Answer: The most perfect ideas man can obtain are those acquired through actual *perception*. In these ideas the *specific essence*¹ is known in a *positive* form, that is, the thing itself is known; and this *positive specific essence*, whenever it can be had, is precisely what we express by naming things, and set forth in their definition. This same essence assumes in due course, through the process of analysis and synthesis, those three modes, which I have already designated respec-

¹ The reader should here recall to mind the classification I have given of the various kinds of *essences* known by the human mind (646 etc.).

tively as the *perfect specific essence*, the *abstract specific essence*, and the *imperfect specific essence*.¹

Analysis, which belongs to the second means of knowing, decomposes *specific essences* (the foundation of all human cognitions), and thus forms partial and abstract essences, such as are the *generic real* and *mental*. *Synthesis*, which also belongs to the second means of knowing, is simply directed to produce *complex essences*, i.e. to effect a certain union between essences of a simpler kind.

The third means of knowing, that of *signs*, gives us ideas still more imperfect. By it we can have *generic mental* ideas, with more or less of the positive element in them.²

The fourth and last means, i.e. *integration*, supplies us sometimes with ideas wholly devoid of the material and positive element. These ideas cause us to know that a certain being exists, but they do not go beyond apprising us of the fact of its existence, *plus a relation* which it has with some other thing we know—a relation sufficient to determine it for us in such a manner that we cannot mistake it for any other object.

1222. Be it remembered, then, that the *fullest* knowledge we can possibly obtain of things is that given us by actual *perception*. Perception alone supplies what I call the *positive element* of the idea, that element which has for its basis the *immediate real action* of the thing on us, or, to put it in other words, that part of the thing which *really* communicates itself to us so as to exist in us. This perceptive knowledge serves us as a rule for judging of the greater or lesser degree of the perfection of our ideas of things. The three other means of knowing, i.e. *analysis* and *synthesis*, *signs*, and *integration*, can never furnish as much material for knowledge as perception does. Hence of two men, one of whom has

¹ We must observe that, of these three modes, that of the *abstract specific essence* is the only one truly simple in itself. The other two are a compound of diverse essences, accidental and substantial.

² In the idea of the *species* we have also the characteristics constitutive of *genera*. Given, therefore, that some one were simply to inform us that he has found a new species belonging to a

genus which we know, the idea of that species, in its *positive* part, would be no more than *generic*, for we should not as yet be acquainted with the characteristics that distinguish it from the other species. In its *negative* part, however, it would be specific. From this we see, that there are *negative* and nominal *essences* which for us can be specific as well as generic and universal.

himself had actual perception of a thing, whilst the other has only heard the thing described by those who have perceived it, the first is justly considered to have a more perfect, more vivid and fuller idea than the second, who knows the thing only verbally or nominally.¹ This is why, in comparing together the essences of the same things, as known through the above-mentioned means, we do not say that our knowledge of them is the fullest that man could have, except when it has been formed through the first means, *i.e.* perception.

1223. *Third question* : What are the impediments owing to which even things that are knowable in themselves are not fully known by man ?

Answer : They can only be those which hinder a thing from exercising on man the whole of the action of which it is capable. For we must bear in mind that the fact of external things being brought into contact with man, and acting on him with all that force which they could put forth, does not depend on man himself, but on another cause, and that wholly transcending, not only the human, but all created power : and amongst the essential limitations of human knowledge we must reckon this, that 'the human mind cannot produce to itself any new cognition unless the objects of that cognition be presented to it by some other being' (*Teodicea*, 85-115).

1224. *Fourth question* : How far does the knowableness of the things themselves extend ?

Answer : *Being* alone is knowable through itself, and constitutes knowableness itself (1203 etc.). Hence the saying of the ancients, that things are cognisable exactly in the proportion in which they partake of *being* : 'Unumquodque cognoscibile est in quantum est ens' (S. Thomas, *In I. Physic.* c. I.). By attentively observing our cognitions, we notice a manifest and most marked distinction between the *intuition* of being, and the *perception* of real things, the traces of all of which resolve themselves into sensations caused in us. We see on the one hand that it is impossible to have the intuition of

¹ I speak here of a *thing* specifically different from the other things which have fallen under the perception of this individual.

being without understanding it (for the intuition and the intellection are one and the same thing), while on the other hand, what we feel in the sensations is not understood through itself, but begins to be understood by us only when we consider it in relation to being, that is, when we consider it as a term of being itself. Thus *knowableness* is of two kinds—knowableness *per se*, and *participated* knowableness, just as there is being *per se*, and being by *participation*. Now as there are differences in participated knowableness, so there are in the nature of the intellectual perception we can have of real things, and this diverse nature of the *perception* deserves to be attentively considered.

ARTICLE V.

Our knowledge of essences has two parts, the one objective and the other subjective.

1225. *Perception*, then, gives us the *fullest* knowledge of things to which it is possible for us to attain, and is therefore the rule whereby we judge of the comparative *quantum* of real knowledge contained in our various cognitions, so that the concept we have of a thing is said to be *perfect* if it has been acquired through *perception*, and *imperfect* in the opposite case (1222).

But in the *perception* itself there are differences. It is more intimate and full as regards some things, and more external and superficial as regards others. This diversity depends on many causes, and is a very fit subject for careful examination. We will speak of it first in so far as it depends on the greater or lesser degree of the knowableness of the things themselves, and on the constitution essential to us as human beings.

In the first place, then, the knowledge we acquire through the perception of things is in part *objective*, and in part *subjective*. It is very important to note and distinguish between these two elements,¹ as also to understand their necessity, arising from the essential limitation of our nature.

¹ If we neglect to take into account the *subjective* element, our philosophy will inflate us with presumption, and fill us with exaggerated pretensions.

Such is the philosophy of a certain class of modern *Dogmatists*. If, on the contrary, we lose sight of the *objective* element, we shall degrade human

Being is *object* itself. Whatever, therefore, is not being, is in itself unknown, and can only be made known by being. We ourselves form no exception to this rule, for certainly we are not being. We see being, we conceive it, but as a thing which is set opposite to, and hence is not, ourselves. Here are therefore two essentially distinct elements: (1) the *being* we see, and (2) *We* who see it. *Being in so far as seen* is *knowledge*; *We* who are possessed of that vision, belong to the category of *feeling*,¹ that which of its own nature is *knowledge*, does not require to be known by any other means; *feeling*, on the contrary, in order to be known, stands in need of an antecedent knowledge (see 1164): *being* is the object, *we* are the subject. From this we can understand that into our cognition of things other than *being* itself, there must always of necessity enter something *subjective*, which constitutes its material part, and something *objective*, which constitutes its formal part. And this gives us the principle by which to distinguish the objective from the subjective part of the perceptions, namely: 'All that in our concept of a thing comes from *being* is objective; and all that is supplied by our feeling as such² is subjective.'

1226. This is the same as to say: We and the modifications undergone by us are the subjective part; if therefore in the concept of a thing, after subtracting the concept of ourselves and of our modifications, anything remains, it is in this remnant that we must seek for the objective part of the perception; because we may be certain that this has not been supplied by us, but is to be found in the thing perceived.

nature by stripping it of all true knowledge, as was done by the *Sceptics* of the *Critical School*. Hence the investigation in which we are here engaged is of the greatest importance for keeping us clear of these two quicksands of philosophy.

¹ See 1195, 1196 [TRANSLATORS.]

² I say *by our feeling as such*, because from the moment that a feeling is supposed to be intellectually perceived, *being* is already added to it, the feeling is seen to be an act or term of being. Hence (no. 88o etc.), in the

perception of external bodies, I have distinguished and separated the *extra-subjective* from the *subjective* part by means of a principle which is simply a particular application of the general one referred to in the text. By the use of that principle I found that in the perception of external bodies there were three *extrasubjective* elements, namely, (1) a force in action, (2) multiplicity, (3) continuous extension; which elements are all essentially different from ourselves (the subject).

Thus, for instance, when I perceive a thing, its existence is not my existence, therefore it is not subjective, its force is not my force, therefore it is not subjective. In a word, whatever I am obliged to admit in that thing purely in virtue of the idea of being, constitutes its objective part.

1227. It may now be asked whether, granting that the objective part is true, the subjective be illusory?

To this I reply *in the first place*: Neither the subjective part nor the objective is illusory, provided we do not take the one for the other. It is evident that if we apply to things different from us what belongs to ourselves alone, we fall into error. But is this error imposed on us by nature itself? Certainly not. The sensible inclination inclines us indeed that way, but we have the means of guarding ourselves from yielding to such propensity. If then that part of cognition which is subjective is taken by us as subjective, and that which is objective is taken as objective, we shall not be deceived, and the subjective part also will prove true and useful to us. What this means is which enables us accurately to distinguish the subjective from the objective part of our cognitions, we have already seen. It is the virtue intrinsic to being itself, which is essentially independent of us, is objectivity itself. Whatever therefore we conclude about things in virtue of *being*, and not of anything received from us, is the *objective* part of the cognition. Whatever, on the other hand, does not come from being, but from us, is the *subjective* part. Those philosophers who did not see that being is an essence altogether different from our own, purely and absolutely objective, and conceived by us as such, have confounded the object with the subject, and declared all human knowledge subjective.

1228. *In the second place*, we must reflect that the feeling we have of our own selves is purely *subjective*. If we therefore take this *feeling* for a *cognition*, we imagine ourselves to be possessed of a subjective cognition; but this is not knowledge. We can also know ourselves truly, that is, objectively, in which case our cognition may be called *subjective* in this sense, that what we know by it is the *subject*. In short, we

are the fount of the subjective part of cognition, even as *being* is the fount of the objective part. By knowing ourselves therefore as *subjects*, we are not deceived, since we then know ourselves for what we are. The only cognitions liable to illusion are those we have of things different from *being* as well as from *ourselves*; because the entity proper to them is not contained in ours. If these things resemble us in the power of feeling or of understanding, they are, like ourselves, *subjects*, but if they belong to the class of insensitive beings, they are neither *objects per se*, nor *subjects*. What then are they? I can only designate them by the negative term *extrasubjects*; the meaning of which term is, that their 'first act,' which constitutes them real beings, remains unknown to us, and, as I have already said with respect to bodies, must be supplied by us in order that we may understand it. But the *extrasubject* is not perceived by us, except through an action whereby it modifies the feeling we have of our own selves. Although therefore, what we perceive be *extrasubjective*, yet in the mode of perceiving it, something of the *subjective*, i.e. of our own feeling, is commingled therewith, and if we do not separate this, illusion will be the result.

ARTICLE VI.

Consequences bearing on the nature of our knowledge of essences.

1229. *Being*, then, is absolutely and essentially knowable through itself. *We* (the subject) are knowable through being. The things different from us are knowable through the medium of us and of being; that is to say, by acting on us they cause modifications in the feeling we have of ourselves, and as through being we know ourselves, so also through it we know the activities which modify us.

From this doctrine there flow several consequences calculated to throw light upon the intimate nature of human cognition.

(1) As the *intelligent subjects* vary from one another, so are there varieties in the perception they have of themselves, and this must also cause diversities in the perceptions of

things that are different as well from *being* as from the percipient *subject*, and which, as I have said, can only give a perception compounded of the extrasubjective and the objective element.

1230. (2) The *being* which shines to our mind by nature does not present itself as subsistent and completed in itself; hence the appellation given to it of *most common* (*ens communissimum*). Now all other things are knowable only through *being*. It follows therefore, that our knowledge in this our present state is essentially *universal*, and that our mind does not directly lay hold of any subsistent and particular being. In fact, no particular being in this world is knowable through itself, but each requires to be made knowable by its relation with the said most common being. If the *being* which shines to our mind were completed by its essential terms; it would then be a particular intellectually perceived by us through its own self, because *being* is knowable of its own nature, nay, the vision of it constitutes knowledge itself.¹

¹ Although the ancients said that knowledge is only of universals, yet they were also aware that what makes a *particular* repugnant to the understanding is not precisely its *particularity*, but that peculiar condition in which all contingent and finite things necessarily are, of not being knowable through themselves, but only through the *being*, of which they participate. Hence it frequently happens that an individual contingent thing has not so exclusive a relation with *being* but that there may be an indefinite number of other individual things having the same relation. Hence the idea of that thing includes the *possibility of an indefinite number of other individuals* like it, or (which is the same), it includes a universal. In the limited things of this world therefore, there is only the subsistence proper to each, which in the case of sensible things is the matter whereof they are severally composed. Now the matter, as its very definition shows, cannot be *per se* an object of the human understanding, for it is called *matter* precisely to signify that it is purely a term of the sense (which perceives particulars only), and has nothing whatever to do with any intellectual

principle. If matter were thinkable through itself, it would, *ipso facto*, cease to be particular; it would not be *matter*, but the *idea* of matter (possible matter). Such, then, is the nature of matter, that it cannot by any possibility present itself *per se* to our understanding. Hence S. Thomas says: 'Singulare non repugnat intelligenti in quantum est singulare, sed in quantum est materiale, quia nihil intelligitur nisi immaterialiter,' *i.e.* through an idea or an intellectual light (S. I. lxxxvi. 1).

But is not the subsistence of spiritual beings perceived by the understanding? Do we not perceive our own individual subsistence with a particular perception? I answer, No; and the reason is that we also are a 'thing felt' (see 1195, 1196, TR.), though immaterial, and therefore in order intellectually to perceive this thing, we must apply to it the predicate of *being*, which predicate in this application remains universal as before, since *being* is not in any way exhausted by our individuality. In the sensible perception of ourselves, therefore, we perceive our individual reality (the substantial feeling of ourselves) pure and simple; but in the intellectual perception

This would be GOD. Although therefore everything felt by us is particular, nevertheless our cognition of it invariably contains the universal. In fact, to cognise a thing felt by us is nothing else than to see it in its possibility (in its idea. TR.), to consider it as an essence which can be actuated, and this very often in an indefinite number of individuals.

this same reality or substantial feeling serves as matter of the cognition, while its form assumes that mode which is determined by the nature of what we feel, and is called the *essence of man*, and which, because still universal, is actuated alike in every human individual existent, and might be actuated in countless others.

Being, then, is the one only thing knowable in and through its own self. But although, in respect of itself, it is particular and individual, in respect of the things which it makes known to us, it is universal and common, inasmuch as none of these things exhausts it. Hence the same being which causes us to know a given particular thing, presents to us also at the same time the possibility of an indefinite number of other particular things similar to that one, or dissimilar.

All this I believe to be in conformity with the mind of S. Thomas, rightly interpreted, though there are in his writings some passages which seem at first sight to suggest the contrary, as for instance, where he teaches that 'the *understanding* is knowable to itself' (S. I. lxxxvi. 1). Properly to understand the meaning of the holy Doctor in these passages, one should be thoroughly conversant with his manner of speaking. He often uses the word *understanding* to indicate the *form* of man. Take as an example the following: 'Intellectivum principium est forma hominis'; in which sentence the *intellective principle* is the understanding itself: 'Intellectus est intellectualis operationis principium' (S. I. lxxi. 1). And this expression is in some degree justified by the etymology of the word *intellect** which indicates a something interiorly seen, *i.e.* *understood*, and seems therefore to prove that the general sense of men, which affixes to

things their names, by the fact of agreeing to call our power of knowing things by the name of *intellect*, considered that the existence of this faculty is necessarily dependent on the abiding vision of something known through itself. Moreover, the reason why S. Thomas sometimes gives the name of *intellectus* to the *formal principle* of the understanding, *i.e.* to *being*, is, because of *being* and of the intelligent spirit, one thing is made, owing to that close and perfect union by which we may say that they come into immediate contact with each other: 'Intellectus enim in actu' (he says) 'quodammodo est intellectum in actu' (S. I. lxxvii. 1). Taking into account this manner of speaking used by the Angelic Doctor, I venture to think that what I here state is simply a declaration of his true mind in this matter.

Being, then, is the one only thing which can be known in its particularity. And since *being* in so far as shining to and received in the human mind, is not being with its terms and completions, but *initial being* only, therefore in so far as it is conceived by each human individual, it may be called the *particular intellect* of each, but more properly the *intellectual principle*.

As a fuller confirmation of this, and in order to show that my opinion is supported by the authority of the greatest thinkers of past ages, I beg the reader to follow up with his reflection the whole course of that philosophy which, having been derived from Plato, whose pupil Aristotle had been, may be said to have been dominant in the world down to the time of Des Cartes. He will find that the whole of that philosophy supposed as its foundation the truth to which I am referring. Aristotle, for example, asks: 'How is knowledge formed except by the *one* seen in the *many*' (*Metaph.* iii.)? And

* From *intelligere* (*intus legere*) (TRANSLATORS).

1231. (3) Hence our perceptions of the diverse things may be expressed by so many formulas which designate their nature.

I. The intuition of being takes this formula: 'Being is known through its own self, and cannot be known otherwise.'

II. The *perception* in general of all other things may be formulated thus: 'A being determined by the feeling it causes in us is perceived.' And this formula, when more particularised by the different species of things perceived, transforms itself into the following:—

(a) In the idea of the *human soul*, we know a being determined by the substantial feeling we have of ourselves, *i.e.* the feeling which constitutes our very substance as human subjects (the *myself*).

(b) In the idea of *body*, we know a being determined by a certain action it exercises on the said substantial feeling, in which action is all that we know of the corporeal *substance* (1208).

1232. (4) Seeing that all *things* are so many terms, actuations, and (though we do not understand *how* this is (1178 (4)) *effects* of being, we may also say in general, that 'the essences of things known by us are *effects* of being.' We ourselves are an effect of being, because our essence could not have been actuated in a real subsistence, except by receiving the

by this he explained his *dictum* that all knowledge had in it essentially something universal. Duns Scotus expounding this passage of the Stagirite, says: 'All knowledge refers to the universal, namely, to the *one* seen in the many, because of particulars there is no knowledge.' 'Omnis scientia est de universali quod est unum in multis, quia de singularibus non est scientia' (*Comment. on do.*). Now if such was the universal knowledge (*scientia de universali*) of the ancients, it clearly assumed at the same time the apprehension of the *one*, and consequently of the *particular*. But what is this *one*, this *particular* which is perceived in the many? We shall understand what it is if we take the expression here spoken of in conjunction with the doctrine of antiquity on the *one*. By the *one* (*unum*) nothing

else was meant than *undivided being* (*ens indivisum*). It was *being* that constituted *oneness*. Hence *one* and *being* were sometimes taken as convertible terms. 'Unum nihil aliud significat quam ens indivisum. Et ex hoc ipso apparet quod unum convertitur cum ente' (S. Thomas, *S. I.* xi. 1). *Being* therefore is that which of its own nature is known as *particular*, because it is the same as the *one*, and *being* seen in things, is that which causes us to know them, *unum in multis*. This relation which the *one being* has with many things (with many of its terms) is what renders our knowledge of things necessarily *universal*. The *universal knowledge* of the ancients, therefore, presupposed as its foundation a *particular knowledge*, that is, the knowledge of being.

act of being. As to other things, we know them by the effects they produce in us.¹

ARTICLE VII.

On the imperfection of our intuition of being.

1233. Although the intuition of *being* is objective, and the same as the intuition of *truth*; yet it may vary in the degrees of light with which being manifests itself to the mind, and qualifies it for acquiring knowledge. Now the higher these degrees of light, the more perfect is the essence itself of the rational creature, because the perfection of its informing principle is proportionately greater: and this is perhaps one of the causes, or rather the first and chief cause, of the diversity of intellectual power in individuals.

But whether the degrees of clearness in the light which *being* reveals to minds differ from the degrees in the *quantum* of manifestation which it can make of its inmost self, is a question on which I do not feel able to express an opinion.

ARTICLE VIII.

Concerning positive and negative essences.

1234. The distinction between positive and negative cognitions has its origin in the distinction between, on the one hand, the objective, and on the other the subjective and extra-subjective part of perception.

In fact, on hearing the phrase *negative essence* or *negative knowledge*, one may feel prompted to ask: How can any knowledge be negative? Either I know, or I do not. If I know anything, my knowledge of it is positive; therefore there is no such thing as *negative* knowledge.

But this apparent difficulty will vanish if we have clearly understood the nature of the various ways in which we may know a thing.

We must remember, then, that our cognition of any sub-

¹ God, on the contrary, knows in all things the *particular*, because His knowledge is not produced by the things different from *being*, namely, by the effects, but by *being* itself, the *cause* of things, as has been admirably observed by S. Thomas (*Cont. Gen.* I. lxx.).

sistent thing is composed (1) of what comes to it from the idea of being, and (2) of what we feel, *i.e.* sensibly perceive of that thing. For example, to know that a thing subsists, is a cognition which descends from the idea of being on occasion of the passion we experience from that thing; but that the thing is, for example, a *tree*, with that trunk, those branches and leaves, that fruit, and all the other properties essential or accidental of the tree, we cannot know, except on condition of having perceived with our senses all these properties, either together or part by part. For if we had never seen or felt anything like them, we never could imagine or conceive them. Now this sensible perception renders the idea of the subsistent tree full and vivid, in short positive; because in it the tree is presented to us in that active form and state which it can have in respect of us. And although in this perception and representation there is much of the extrasubjective as well as of the subjective (which, however, we have the power to distinguish and separate from the objective), nevertheless we experience in it all that activity which the tree can exercise on us as sentient beings, and hence we apprehend and receive that real and effective *nexus* which the nature of the tree has with our own.

We must therefore distinguish the *judgment on the subsistence* from the *representation* of the tree. The first is wholly objective, since it goes no further than to affirm the subsistence (to apply the idea of being); the second is a mixture of three elements, the objective, the extrasubjective, and the subjective.

Now supposing the thing called *tree* had never fallen under our sense-perception, could we nevertheless know that a tree subsisted? Yes, if some one told us of it. But in this case we should not know *what* the tree was in its real self; we should only know that a certain thing subsisted,¹ which men called by the name of *tree*. This name would determine the object perfectly for us, not however by giving us a representation of it, but only by means of a relation which has nothing

¹ The knowledge that a thing subsists is wholly objective, because the idea of *thing* is universal and indeterminate.

of the real in it, and is created solely by the human mind which had arbitrarily chosen this word for indicating that object.

1235. The relation of which I speak might also, instead of being purely nominal, have in it something real, and yet give us no representation of the object. Suppose I know a fruit, but can learn nothing about it save this, that it has been produced by some being in this world. This being, the cause of the fruit, becomes known to me by its effect, namely, by a relation which is real, and of a nature to determine the being for me, but not to give me any representation of it. The only way in which I can have the representation of an object is *by its coming into direct communication with the feeling I have of myself*, that is, by its acting on me in such a manner as to make me have sensible experience of the activity proper to it.

1236. In these two cases, therefore, I know the object simply by a *relation*, either *arbitrary* or *natural*, and not by *perception*. Here it should be observed that a *relation*—whether of *effect to cause*, or of *sign to the thing signified*, or of any other kind, if such there be, capable of determining a thing for us—is always constituted by the idea of being, and belongs to the objective part of cognition.

Now to know that a certain thing exists, as also to know it simply by a relation which determines the thing, is not in any true sense to have a positive idea of the same. For, let me say it once more, 'a representation can only be produced by the thing itself exercising on us an immediate sensible action.' Our consciousness of that action gives the knowledge of the representation itself.

Since, therefore, the idea of which we are speaking is wholly devoid of representation, contains none of the constitutive elements of the thing, it is appropriately called *negative*. There is nothing in it but what belongs to the idea of being and its applications—an idea in itself extraneous to the nature of the thing, which for us partakes of it only on occasion of becoming cognised.

ARTICLE IX.

On the negative idea of God.

1237. Against the idea of God being negative, as a long tradition declares it to be, there are some objections of which it will be well here to take some notice.

First objection:—To form the idea of the Supreme and Infinite Spirit, we start from the idea of the human soul, and after removing from it all limitations, add to it all perfections. Now if the idea of the soul is positive, much more must an idea which we form by means of so many additions be positive.

Answer: It is not true that we form the idea of God by starting from the human soul in the way alleged.

We must distinguish in an idea the two parts which have been pointed out in the preceding article, viz. (1) the part containing a subsistence and a *relation* determinative of that subsistence, but no representation or perception of the thing itself; (2) the part which *represents* the thing, *i.e.* makes us know what it is by the sensible *action* we receive from it in ourselves. This is the positive and, as it were, the vital part of the idea, whereas the first part is merely an outline within which the positive idea must be contained, but not the positive idea itself.

Now in the idea of God, we in our present state have the first part through the relations of cause to effect, of limited to unlimited, of imperfect to perfect, etc. But how many soever these *relations* may be, they never can give us anything beyond this same part.

1238. Nevertheless, so constituted are we, that it is but small satisfaction to us to have the idea of a super-sensible thing in this negative form. Moreover, an essential, profound, nay, the primary need of human nature, spurs us on continually with a yearning to know God positively and fully, to have the perception, the direct vision of Him. But this exalted aspiration of our nature cannot be entirely satisfied here below. Being incapable of perceiving God Himself by our natural resources, we fly to analogies of Him, and as the

nearest we can find are in intelligent spirits, such as the human soul, so we join these together and compose with them the best concept of God we can. Hence it is that even Religion has recourse to symbols, as some substitute for that positive and beatific idea of God, which we cannot have at present, but to which, as I have just said, by the noblest of our instincts we irresistibly aspire.¹

¹ The idea of God, therefore, is composed (1) of a *negative* part, (2) of a *symbolical* part, or, more generally, of *similitudes*, which take the place of the positive part, and in some way supply for the want of it. Both these parts enter into Religion, but the principal and fundamental part is the first. If we take away the *symbolical* part, the negative will remain; but there will be nothing to substitute for the part we have taken away. It will indeed be in our power to meditate on the negative part, which is wholly composed of the relations of God with created things, and these meditations will give us a doctrine concerning God more and more complete and admirable, but which will never be anything beyond a development and analysis of this same negative part. All this development also enters naturally into Religion and into the Divine worship, which it aids man to render with increased intelligence and love. Professor Cousin did not, therefore, accurately characterise *Religion* and *Philosophy* when he reduced the former to *symbols*, and the latter to *pure conceptions* (Lesson of April 17, 1828). How many soever may be the *pure conceptions* about God, which we can obtain by meditation and reflection, they all enter into Religion, and are aids to its Worship, which is not restricted to symbols alone. On the other hand, if philosophy does away with *symbols*, it has nothing to substitute in their stead; since all that philosophical reflection is able to discover about God, consists, not in reducing the *symbols* to *conceptions*, but in developing the negative part of the idea of God, which is composed of His *relations* with us.

It is indeed true that this development is in part a work of time, and the result of the application of reflection to the first conceptions obtained

by direct thought, and that therefore it may all be said to appertain to philosophy, inasmuch as it is produced by the light of natural reason alone, but it does not, on this account, belong any the less to religion. What opposition can there be between Reason and Religion? What is there to hinder reason—philosophy, if we like to call it so—from occupying itself with a religious theme, with God, Who is the object of religion? Why shall it be said that from the moment that this object has begun to engross the attention of the philosopher, it has ceased to be religious, and has become, instead, merely philosophical? What sort of division is this? Has philosophy then the power of changing the nature of things simply by occupying itself with them, so that the God of philosophers is no longer God? Or shall this Sovereign Object of the adoration of intelligent spirits have no more the right to be adored when man applies himself to It precisely with what is his noblest portion, I mean his intellectual activity? The separation, therefore, of philosophy from religion is arbitrary and false. Religion embraces the whole of God, whilst philosophy deals with a part of that whole by means of reasoning. The whole and the part are not opposed to one another, do not exclude one another. Religion existed before philosophy, and what philosophy or rather the natural reason has discovered by exercising itself thereon, was only a greater development of religion itself. S. Thomas's sublime treatise, *De Deo*, though a marvel of depth of thought and acuteness of reflection, is none the less a religious production, nor has it ever been considered as anything else than a *Theology*. Instead, therefore, of separating the inseparable, religion from that which human reason applied to religion knows, it would have been

The symbols, therefore, intended to represent God do not give us the perception of the Divine essence, because they have only a remote *analogy* with God, and nothing more.

It is true that if the idea which we obtain by uniting in one being all the perfections known to us, be considered in itself, it is larger and fuller ; but, as a representation of God, it must always be defective, inadequate, and null. We shall understand this better by considering that even the best accumulation we can make of all perfections in a single being will fall short of giving us these perfections as subsisting all together *in an act absolutely one and simple*, because nature nowhere presents to us an example of this. And yet this perfect oneness and simplicity of being in all possible perfections is essential to God, nay, constitutes His very essence itself. Therefore so long as we do not behold being subsistent in this unique form, we are without a positive idea of God (*Teodicea*, 55-60).

1239. *Second objection* :—If our knowledge of God is negative, it is not knowledge, and thus when we turn our thought and affection to God, we shall not know to what we are turning them. Hence for us God will be as if He were not.

Answer : This difficulty will likewise disappear as soon as we correctly understand the nature of the negative idea above described. I will explain it in other words.

Let us suppose a thing not known to us either by perception, or by some natural similitude or analogy, or by its relation with some other thing of which we have perception.

Clearly, of this thing we have no knowledge. Now let us suppose that we come to know of its *existence*, but not its

well to distinguish the successive states of religion itself ; for religion, as ages rolled on, grew more and more developed and perfect. At first it was more *symbolical*, then it abounded more in *pure cognitions*, and although this change was fostered by the continual increments of revealed light down to the coming of Jesus Christ Himself, nevertheless it was also much aided by the use of reason strengthened by that light. Indeed the faculty of reason was

not given by God to man, to stagnate in him idly and unprofitably, but to be exercised on the noblest of truths, among which that relating to God stands highest. However, *natural reason* was never left to its unaided self, and human reflection always had for its subject-matter not merely what it found in the objects of natural direct knowledge, but also what God was pleased to reveal of Himself to man,

essence. By this we already know something of it, that is, we know that a certain thing whose essence is unknown to us, exists.

But how many other particulars could we not know about this thing, without at the same time knowing its essence?

We could know, for instance, all the countless relations it may have with things already known to us.

Speaking of God, He has relation with *realities*, with *feelings*, and with *ideas*, which are the three activities I have distinguished above (1162-1165).

With *realities* He is related as *cause*; for we see that they owe their existence to that Being Who, we know, is called GOD, although we do not know His nature. It is true that these effects do not openly reveal the cause itself, which remains hidden from us as behind a veil; but it is also true that they are proper to that cause in such a manner that it would be absurd to attribute them to anything else. Unless therefore we wish to shut our eyes to the manifest light of reason, we cannot mistake the said cause, or confound it with any other. We thus have a sure *datum* which implicitly contains the positive idea of God, although, owing to the limitation of our intelligence, we are unable to bring out that idea explicitly. In fact, the idea of *created things* implicitly contains it, and we should discover it there if we were able fully to comprehend what *creation* is, which, precisely by reason of its incomprehensibility, shows itself to be of Divine origin; for the meaning of the word *creation* cannot be fully understood by us, because, in order to understand it, we should require to have the positive idea of God which it implies.

With *feelings*, God has the relation of *supreme good*; for we continually aspire after happiness, of which, however, we have only a notion in general, and hence we also aspire after the hidden Being in the possession of Whom our happiness consists.

With *ideas* He is related as *the being knowable through Himself*.

In the idea of being which we have by nature, there is comprised a *potential infinite*. It is on this account, that, in

any series whatever of things, we can always proceed further and further with the reckoning of its links, and yet never actually attain to the infinite number. This power of going on indefinitely with new additions, however far the series may have been extended, makes us aware that all the things of which it is composed are essentially limited. Now the concept of limited things is relative to some other thing unlimited and absolute. Although therefore we do not know the unlimited and absolute *Being* as He is in Himself, we nevertheless understand the possibility of Him, we understand that He is the opposite of that which we know (the limited); and hence by way of contraposition to the limited (that is to say by way of *negation*) we form the concept of the Unlimited Reality. This is precisely what we do when accumulating in a single being all the degrees and qualities of perfection positively known to us. We then see very well that, after this has been done, the being is still limited. We therefore pass on with our mind to its contrary, and say: 'A Being contrary to these limited things on which my imagination dwells, is possible.'¹ But if we ask ourselves *what* this Being is, we are bound to answer that we do not know, and all we can say is, that He is the opposite of everything we are acquainted with, namely, of the limited. By means of this opposition, therefore, of this negation of the *limited being*, that unlimited Being, although unknown to us in Himself, becomes contra-distinguished and fixed before our mind so that it is impossible to confound Him with anything else; for when all limited beings are put aside, the unlimited is all that can exist.

The concept of God, then, is formed through the exclusion of every being distinct from Him, and consequently through negations.

1240. But we also know God in another way, more proximate than this, although still negative. We have knowledge separately, (1) of possible being, (2) of some specific essences, and (3) of the *act* by which these essences subsist, *i.e.* of some limited substances. Now a specific essence, in so far as it is

¹ Please to observe that here I speak of the *concept* of God, and not of His *existence*.

distinct from possible being, is a limitation of it ; but in God there can be no limitation. This reflection enables us to construct a formula expressive of God, thus : ' Being, considered in its complete act, is God.' This formula is true, but it is at the same time incomprehensible to us, because to conceive being itself in its perfect and complete act, is beyond our power.

And this is that *ineffable name* of God of which the Scriptures tell us, namely, a formula which cannot apply to anything but God. But although that formula cannot be understood by us in its oneness, it can be understood in its elements ; and this is enough for us to be able to single out God from among all things, and reserve a name for Him alone, for in no other thing can those elements be found united in the way the formula expresses.

1241. Our negative knowledge of God is, therefore, such that by means of it we know to *Whom* to address ourselves without any fear of error, and can undoubtingly adore our *First Cause*, practically know the *Fountain of goodness*, and satisfy our craving for knowledge in the *Light of minds*. How puerile, then, as well as vain are the efforts of those who would fain persuade mankind to turn away from this inexhaustible source of all good, on the plea that He is an *incomprehensible being* !

ARTICLE X.

Conclusion.

1242. I shall conclude this chapter on our knowledge of essences with three observations.

(1) All our ideas, no matter whether positive or negative, are alike designated by words. Hence, so far as regards language, they all seem to express the same kind of essence, *i.e.* positive and full, which nevertheless is not the case, and this circumstance ought to be attentively considered, lest a purely mental or nominal entity be confounded in our minds with a real one.¹

¹ By distinguishing the various kinds of essences, we are enabled to reconcile certain opinions of the Doctor of Aquin which would otherwise seem to be mutually contradictory.

He says in many places that the substance and quiddity of the thing is the proper object of the understanding, *i.e.* assuming the presence of the suitable conditions; and again that ' the under-

1243. (2) By the simple idea of a thing, wherein the essence is seen, we make no affirmation as to the subsistence

standing penetrates into the innermost nature of the *species* which exists in the individuals themselves' (*De Verit.* q. X. v.). This is verified especially in the perception of ourselves, because by perceiving ourselves we perceive the term of the act itself by which we exist, and consequently our *essence* to which that act extends.

Elsewhere he says, that 'In a mind which' (like the human) 'receives its knowledge from things, the *forms* (ideas) exist in virtue of a certain action of the things upon the soul.' Then he subjoins: 'What is known to us through the intellectual vision are the *things themselves*, and not their images, which is not the case either in the corporeal, *i.e.* sensitive, or in the spiritual, *i.e.* imaginative vision; for the objects of the imagination as well as of the sense are merely some accidents which result in a certain figure or image of the thing, whereas the object of the understanding is the *essence* itself of the thing, although the understanding knows that essence through a similitude of it, as the means of knowing, and not as though it were the object on which its vision is primarily fixed.' 'In mente enim accipiente scientiam a rebus, formæ existunt per quamdam actionem rerum in animam. . . . Ipsa cognita per intellectualem visionem sunt res ipsæ, et non rerum imagines; quod in visione corporali, scilicet sensitiva, et spiritali, scilicet imaginativa, non accidit. Objecta enim imaginationis et sensus sunt quædam accidentia, ex quibus quædam rei figura vel imago constituitur; sed objectum intellectus est ipsa rei essentia; quamvis essentiam rei cognoscat per ejus similitudinem, sicut per medium cognoscendi, non sicut per objectum in quo primo fertur ejus visio' (*De Verit.* q. X. iv.).

In this passage mention is made of a certain *similitude* whereby the understanding knows the essences, and of certain *images* of the things which the understanding does not perceive, because its vision goes direct to the things themselves. What is the difference between that similitude and these images? To my mind it is the following. The *sense* has *sensation* (properly

so called), and *sensitive corporeal perception*. The *sensitive corporeal perception* is the *term* of the action of external things on us, and is what renders the sensation *extrasubjective*. Now this term of the action (which it is not necessary to describe here) corresponds with the sensible *image* of S. Thomas, a phenomenon of the sense. Meanwhile the soul in so far as intellective, conscious of being affected by the said term from without, and applying and joining thereto the being of which it has the notion in general, sees a determinate being acting on it. The idea thus acquired is the *similitude* of S. Thomas, through which the understanding cognises things; nor can it cognise them otherwise, for its object is necessarily *being*. But how does being taken universally come to receive determinations? I answer, from that *term* of the action exercised on the sense. Consequently, such as is the action, so is the *essence* of the things which it brings to our cognisance. With regard to external bodies, I have already shown that what in them falls under our immediate perception is not the *first act* by which they are beings (exist), but only the *action* which they exercise on us, and which therefore constitutes for us the essence known under the name of *body*. Hence I also said that their action on us is *substantial*, or, in other words, that what we take for *corporeal substance* is precisely the *force acting* on us in such a way as to cause modifications in our sense (692 etc.).

But although all external bodies are *forces acting sensibly* on us, they do not all, or always, act, *i.e.* affect our sense, in the same way; and these diversities in the powers of acting give rise to different species of bodies, and also to specific differences in the state of the same body. From this we see that the distinction between our several ideas of bodies is determined solely by *accidental* modes in the actions exercised on us; whence it follows that these ideas give us the knowledge of *generic essences* only, which are not complete essences; but the *diverse powers* which bodies exhibit of acting on us stand for

of that thing, but are in the realm of possibilities alone. For this reason, no sooner has an essence been conceived than it appears to us possible; for to be *possible* and to be *thinkable* are synonymous expressions. Hence the ancients held that in the simple apprehension of things (the idea) error is impossible, and S. Thomas endorses the opinion of Aristotle, who defines the intelligence as 'The faculty of *indivisibles*, into which no falsehood can enter' (Arist. *De Anima*, L. iii.).

1244. (3) We have seen that the particular principles of the several sciences are nothing but the essences of the things which form respectively the subject-matter of those sciences (570 etc.). Therefore the sciences are based on principles absolutely exempt from error.

essences. To the knowledge of these generic essences are therefore applicable those passages in which S. Thomas says that the essences of things are hidden from us. For instance, in the treatise *De Veritate* (X. i.) he says: 'The essences of things are unknown to us, but their aptitudes (*virtutes*) are revealed to us through their acts, and we often' (*therefore not always*) 'take the names of the aptitudes or powers to signify the essences.' And then a little further down he adds: 'Since the substantial differences of things are unknown to us, therefore, instead of them, those who formulate a definition make use sometimes (INTERDUM) of the accidental differences, in so far as these mark or denote the essence, even as certain peculiar effects denote the cause. Wherefore the 'sensible,' regarded as the constitutive difference of the animal, is not taken from the sense considered as a faculty, but from the sense considered as signifying the essence itself of the soul, from which this faculty flows' (*Ibid.*).

As regards God, we know nothing except *effects* produced by Him, and these finite and absolutely inadequate to give us a positive idea of their Cause; hence our knowledge of God is always,

as I have said, negative. The Angelic Doctor therefore writes: 'Our understanding, even in our present state, is able to know, in a certain way, the Divine Essence, so however as to know, not what It is, but only what It is not.' And as to the objection raised concerning the turning of our affections to God, he solves it thus: 'We can love God immediately, without being obliged to love some other thing first; although sometimes we are, by the love of some visible things, carried up to the invisible ones. Nevertheless we cannot in our present state know God immediately without being obliged to know something else first. The reason is, because the affection follows the understanding, and it is only at the point where the operation of the understanding terminates that that of the affection begins. Now the understanding, proceeding from the effects to the causes, comes at last to know God, after a certain manner; that is, to know of Him what He is not, and thus the affection is carried to what the understanding presents to it, without being obliged to pass through all the steps which were made by the understanding itself' (*De Verit.* q. X. a. XI.).

PART IV.

ON THE ERRORS TO WHICH HUMAN KNOWLEDGE
IS LIABLE.

CHAPTER I.

A RECAPITULATION OF ALL THOSE COGNITIONS IN WHICH
NATURE ITSELF PROTECTS US FROM ERROR.

1245. Had truth and certainty been committed to the custody of man's free-will, they would indeed have had an untrustworthy guardian, and probably human perversity would very soon have put an end to both.

Hence we have seen that the primary truths were entrusted by the providence of our Creator, not to the individual man, but to human nature. This nature, essentially intelligent, sees essentially the primary truths ; and man, therefore, far from being able to annihilate, cannot help seeing them ; for even as he has no power to create anything, so he cannot destroy anything to which God has given existence.¹

¹ S. Augustine's mind made that progression which, as I have observed, must necessarily take place in philosophy, which at first is *vulgar*, then grows *learned*, and lastly attains to *perfection* (29-34). The vulgar philosophy sees not the difficulties involved in philosophical questions, and dashes on full of presumptuous self-assertion ; but no sooner does its attention happen to be arrested by some knotty point, than it rushes into the opposite extreme, and is so taken aback that no explanation can satisfy it. To use the words of a modern writer, 'It would seem as if scepticism were the first form in which common sense appears on the scene of philosophy.'

S. Augustine, therefore, began as a follower of the so-called *Academical Philosophers*. Then, having emerged from the scepticism characteristic of that school, he fell—naturally, I would almost say—into the Platonic ranks. Plato's doctrine about ideas belongs to the *learned* philosophy, but in that first period, when it is as yet imperfect—*i.e.* when it sees indeed the difficulties, but has not discovered the simplest solution of them, and has recourse instead to ingenious hypotheses, which err by *excess* rather than by *defect*. A mind like S. Augustine's could not, however, stop here. He perceived that the Platonic theory on the origin of ideas was marred by superfluity, and

1246. Let us then briefly recapitulate here all that nature does in order to secure to man the possession of truth, and protect him from error. This will be a fresh proof that true scepticism is impossible; that it is only a lie which, either through moral obliquity or through mental aberration, a man utters to himself or to others; and that in an intelligent nature truth not only is supreme, but has a power of which it cannot be dispossessed, although that nature, because endowed with free-will, can sin against it.

I. In the first place, then, man has by nature the permanent vision of *being* taken universally. This being is the *light*

by cutting off that superfluity, he found himself in the truth. This was through being vividly impressed with the fact that human nature is essentially *rational*, and hence can recognise the truth when, searching after it, she finds it; so much so that even a child, if suitably questioned, will give right answers even about things it has never learnt from anyone. Hence in the first book of *Retractions*, c. viii., we find him censuring himself for having, on a former occasion, said that the soul seemed to have come into this world with all the arts congenite with it; 'for,' he says, 'it may be . . . that the child, when interrogated, is able to answer because it is intelligent by nature.' 'Fieri enim potest . . . ut hoc ideo possit (interrogata respondere), quia natura intelligibilis est.' And by way of explanation he subjoins that what constitutes a nature intelligent is an innate *light*. 'I have said that those who are skilled in the liberal arts discover them in themselves as things which had been sunk in oblivion, and in a certain way disinter them. But this I now reprove; for it is more probable that the reason why even the illiterate, when properly interrogated, answer rightly concerning certain portions of knowledge, is this: that they have before them, so far as they are capable of it, the LIGHT OF AN ETERNAL REASON, wherein they behold those immutable truths, not because they had once known and then forgotten them, as was thought by the Platonists, and others of a similar way of thinking.' 'Propterea . . . quia præsens est eis, quantum id capere possunt, LUMEN

RATIONIS ÆTERNÆ, ubi hæc immutabilia vera conspiciunt, non quia ea noverant aliquando et oblii sunt, quod Platoni vel talibus visum est' (*ibid.* c. iv.). Now this is precisely that improvement of which I said that the Platonic doctrine stood in need. Instead of representing all ideas as innate, it should have restricted itself to saying that they are all subordinate to one innate idea—the light of reason, and are derived and generated from it, when, on occasion either of sensation or of interrogations, the various things are seen and intellectually apprehended (229–233). This light I call the *principle of cognition*; and so it is called by S. Thomas, who positively declares that, whatever things we know, we know them 'in rationibus æternis sicut in COGNITIONIS PRINCIPIO' (S. I. lxxxiv. 5). And that no doubt may remain as to the meaning of this *principle of cognition*, I would invite the reader to observe that S. Augustine, and after him S. Thomas, call it by the name of *truth*: 'Nec ego utique in te (videmus verum), nec tu in me, sed ambo in ipsa, quæ supra mentes nostras est, incommutabili veritate' (*Confess.* L. XII. c. xxv.). Now, I have already shown that, according to S. Thomas, the *truth* wherein we in this present life see the things that are true is the *idea of being in general* (1123 etc.). Thus the teaching of these two great authorities is in perfect harmony, and complete in all its parts; and that which I am endeavouring to set forth in these pages is only a reproduction and continuation of the same.

of the mind, the last *why* in all human reasonings, always the victor—always, by its own essence, incapable of being vanquished.¹ This last *why* is *truth*, so that all things are true in so far as they partake of it, and therefore man is by nature the possessor of truth.

II. The first principles of reason are nothing but the idea of being in an applied form (480 etc.); their evidence being the same as its evidence, they also are exempt from error.²

These primary truths are the sources of all human cognitions. There are, however, also some truths of fact, about which error is impossible. They are the following:—

III. Man cannot be deceived about his own existence.³

IV. He cannot err in the immediate consciousness of the principal modifications undergone by him.⁴

V. Our senses never lead the understanding into error so long as it takes their depositions as they are, without adding anything to them.⁵ This testimony of the senses is a part of

¹ S. Thomas teaches that, with regard to being, man cannot possibly err: 'Proprium objectum intellectus est quod quid est' (that is, the *being*, the *essence* of things), 'UNDE CIRCA HOC NON DECIPITUR INTELLECTUS' (*Cont. Gent.* I. lviii.).

² S. Thomas says: 'Intellectus IN PRIMIS PRINCIPIIS NON ERRAT, sed in conclusionibus interdum, ad quas ex primis principiis ratiocinando procedit' (*Cont. Gent.* I. lxi.).

³ So says S. Thomas: 'NULLUS ERRAVIT UNQUAM IN HOC QUOD NON PERCIPERET SE VIVERE' (*De Verit.* X. viii.).

⁴ This was the starting-point of Des Cartes, *I think (cogito)*, the consciousness of thinking: this *evidence* is the basis of the whole Cartesian system. I have remarked that this basis is solid, but that its solidity is due to the principles of reason. It cannot therefore be the first stone of the scientific edifice. Hence the Cartesian error consists wholly in having begun the structure from that which is not its foundation. This was the weak side which caused that philosophy to give way under the attacks of its opponents.

⁵ I have treated of the criteria of the

truthfulness of the senses in Sect. V., 749 etc. What I say here is also in conformity with the teaching of S. Thomas. It may, however, be well to explain a form of expression used by him, and proceeding from Aristotle, which might create confusion in minds not well versed in a phraseology that has now gone out of use. We find it in such passages as the following: 'The proper object of the understanding is the quiddity of things; hence, respecting this, the understanding cannot be deceived *except by accident*. But it may be deceived in composing and dividing. The same must be said of the sense, which is the FACULTY OF PARTICULARS: IN THESE THE SENSE IS ALWAYS TRUTHFUL, but in other things it is liable to deception.' 'Proprium objectum intellectus est quod quid est, unde circa hoc non decipitur intellectus, nisi per accidens. Circa compositionem autem et divisionem decipitur: sicut et sensus, QUI EST PROPRIORUM, est semper verus, in aliis autem fallitur' (*C. Gent.* I. lviii.). Here the holy Doctor distinguishes two objects as well of the understanding as of the sense: the *proper object*, and with respect to this he does not admit the possibility of error; and the *object*

that consciousness the certainty of which has been pointed out at no. IV.

VI. That abstraction which from perceptions draws ideas, and therefore the knowledge of the *essences* of things—or, as the ancients termed it, *simple apprehension*—is likewise exempt from error.¹ Now these *essences* are, as we have seen, the

by accident, in which both the understanding and the sense may mislead us. Now what did he mean by this object *by accident*? Let us see it first with regard to sense. He himself has explained the phrase *objectum sensus per accidens* in his commentary on Aristotle's work *De Anima* thus: 'As to the whiteness of the thing seen, the eye does not deceive, but as to whether that thing be snow, or flour, or some other white substance, in this the eye may deceive, especially when it sees from a distance' (L. iii. Lect. 6). Now I request the reader to take note: the eye sees the white colour, but to judge that the thing which has that colour is snow, etc. belongs alone to the understanding, which pronounces upon what the eye presents to it (whiteness); but as this pronouncement follows most rapidly upon the sensation, it seems to be intimately united therewith, and as a consequence, the generality of men mistake it for an object of the sense itself. Hence, if any ordinary person be asked, 'What assures you that what you see upon yonder mountain is snow?' he immediately answers, 'My eyes, sir,' for he does not stop to separate two things which, though perfectly different, are most closely united, *i.e.* (1) the sensation of whiteness, (2) the judgment whereby the understanding takes that whiteness as indicating snow, and affirms accordingly. Now Aristotle would not in this case also depart from the common, though incorrect, manner of speaking. So great was his respect for the popular phraseology that it carried him at times even to the length of seeming to adopt its errors; and he therefore contented himself with saying that the *judgment* in question was the object of the sense *by accident*, inasmuch as it received its matter from the sense, and instantaneously followed the sensation. It would, however, be better to abandon

this manner of speaking, and to say, unequivocally, that this judgment is an object, not of the sense, but of the understanding.

After this it will be easy to see what must have been, for Aristotle and the Schoolmen, the object of the *understanding by accident*. As the *object* (to speak correctly, the term) of the *sense* is the matter of our cognitions; and the form of them, although not appertaining to it, was called its object *by accident*; even so the *form* of our cognitions is the *proper object of the understanding*, and their matter its *object by accident*. Hence, if the understanding does not judge of sensible things strictly in accordance with what the sense experiences, it falls into error.

Lastly, I would observe how, speaking of the sense, Aristotle says that it sometimes, though seldom, errs even in respect of its proper object, namely, when the organ happens to be defective; but if we separate, as we ought, the depositions of the sense from every extraneous element, we shall find that this exception is wholly superfluous.

¹ This also has been taught by S. Thomas (*De Anima*, L. iii. Lect. 11). He says: 'There is an operation by which the understanding perceives *indivisibles* (*i.e.* simple essences), as when it has intellection of *man* or *ax* or some other incomplex thing. And into this kind of intellection no error can enter, both because incomplex things are neither true nor false, and because in respect of the quiddity (*being*) of things, the understanding does not err. But in those intelligible things wherein there may be the true or the false, there is a certain composition of the things understood, as when many things are joined into one (in the operation of synthesis is complex ideas are formed). Now what are these *incomplex* things? They are the *pure ideas* divested of all judgment on real and subsistent things. And

particular principles of the sciences, and correspond with the *anticipations* (προλήψεις) of Epicurus.

Such are the natural and infrangible bonds which unite and firmly secure to our nature the truth for which it was made.

But having hitherto seen the boundaries within which the temerity of human reason arrayed against truth cannot penetrate, we must now look at the other side of the question, and examine how far the power which man has of injuring himself by yielding to error extends.

why can there not, in these ideas, be either the true or the false? Because they are the exemplars, the *truths* of things, but the true or the false consists in the correspondence or non-correspondence of the things with their

exemplar-ideas. If therefore we do not think of real things, but only of their ideas or possibilities, there is no judgment about that correspondence, and consequently no possibility of error.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE NATURE OF HUMAN ERROR.

ARTICLE I.

Distinction between the question of the NATURE of error and that of its CAUSE.

1247. The question of the *nature* of human errors is easily confounded with that of their *cause*; and when we have described the first, it seems that the second also has been discovered. For, in order to describe in what error consists, one must describe how it is engendered, and this cannot be done without describing the act by which the understanding falls into it. Now this act is precisely what men usually consider as the *cause* of the error.

And so it is in fact, but only the *proximate* cause; there lies behind it another cause, relatively to which it is itself only an *effect*. I will explain:—

Error consists in a wrong action of the understanding. This is its nature, this the way in which it arises, and this also its proximate cause. But what is it that moves the understanding to act wrongly? This is a new question, and its object is to seek, not for the proximate, but for the remote or first cause of man's errors. And since these two causes, the *proximate* and the *remote*, are closely linked with one another, I shall begin by saying a few words on the first, and then proceed to inquire into the second, which is the true and efficient cause of our errors.

ARTICLE II.

Error is found in the understanding alone.

1248. As I have already observed, those who say that 'the senses deceive,' or who speak of the 'errors of the imagi-

nation,' use a language which is not merely inaccurate, but positively contrary to fact.

In order that these phrases may convey a correct meaning, they must be taken with a very material qualification, that is to say, we must understand by them that the senses and the imagination furnish the matter and the occasion of error, and nothing more. A square tower seen from a distance appears to you round, but it is not the eye which tells you that the tower itself is round, the eye says only that the term of its sensation is *something round*, or rather it does not say this, but feels it. The understanding adds its own judgment, and from that feeling infers the roundness of the tower. It is the understanding therefore that commits the error. Again, the imagination presents to a sanguine speculator on Change a vivid picture of some great gain, and the understanding judges that gain probable or certain. The vividness itself of the imagination is real; but the understanding errs in deducing from it probability or certainty.

This is a well-known truth, but philosophical writers have never yet made up their minds to abandon such equivocal expressions as 'errors of the senses,' or 'of the imagination,' for signifying that the senses and the imagination afford the occasion of these errors.¹

¹ 'Par la même raison,' says Bossuet, 'il n'y a que l'entendement qui puisse errer. A proprement parler, il n'y a point d'erreur dans le sens, qui fait toujours ce qu'il doit, puis qu'il est fait pour opérer selon les dispositions non seulement des objets, mais des organes. C'est à l'entendement, qui doit juger des organes mêmes, à tirer des sensations les conséquences nécessaires; et, s'il se laisse surprendre, c'est lui qui se trompe' (*De la Connaissance de Dieu et de soi-même*, Chap. I. vii.).

S. Thomas had already taught that the sense, as such, perceives neither *truth* nor *falsehood*; and that therefore, when we speak of the *errors of the sense*, this phrase must be understood as signifying that the sense furnishes to the understanding the occasion of error,

or in a way similar to that in which even insensible things are said to be true or false in so far as the sense *apprehends* them just as they happen to impress it. 'Error is not in the sense as in a faculty that knows the true and the false. Error is not to be sought in the sense except in the way in which truth is in it. Now truth is not in the sense in such a manner as that the sense has knowledge of the truth, but only in so far as it has a true apprehension of things sensible.' 'Falsitas non [est] in sensu, sicut in cognoscente verum et falsum. Falsitas non est quaerenda in sensu nisi sicuti ibi est veritas. Veritas autem non sic est in sensu, ut sensus cognoscat veritatem, sed in quantum veram apprehensionem habet de sensibilibus' (*S. I. xxii. II.*).

ARTICLE III.

Error lies in those judgments which are posterior to the intellectual perception.

1249. The understanding alone is subject to error¹ (1248).

If, however, we wish to know precisely which among the functions of the understanding is subject to error, we shall easily see that it can only be that of *judgment*. Error, therefore, is a *faulty* judgment by which we affirm the false instead of the true.

But the first judgments, that is the intellectual perceptions, as well as the ideas which are drawn from them, and which the ancients termed *simple apprehensions*, are exempt from error, because these first operations are done by the intelligent nature itself, which never errs.

Error then has its seat in the *judgments* formed by the *reason* subsequently to the perceptions of things, in which judgments there are always *two* objects joined together.²

1250. The union of two objects may be termed a synthesis; hence we might simplify the general formula expressive of the nature of error by reducing it to the following: 'Error invariably consists in a synthesis of objects wrongly made.'

1251. One of the two objects which are joined together is the *subject* of the judgment, the other is the *predicate*.

Every error, therefore, consists in a wrong union of a *predicate* with a *subject*. In other words, we err (1) either by affirming a predicate of a subject to which it does not belong, or (2) by denying it of a subject to which it does belong. And since to affirm a predicate is a kind of mental composition, and to deny it is a kind of mental decomposition, therefore

¹ Error, like every other evil, is not a *positive*, but a *negative* thing, according to the celebrated remark of S. Augustine: 'Since truth is that which is, we shall beyond all contradiction have to conclude that error is always that which is not.' 'Si verum est id, quod est, falsum non esse usquam concluditur, quovis repugnante' (*Solil.* II. viii.).

² The union of two objects is what characterises this class of judgment, and distinguishes them from those which are simply intellectual *perceptions*: because the latter are composed not of two objects, but of an *object* and of a *felt activity*, as I have elsewhere demonstrated (119, 120, and *n.*).

the ancients said that the understanding is not subject to error except in that operation in which it composes or divides.¹

ARTICLE IV.

Explanation of that particular species of error which arises from the abuse of language.

1252. When an author gives to a word a signification² wider than, or different from, that assigned to it by common usage, he will infallibly lead both himself and his readers into error, unless he define the word beforehand, distinctly intimating his intention to take it, not in the sense generally current, but as an arbitrary sign of a special idea of his own ; and then being very careful lest, forgetting his definition, he should in the course of the argument lapse into using that

¹ It may be said that the understanding is subject to error both in composing and in dividing, for the reason I have given ; but these two operations may be reduced to one, namely to *composition*. For even *division* may take the form of composition ; since to *unite* a negative predicate to a subject is really a division under the form of composition, as may be seen for instance in algebraic addition, where positive and negative quantities are linked together by signs of contrary values. Hence S. Thomas sometimes says, simply, 'The error of the understanding considered *per se* is to be found only in that operation by which the understanding composes' (*S. L. xvii. iii.*). The same thing has been said by Aristotle (*De Anima*, L. iii. c. xii.). Sometimes, however, he says that error is found either in composition or in division : 'About the essence of things the understanding does not err. But in composition and division it may err by attributing to a thing of which it understands the essence what does not necessarily follow from that *essence*, or is contrary thereto.' 'Circa quod quid est intellectus non decipitur. In componendo vero vel dividendo potest decipi, dum attribuit rei, cujus quidditatem intelligit, aliquid quod eam non consequitur, vel quod ei opponitur' (*S. I. xvii. III.*).

² It is commonly believed, that the words in ordinary use have not a strictly determinate meaning attached to them by the general sense of mankind. This is an error : if it were true, *propriety* in the use of terms, which is the chief quality of a writer, would cease to exist. What induces the belief I speak of are the two following apparent reasons : (1) that particular individuals do commit many inaccuracies in their discourse, (2) that the great majority are incapable, when asked, of giving a precise definition of any word. Now the first of these reasons proves the very opposite of what it is supposed to prove ; since the particular *improprieties* of speech could not be noticed, if the *proper* and determinate sense of the words used were unknown. As to the second reason, we shall find that it proves nothing, when we remember that there are two kinds of knowledge, both equally true, the one *vulgar* or *popular*, and the other *scientific* (which S. Thomas characterises as being acquired '*per studiosam inquisitionem*'—*S. I. lxxxvii. II.*) ; and that it is only by means of *scientific* knowledge that *definitions* can be given, because, to formulate a definition, one must analyse, institute comparisons, and separate the *genus* from the *differentia* (See note to 528, 2nd vol. p. 107 etc.).

word in the ordinary meaning—a thing to which the force of habit and the example of other men continually incline us all.

1253. Sometimes, however, the value of a word is not changed intentionally, but through inadvertence, due perhaps to the influence of some prejudice. In this case error is sure to creep into the author's argument unawares to himself. The reason is, that, owing to the two causes I have just named, he will not be able to keep uniformly to the improper meaning given at first to the word in question, but will now and then unconsciously slip into using it in the common acceptation, and as a consequence fall at cross purposes with himself.

But even if by a sort of miracle he were to avoid this inconsistency, his readers would certainly not understand him, since they would take in their accustomed sense what he takes in a different one. This kind of misunderstanding is a most prolific source of dissensions amongst the learned.

1254. Now by analysing the error here referred to, we find it to consist in this, that one object is multiplied into two; for a term improperly used signifies two things at the same time, namely, (1) what is attached to it by common usage, and in which no change ought to be made without a particular declaration to that effect; and (2) what the author has inadvertently assumed it to indicate.

Here, then, we have two different essences, two different objects confounded together, the characteristics which belong to one being attributed to the other, or at least being so understood by the readers.¹

1255. It will be seen that the error which happens in this fact may be of two species: for if the author, while intending to speak of one object, uses a word which expresses a different one, he commits the blunder of considering the definition proper to one thing as proper to another.

But if he promiscuously takes the word in two different significations, he makes a monstrous compound of two different objects, by unnaturally conjoining the distinctive properties of the one and of the other in one and the same being;

¹ What has been said of an author and his readers is, of course, equally applicable as between a speaker and his hearers (TRANSLATORS).

as, for example, if having at first spoken of a being as endowed with reason, he were afterwards to attribute to it some quality belonging exclusively to the brutes, such as the necessity of following instinct alone. So did Rousseau, who, after having taken the phrase *state of nature* as signifying the natural state of the brutes, drew from it the conclusion (which I verily believe he meant as a satire on his own times, or as an expression of his profound melancholy) that the life best adapted to man is that of the beasts of the forest.

1256. Such, then, are the errors to which, according to the ancient philosophers, the human understanding is liable *by accident* in that operation whereby it knows the *quiddity* (essence) of things. They proceed from an improper use of language, whereby beings are multiplied and mixed up together, thus producing, in fact, an intellectual synthesis.¹

ARTICLE V.

Why error is found only in the judgments posterior to the intellectual perceptions and first ideas.

1257. The reason why error is found only in an intellectual act posterior to the intellectual perceptions and first ideas, is this, that the perceptions, as well as all those other operations in which the understanding is exempt from error (1246), take place in us *necessarily*, being the work of the intelligent nature itself, which never errs.²

¹ See the *Summa Theologica* of S. Thomas (I. xvii. III), where he says: 'The understanding, considered *per se*, can err only in the operation called composition, but by accident it can err also in the operation by which it knows *quiddities*, namely, INASMUCH AS COMPOSITION IS MIXED UP WITH THIS OPERATION.' 'Quia vero falsitas intellectus, per se, solum circa compositionem intellectus est; PER ACCIDENS etiam in operatione intellectus, qua cognoscit quod quid est, potest esse falsitas IN QUANTUM IBI COMPOSITIO INTELLECTUS ADMISCEATUR.' And here he adduces and explains the two species of error which I have adduced and explained. But since these errors

also do not, strictly speaking, take place except through an intellectual composition (*synthesis*) to which language gives the occasion, it seems to me, as I have already remarked, more simple and less likely to create ambiguity to say that the understanding errs here likewise in composition and not in simple apprehension, instead of saying that it errs in simple apprehension *by accident*.

² This is also the reason given of this fact by S. Thomas: 'A natural thing never fails in that which belongs to it according to its form.' 'Res naturalis non deficit ab esse, quod sibi competit secundum suam formam' (S. I. xvii. III).

Intellectual *perceptions*, therefore, are either had or not had ; but mistaken they never are. The same must be said of the *ideas contained in* these perceptions.

ARTICLE VI.

Continuation: DIRECT and REFLEX knowledge.

1258. Since the object of the present discussion is to know in what kind of intellectual acts error consists, it becomes necessary for me here to enter on a fuller explanation of those two species of knowledge to which I have often alluded, namely, the *direct* and the *reflex*.

We have seen, then, that the human being, destitute at first of all ideas of things, becomes affected by sensations which leave a phenomenon in his imagination (images) ; and that his understanding, through the sensations forms perceptions, and, through the images forms ideas, in the manner already explained.¹

¹ For the way in which the understanding forms its perceptions of sensible things, see 528 etc.; and for that in which it separates ideas from the perceptions, see 519, 520. Now the question suggests itself, 'How is the understanding moved to the act of perception?' and again, 'Whether it forms this act as soon as sensations are received, or whether in the beginning of man's development some time intervenes between sensation and intellection.' Here I think it advisable to say something on the first of these two questions, which have a very close affinity to each other, and to indicate how I conceive that the understanding can be moved to perception on occasion of the sensations. Let me first state where the difficulty of this explanation lies. That our sensitivity is drawn and moved to its action by the impressions made on it by sensible things, is easily understood; for sensitivity is a passive faculty, and the 'sensible' is a stimulus suited to its nature. But between the sense and the understanding there is neither similarity nor communication of nature. It cannot therefore be supposed, that sensation moves the understanding by acting on

it directly as efficient cause. How, then, does sensation *occasion* in the understanding that movement which results in perception, without, on this account, having a real communication with this faculty? I maintain that this is brought about by the UNITY of the human subject. We must consider that the identical *Ego* which is sensitive is also intellective. Now it must be remembered that *sense* produces *instinct*; for example, the stimulus of hunger felt in the stomach produces the *instinct* to seek for food, or to lay hold of it if within reach. So far we are in the sensitive order only. I do not now care to explain how it happens that *sense* begets *instinct*; it is enough for me to state the fact, which is that the animal, on having certain sensations, feels a want, and as a consequence puts all its activities in motion; which power of activity seeking the satisfaction of a want is called *instinct*. Starting from this fact, I argue thus: The human subject (at once sentient and intelligent), feeling in itself a *want* arising from its sensitive nature, excites itself to put in motion *all* the activities it has, in order to relieve that *want*. But among such activities there is also the intellective.

The understanding forms perceptions, and from them draws ideas, instinctively and naturally; it is not therefore herein subject to error, for, as I have said, nature does not err (1257).

But we must now distinguish these first cognitions, in producing which the free-will has no part, from those which come after and are commanded by the will. . The first constitute *direct*, and the second, *reflex* knowledge.

1259. This distinction is of the highest importance, and has always been known and observed by the greatest philosophers. The *Sensists* are the only ones who have ignored and forgotten it.

The direct knowledge is purely *synthetical*, while the reflex is also *analytical*. By reflection we turn on what we have directly perceived, analysing and decomposing it, considering it part by part, and then reconstructing it as we please; whereas by pure perception we embrace the whole thing in its entirety, by a simple act, and as though it were a single object. In this first intellectual apprehension nothing is distinguished or particularised in the thing; for among the natural limitations of our understanding there is this, that 'In order to draw distinctions, it must make a corresponding number of acts, each of them in the form of a negation, and this necessarily preceded by an affirmation.' First, then, we perceive the thing in its whole, and afterwards by *reflection* we analyse it. Now, as by considering things distinctly in their several parts we gain a much clearer knowledge of them than by the first and concrete perception, so the latter appears to us confused and imperfect;¹ and this is why it escapes the

It therefore turns to its purpose, not only the sensitive activity, but also the attention of the understanding, since these two activities are, by virtue of its unity, radically one. Thus it is that the sense, though not acting directly on the intellectual faculty, occasions an intellectual movement. The subject, possessed of this faculty, is excited by the sense to set it to work. THE UNITY OF THE EGO, where the sense and the understanding meet together, is therefore the medium of communi-

cation between these two wholly different powers.

¹ S. Thomas says: 'We know a thing all the more perfectly the more fully we perceive the differences between it and other things.' And he gives this most noteworthy reason for it: 'Because each thing has an existence proper to itself, distinct from that of all other things.' 'Tanto enim perfectius cognoscimus, quanto differentias ejus [rei cognitæ] ad alia plenius intuemur. Habet enim res unaquæque in

notice of those who do not attentively examine how thought takes place in their consciousness.

1260. As regards that portion of direct knowledge which consists in ideas or the intuition of essences, Aristotle noted very accurately its nature, and placed in it that mental act which he called *intellection* (*νόησις*). He knew, moreover, that the object seen by this act presents itself as a whole, without any division of parts, so that in this first apprehension it is one and indivisible. He observed, also, that this primitive apprehension takes place by a spontaneous movement of our nature, and is exempt from error. 'Intellectio est indivisibilium, in quibus non est falsum' (*De Anima*, l. iii. ch. vii).

S. Thomas, following the same track, distinguishes two species of knowledge. The first relates to what, after Aristotle, he terms the *indivisibles*, and is the same as that direct knowledge of essences, not subject to error, of which we are speaking. The second, subject to error, relates to things either divided or composed by the understanding, in other words, it is *reflex* knowledge; for it is by reflecting on its first perceptions and ideas that the understanding analyses and composes them. What the understanding first apprehends are, according to the holy Doctor, the *essences* of things,¹ responding to the *first ideas*, i.e. those contained in the intellectual perceptions. Now the reflection which supervenes, by analysing these ideas of things, notes and distinguishes in detail their various properties. This operation adds nothing to the first and *direct* knowledge except a greater degree of light;

seipsa esse proprium ab omnibus aliis distinctum' (*Cont. Gent.* I. lxxx.). Hence the first perception of things is confused because it embraces many individuals together as an indistinct whole. When Laromiguière defined ideas as 'Feelings distinct and evolved from other feelings,' he had before his mind the truth of which I am speaking; but he did not observe that ideas and intellectual perceptions exist in a confused, before existing in a distinct state, and that even in their first state they are essentially different from *feelings* (966, etc.).

¹ 'The human understanding does not gain a perfect knowledge of things

in its first apprehension. By that apprehension it only understands something of them, namely, their *QUIDDITY* (essence) which is its first and proper object. Later on, it comes to understand the properties of that quiddity, as well as its accidents and relations.' 'Intellectus humanus non statim in prima apprehensione capit perfectam rei cognitionem; sed primo apprehendit aliquid de ipsa, puta quidditatem ipsius rei, quæ est primum et proprium objectum intellectus, et deinde intelligit proprietates et accidentia et habitudines circumstantes rei essentialiam' (*S. I.* lxxxv. 5).

it only adverts to and takes note of what was already therein contained. Hence it has been said with reason that the essences of things (ideas) are the proper object of the understanding ; since pure reflection does not produce any new object, but only examines and *recognises* an object already apprehended.

1261. Wherefore reflex knowledge may be termed a *recognition* rather than a cognition ; and so did Tertullian very appropriately call it, saying : ‘ Nos definimus Deum primum natura COGNOSCENDUM, deinde doctrina RECOGNOSCENDUM ’ (*Contr. Marc. L. i*). We see by these words how well aware was this ancient ecclesiastical writer, that man, after knowing things by a first and natural intellection, turns by reflection on what he knows, and by recognising and analysing it, imparts to it distinction, clearness, and a strictly *scientific* form. A similar thought was expressed by Averroës when he distinguished two species of cognitions, designating the one as produced *by way of formation*, and the other as produced *by way of verification*.

1262. We have seen, that the essences or ideas of things, which, according to S. Thomas, belong to direct knowledge, are the *principles* of the sciences which deal with those things. Hence the *direct knowledge* is the germ, the rule, the criterion of the *reflex*, which therefore, in order to be truthful, must conform itself to the perception or immediate apprehension as its rule and exemplar. In this sense the distinction between direct and reflex knowledge was made also by Epicurus.

The celebrated *anticipations* (*προλήψεις*) of this philosopher are nothing but the *indivisibles* of Aristotle, the *quiddities* or *essences* of S. Thomas, the *cognition* of Tertullian, the knowledge *per modum formationis* of Averroës, in a word, the *direct* and first cognition of things, which received all these appellations according to the various aspects in which different thinkers were led to regard it. In the *anticipations* Epicurus placed the principles of all reasonings : without them we could neither inquire, nor doubt, nor opine, nor name anything, nor make any act of reflection whatever ; for reflection always turns on what is already in the mind. It adds nothing ; it only

analyses, recognises and verifies. Hence some intellectual perceptions and ideas must be received by us independently of our knowledge and will, through the action of nature itself, so that we may afterwards voluntarily turn our attention upon them. The second of these operations can be more easily adverted to, while the first, being spontaneous, escapes observation; and this explains also why we commonly use the word to *reflect* for expressing the operations of our mind generally, thus reducing every use we make of this faculty to reflection.

1263. I have deemed it advisable to quote these authorities in order that the difference between *direct* and *reflex* knowledge may be firmly grasped, and considered under its diverse aspects; and also in order that a distinction which so many intellects of the highest order have noted and considered necessary for explaining human cognitions, may not be thought a vain subtlety. But if this distinction is necessary for dealing in a proper manner with the question of human cognitions generally, it is most particularly so for understanding the nature and cause of error. For since error can be found only in *reflex knowledge*, we shall not be able to see in what it consists and whence it proceeds, unless we form a clear notion of this kind of knowledge as distinct from the *direct*. For this reason, we must also take care not to confound the distinction between *direct* and *reflex* knowledge with that between *popular* and *philosophic* knowledge, on which latter distinction it may now be well to say a few words.

ARTICLE VII.

Popular and philosophic knowledge.

1264. *Direct knowledge* consists in the intellectual perceptions and in the ideas which we separate from them.

Reflection, stimulated by language, comes very soon into exercise, and its first steps are those by which it notices the *immediate* and *quasi-immediate relations* of the things perceived and apprehended.

In this operation, the single perceptions and the ideas of

things are not as yet *analysed*;¹ they are left entire as they stand in their first acquisition; they are simply contemplated as a whole. The operation is still *synthetical*, and all men are capable of it; hence it constitutes a great part, if not the whole, of the common and *popular knowledge*.

1265. The *philosophic knowledge*, on the contrary, begins with the analysis of the single objects. By being analysed the objects perceived acquire a singular increase of light, and this is what gives such peculiar splendour to the learning of scientific men. This analysis may be regarded as the starting point of philosophy; and setting out from it, the student comes, among other things, to have a more thorough comprehension of those great relations which had already been perceived and noted, as it were intuitively, between the various beings, by the generality of men.

1266. Hence the popular knowledge holds a middle place between the purely *direct* and the *philosophic*. It is the product of a first reflection, whereas philosophic knowledge is generated only by a second reflection.² The first reflection does not add any new matter to the cognitions previously acquired, but discovers in them new immediate relations; the subsequent reflections disclose further *relations* arising out of all

¹ Before the immediate relations of things can be observed, some amount of analysis must have taken place, because a relation supposes a distinct vision of the things on which it is based. This first *analysis* is performed, not on each of the real things separately, but on their aggregate; for the real things, in our primitive perception of them, are seen by us in a confused mass. For example, the visible universe is one sole perception. *Analysis* comes next, and distinguishes the several beings from one another. Then follows the *synthesis* of which I speak. Thus *analysis* and *synthesis* are operations which come in alternate turns. The *reflection* resulting in the first *analysis* does not produce a knowledge worthy of a special name; but when the first *synthesis* supervenes, it completes the popular knowledge. Hence that which I call man's *first reflection*, and whereto

I attribute the formation of the popular knowledge, is, properly speaking, composed of two operations, namely, (1) an analysis which distinguishes the real beings at first confused together in the perception; and (2) a synthesis whereby their great relations are understood, and, I would almost say, immediately perceived. The same may be said of the philosophic knowledge. It starts from *analysis*, but does not receive the appellation *philosophic* until synthesis has completed it and given it a distinct and important character.

² I designate these two reflections as *first* and *second*, not from the reflective *act*, numerically first and second, but from the *objects* on which man's reflective faculty exercises itself. It is by the difference of their objects that the two reflections of which I speak are mutually distinguished.

the knowledge that has been obtained up to the time of their coming into exercise.

1267. If *direct knowledge* is wholly exempt from error, the same cannot be said of the *popular* knowledge, because this is already, in part, the fruit of reflection, even leaving out of account what is imported into it by the imagination. But the most liable to error is the *philosophic* knowledge, owing to its being produced by a reflection more remote.

1268. Those who confounded the *direct* with the *popular* knowledge, ascribed infallibility to the masses, applying to the popular knowledge that which can only refer to the direct. In fact, the masses, yea all mankind, are, alas! but too liable to error. It is written: 'All men are liars' (Ps. cxv. 2); and again: 'All have fallen from the right way, they are altogether become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no, not one' (Ps. xiii. 3). Hence philosophers, on finding themselves charged by their adversaries with being the authors of all errors, whilst the multitudes from which they had sprung were absolved, considered themselves unjustly treated, and in self-vindication emphatically referred their accusers to the vulgar prejudices.

1269. The passage I have quoted above from Tertullian (1261) is well adapted to make us understand that reflection and simple knowledge are two different things; and this is why I have quoted it. But on examining more particularly of what species of *reflection* he speaks, we find that it is the philosophical and scientific, in contradistinction, not to a purely direct, but to a popular knowledge. In fact, the knowledge we can have of God in this life by natural means is, not *direct*, since we have no direct perception of him, but *reflex*, of that first reflection which engenders the popular knowledge, and consists in observing the relations of the things that have been intellectually perceived. Now our idea of GOD, as I have said, is that of a being who is the origin and cause of the universe. The distinction between popular and philosophic knowledge is made by the African Apologist in other places also, and we may say that the whole of the treatise which he entitled *De testimonio animæ*, is directed to establish this dis-

tion. He there undertakes to show that the human soul, by its very first reflections, ascends naturally to the teachings of the Christian faith. After observing how very common it was for men everywhere to burst forth into such exclamations as 'God help me!—Immortal God!—God knows and sees,' etc., he comments on this fact as follows: 'Who will deny that these outbursts of the soul are the teaching of nature, and a tacit hymn of our connate or innate consciousness? Beyond all doubt the soul was before learning, speech before books, sense before style, man before the philosopher and the poet. Can we suppose that, prior to the diffusion of letters, men were mute and unable to utter a syllable? Whence, then, did the soul learn? Certainly not from philosophy, not from letters or books, not from professional training, since we find that men express all these things without having been taught in schools, and while still simple, uncultured, and accustomed only to manual occupations. It is nature that teaches the soul these utterances.'

Few passages will be found in all antiquity in which the distinction between popular and philosophic knowledge is presented in so clear a manner.

1270. In modern times the ancient distinction between *direct* and *reflex* knowledge has been reproduced; but the *direct* knowledge has been confounded with the *popular*. Nor need we be surprised at this; for, since the popular knowledge comes through a first reflection on the things *directly* perceived—a reflection which looks at them in their complex aggregate, and embraces them in a grand unity through the relations binding them all together—it was most easy to take this reflection for the *direct* act of intellectual perception. The direct act takes place silently and without advertence, whereas the first reflection is resplendent with light, and, like the multitude, full of words. I shall quote from an eloquent philosopher a passage in which he very skilfully leads the minds of his audience to notice the *direct* knowledge—so apt by itself to escape observation—and separate it from the reflex.

'Je veux penser' (writes Professor V. Cousin), 'et je pense. Ne vous arrive-t-il pas quelquefois, messieurs, de penser sans

avoir voulu penser? Transportez-vous de suite au premier fait de l'intelligence ; car l'intelligence a dû avoir son premier fait, elle a dû avoir un certain phénomène dans lequel elle s'est manifestée pour la première fois. Avant ce premier fait, vous n'existiez pas pour vous-mêmes ; ou si vous existiez pour vous-mêmes, comme l'intelligence ne s'était pas encore développée en vous, vous ignoriez que vous fussiez une intelligence qui pût se développer ; car l'intelligence ne se manifeste que par ses actes, par un acte au moins ; et avant cet acte, il n'était pas en votre pouvoir de la soupçonner, et vous l'ignoriez absolument. Eh bien ! quand pour la première fois, l'intelligence s'est manifestée, il est clair qu'elle ne s'est pas manifestée volontairement. Elle s'est manifestée, pourtant, et vous en avez eu la conscience plus ou moins vive. Tâchez de vous surprendre pensant sans l'avoir voulu, vous vous retrouverez ainsi au point de départ de l'intelligence, et là vous pouvez aujourd'hui observer, avec plus ou moins de précision, ce qui se passe, et dût se passer nécessairement dans le premier fait de votre intelligence, dans ce temps qui n'est plus, et ne peut plus revenir. Penser c'est affirmer ;¹ la première affirmation dans laquelle n'est point intervenue la volonté, ni par conséquent réflexion, ne peut pas être une affirmation mêlée de négation : c'est donc une affirmation sans négation, une aperception restrictive de la vérité,² un développement tout instinctif³ de la pensée. La vertu propre de la pensée est de penser ; que vous y interveniez ou que vous n'y interveniez pas, la pensée se développe,⁴ c'est alors une

¹ To affirm is to judge, and therefore to think is to judge. This truth is the basis of the present work.

² I have already said that the ideas of things are their *truth* (III7-III21). As regards the statement that the first act of thought (which indubitably consists in the judgment called *intellectual perception*) is an *affirmation* without *negation*, I endorse it also, but I would add, 'Not an affirmation without *limits*.' The *limits* are in the object of the judgment, though in making this judgment we do not notice them separately, and therefore require no negation. In order that our judgment should be

accompanied with a *negation*, it would be necessary for us to have distinctly noticed the limits proper to the object affirmed.

³ This instinct, however, is not such as to be altogether incapable of explanation: it is not an isolated fact having no connection with any other. See the account I gave of it in the note to no. 1258.

⁴ Thought, however, does not develop itself without the action of the human subject, for it is *he* that thinks. To think does not mean that thought is a thing independent of the thinker. Nevertheless it is true that

affirmation qui n'est pas mêlée de négation, une affirmation pure, une aperception pure. Or qu'y-a-t-il dans cette intuition primitive? Tout ce qui sera plus tard dans la réflexion, mais si tout y est, tout y est à d'autres conditions. Nous ne commençons pas par nous chercher, car ce serait supposer que nous savons déjà que nous sommes; mais un jour, une heure, un instant, instant solennel dans l'existence, sans nous être cherchés, nous nous trouvons, la pensée dans son développement instinctif nous découvre que nous sommes; nous nous affirmons avec une sécurité profonde, avec une sécurité telle qu'elle n'est mêlée d'aucune négation. Nous nous apercevons, mais nous ne discernons pas avec toute la netteté de la réflexion notre caractère propre qui est d'être limités et bornés; nous ne nous distinguons pas d'une manière précise de ce monde, et nous ne discernons pas très précisément le caractère de ce monde; nous nous trouvons et nous trouvons le monde, et nous apercevons quelque autre chose encore à quoi naturellement, instinctivement nous rapportons nous-mêmes et le monde; nous distinguons tout cela, mais sans le séparer bien sévèrement. L'intelligence, en se développant, aperçoit tout ce qui est, mais elle ne peut l'apercevoir d'abord d'une manière réfléchie, distincte, négative; et si elle aperçoit tout avec une parfaite certitude, elle aperçoit avec une certaine confusion¹ ('Cours de Philosophie,' Leçon 6^{me}).

1271. In all this extract our author seems intent on fixing the distinction between the first and *direct* kind of knowledge, and that which is *reflex*; and there are in it but few phrases indicating a confusion of the *direct* knowledge with the *popular*, or that produced by the first reflection.² But in

thought develops itself independently of his *deliberate will*. The individuality of the thinking subject is indispensable for the universality of thought. These are all facts, and we must not deny them. We ought, on the contrary, to reconcile them with theory, a task which I fear the Parisian professor will find somewhat difficult.

¹ This confusion arises also in some degree from the multiplicity of the parts of which the objects are composed, which multiplicity is too much for the

first act of our intellectual force to perceive in a distinct manner. How *multiplicity* causes want of distinctness in the intellectual perception, I have already shown (902 etc.).

² This confusion is observable where our author supposes that we perceive at one and the same time ourselves, the external world, and a something else (the infinite) outside this world. On the contrary, we have (1) the idea of being in general, by a primal, necessary and spontaneous intuition: here is the

what follows, this confusion is more manifest. And since, to mark out with precision the limits of *direct knowledge*—the only knowledge exempt from error—is a matter of the greatest importance, I think it advisable to give here the criterion by which it may be distinguished with certainty from the popular knowledge.

In the first place, the *direct* knowledge has objects more particular than are those of the popular. The latter is a *first reflection* on what has been intellectually perceived, and, by the nature of things, the eye of *reflection* takes a wider range than that of mere perception, and, in general, than the acts submitted to its consideration. In fact, we perceive things one by one,¹ or if we perceive many things together, as when, our sight having been trained to give us the knowledge of distant objects, we perceive by it simultaneously the whole scene of the things lying within our perspective; nevertheless, if we move, those things, and therefore our perceptions, are continually changing. Again, the actual perception, whatever its complexity and multiplicity, cannot embrace those objects which are not actually present, but have passed away or are yet to come; so that the perceptions follow one after the other, each disappearing in turn. But if the actual perception ceases, the recollection of it remains, and things that were

infinite excluding all *negation* as well as all *affirmation*, and this primal act constitutes our intellectual faculty. (2) We perceive the external world by a primitive synthesis (intellectual perception), and here we have limits in the explicit object, not, however, *negation*, but *affirmation* only. (3) We take away from this the judgment on the subsistence of the things perceived, and there remains to us the pure apprehension (idea). At this point other *limits* make their appearance, but there is as yet no explicit negation, at least necessarily. In this our state as intelligent beings we have the substantial feeling of our individual existence, which, when our mind has in course of time distinctly perceived it, we express by the personal pronoun *Myself* (*Ego*). After the *direct knowledge* comes the first reflection resulting in the popular

knowledge, and by this reflection we think, (1) of a Cause of all things (God); (2) of other great relations of the things presented to us by the direct knowledge. Our author, on the contrary, brings all these things under one sole knowledge, which he qualifies as *spontaneous*, placing it in opposition to the *reflex*. But I would observe, that this *spontaneous* knowledge (I have no objection to his calling it so) divides itself into two kinds, namely the *direct* and the *popular*, and that the two kinds are essentially distinct one from the other.

¹ I here suppose that the first perception has, through the first natural analysis of which I have spoken, already become in some degree distinct, or in other words, that the beings which are really distinct in themselves, are also distinct in our perception.

perceived at widely different times are all preserved together in the depository of the memory. The supervening reflection turns on all this accumulated treasure of cognitions and on consciousness itself. It has therefore, arrayed before it, the past as well as the present in a single view. To this general *coup d'œil* other reflections and partial views succeed, and then, properly speaking, begins that analysis, by which the popular passes imperceptibly into philosophic knowledge.

1272. From these characteristics of *particularity* for the direct, and of *generality* for the popular knowledge, it comes to pass that the latter is more apt than the former to produce in man a sublime sentiment.

A *sublime sentiment* is always the effect of a vivid representation of things either vast by reason of their multitude, or grand by reason of their excellent nature; and the representation is, ordinarily speaking, the more *vivid* the more it is new and the more man is endowed with a vigorous and as yet virgin imagination; all which things are found united in the infancy of the human race. Hence that dignified tone which marks the ancient poets, that knowledge so popular, that language so charming by its breadth, grandeur, decision, simplicity, and enthusiasm.¹ For, the first reflection of man (1) is *vivid*, precisely because, as in the youth of individuals, so in that of nations and of mankind generally, the imagination is buoyant and still unenervated; (2) it is *new*, because it is the *first* of its kind, discovers the relations of things, and feels itself possessed of a power of invention which gives it almost a creative character; (3) it is *sublime*, because it necessarily goes straight to the greatest and most necessary among the relations of things, and divines² the existence of invisible beings, of a first *Cause*, of a GOD; (4) it is *vast*, because it has not as yet learned to stop at the particular things and their minute parts, there being nothing which can

¹ See the remarks I made on the state of æsthetics at their earliest period, in the *Saggio sull' Idillio e sulla nuova Letteratura Italiana* (*Opusc. Filos.* V. i. p. 304, etc.).

² The mind does not cease to per-

form this operation, even when supplied with divine revelation; only that this natural upward flight of the mind renders easier and more intimate the belief in what revelation teaches us.

determine the attention to them, but eagerly throws itself upon the contemplation of the whole, which it still finds too little, and adds to it the infinite.

1273. The philosopher of whom I speak attributes enthusiasm, not to the reflex, but to the spontaneous knowledge, and this because he has failed to observe that enthusiasm cannot spring from the direct knowledge, although in the highest degree spontaneous, but only from the *first* reflection and the *last*. From the first, for the reasons I have already given; such for instance is the overpowering emotion shown by deaf-mutes when they first come to be made aware of the existence of God;¹ from the last, because after man has analysed all, divided and subdivided it in every possible way, and thus necessarily come down to minute and dry considerations, he by this reflection gradually recomposes together all the parts he has found, with the result that at the end of his long and laborious journey he finds himself brought back to the point whence he started—to the grand, the sublime, the whole, but a whole infinitely more distinct and effulgent than at first.²

¹ The Abbé Sicard describes that species of ecstasy which seized the deaf-mute Massieu on his discovering that there was a God. See also the biography of the deaf-mute Teresa Ferrari, by Cesare Galvani (in the second volume of the *Memorie di Modena*).

² The history of divinely-inspired men goes to prove that inspiration is usually accompanied with a sacred enthusiasm. This arises from the extraordinary action which God exercises on those souls in communicating to them His secrets, and from the greatness of the mysteries He reveals to them. It must, however, be noted that this *enthusiasm*, although an effect mostly conjoined with *divine inspiration* or *revelation*, is not the *inspiration* or *revelation* itself. Indeed it would seem that God did make revelations to holy men even without causing any extraordinary emotion in their souls, as when He spoke to them in tranquil dreams, not disclosing to them new and principal mysteries, but giving them ordinary commands, for example that concerning the

flight of the Holy Family into Egypt. But the vulgar have sometimes confounded the two things, not considering that a species of enthusiasm or grand and sublime intellectual agitation can also arise from purely natural causes, such as the *first reflections* by which great truths are discovered. I am sorry to observe that Professor Cousin has not avoided this vulgar error; by placing the *natural* inspirations of the poets in the same category as those that are divine and truly *supernatural*, because he saw in both a species of enthusiasm, he has confounded what proceeds from human nature with what comes immediately from God, false religions with the true; as if some similarity in the effect were proof conclusive of a sameness of cause. But would false religions be fictions, if they did not in some thing resemble the true one? Would men ever have been deceived by them? And is it not the duty of philosophical sagacity to distinguish between things which, although similar in some respects, are different in reality, and not to allow itself to be

ARTICLE VIII.

A recapitulation of what has been said concerning the seat of error.

1274. The first knowledge which man acquires is *direct*, and cannot be any other. Man is moved to its formation by

hallucinated, as vulgar minds are, by such resemblance? Here are the words of the eloquent professor :

‘Tel est le fait de l’affirmation primitive antérieure à toute réflexion et pure de toute négation. C’est déjà de l’activité, sans doute, mais ce n’est pas l’activité réfléchie, volontaire et personnelle. L’inspiration a pour caractère l’enthousiasme ; elle est accompagnée de cette émotion puissante qui arrache l’âme à son état ordinaire et subalterne, et dégage en elle la partie sublime et divine de sa nature :

Est Deus in nobis, agitante calescimus illo.

. Voilà pourquoi, dans le berceau de la civilisation, celui qui possède à un plus haut degré que ses semblables le don merveilleux de l’inspiration passe à leurs yeux pour le confident et l’interprète de Dieu. . . . Voilà l’origine sacrée des prophéties, des pontificats et des cultes’ (V. Cousin, *Cours de Philosophie*, 6^{me} leçon).

In this passage many very different elements are jumbled together, and it would seem as if the writer’s imagination, by hastily embracing a great number of things, took away from him that calm clear-sightedness which he so often exhibits in analysing the most difficult subjects. I will therefore state in what particulars the passage seems to me defective. (1) It does not distinguish true divine inspiration and revelation from a simply natural knowledge, sublime if you will, like that of the great poets, yet not exceeding the bounds of nature. I admit that even natural knowledge may be called a participation of the Eternal and Absolute Reason, but we must not make this truth a pretext for confounding with natural knowledge the supernatural revelation, wherein philosophy, although unable to fathom its inner depths, can find nothing absurd or impossible. (2) Likewise, it does not distinguish between the divine inspiration which pro-

duces enthusiasm, and the enthusiasm which is vulgarly termed inspiration because in it man feels in great part passive, and nobly passive. (3) It says nothing about *imposture*, the cause of false religions which simulate the true; on the contrary, falsehood and truth, the spurious and the genuine, religion and superstition, or, to use our author’s words, *prophecies*, *priesthoods*, and *worships*, in general, are referred by it to one and the same origin. (4) It affirms that the spontaneous knowledge where enthusiasm is easily excited, takes place without any kind of *reflection*, whereas in point of fact a primitive and general reflection is its immediate cause. Thus the *direct* and the *popular* knowledge are confused together. (5) It excludes *personality*, i.e. all personal action, from the *popular knowledge*, leaving only an activity similar to that of an individual present at a theatrical performance. We must observe that *our being conscious of what takes place in us* is precisely the fact of which there is question here, and that the consciousness of a thing presupposes the act of apprehending that thing. In that apprehension we may be passive, but we are nevertheless the *subjects*, the *persons* by whom it is formed. The objects of our thoughts, and they alone, compose the scene. In these thoughts we are actors, even as he who plays his part on the stage is an actor. We do not indeed create the objects, but it is *we* that pass from one to the other, that unite and divide them. It is not as if others thought for us and we saw what they think, or as if the thoughts moved and acted of themselves while we merely stand by as spectators of the event. To say otherwise is not to give a correct account of the facts of nature. Thought, whether spontaneous or reflex, cannot be separated from the thinker as a scene on the stage is separated from the lookers-on. The *person*, whether he be passive or active, *subsists* and remains identically the same in either case ; only

the instinctive desire to satisfy his wants, and the occasions are given him by the sensations and images of external things.

Next comes a knowledge which is *reflex* of a first reflection, and which I have called *popular* because it is common to the generality of men. What sets this reflection in motion is the language received from society (514 etc.).

So far there is no analysis, or hardly any, and knowledge is eminently compact. Analysis gives birth to philosophic knowledge by means of a second, or certainly a higher reflection. Man, after having embraced the whole somewhat confusedly, wishes to recognise and carefully examine what he knows, in order that he may gain a more distinct and luminous vision of it. He then begins from the parts, submitting them to analysis. Such is the origin of that knowledge which is distinctively called *philosophic*.

1275. The philosopher, therefore, parts company with the vulgar, but at the outset he necessarily retains something of their habits of thought. Analysis is an art, and, like all arts, can only be perfected by degrees. Philosophy begins therefore with an imperfect analysis. Analysis goes on improving, and philosophy learns caution and wisdom by passing in succession through innumerable errors, sometimes of a humiliating, and sometimes even of a most disheartening character.

In its commencement, then, philosophy is *vulgar*. But on subsequently becoming aware that over-confidence in its ability to give an easy explanation of the facts of nature results only in gross errors, it takes great pains to excogitate ingenious explanations and hypotheses, looking contemptuously on the vulgar, from whom it now stands farther apart than before, and assuming a graver and more exclusive tone. In this state it declares itself *paucis contenta judicibus*, for it feels that from vulgar it has become *learned*. Learned philosophy has its own errors too, nor does it finally master any particular

that when he is subject to a passivity, something else is supposed to exist outside of him. Lastly, I would deny that

the 'spontaneous affirmation' of the Parisian professor has received from mankind the name of *inspiration*,

truth without having first given numberless proofs of human fallibility (29-34).

Enriched at last with a goodly store of particular truths, which reflection has verified and analysis brought out into full distinctness, philosophy sets itself to reconstruct those truths into one harmonious whole, returning, as I have said, to a synthesis which is nothing but a confirmation, an immense addition of light, a testimony rendered to the first or vulgar synthesis.

1276. Among all these cognitions, where is the seat of error?

The direct knowledge being the work of nature itself, there can be no error in it.

The *popular* is the first kind of knowledge in which the action of the human will begins to intervene, and here error commences.

But inasmuch as the popular knowledge has a more restricted sphere than the philosophic, it follows that its liability to err is less. Consisting as it does in a first reflection whereby the great relations of things are observed and apprehended, it embraces these things in their complex whole, and not in the single parts. Now 'the greatest danger of error lies in the ease with which the part may be taken for the whole.' To this simple formula almost every species of error might be reduced. Moreover, the philosophic knowledge is formed by reflecting on the contents of the popular; consequently, in its beginning, it receives also the errors of the latter.

1277. But there is another thing to be considered: the *popular knowledge*, at the outset is the effect of a will acting, not with deliberation, but in a purely spontaneous and instinctive manner; for, as we have seen, it is only by means of the language received from society that man acquires dominion over his faculties (525 etc.). Hence language moves his understanding to the first reflection in a way similar to that in which the senses move it to the intellective perception, that is, as *causa occasionalis*. It is man himself (the intelligent subject) who really sets his understanding in

motion with the purpose of attending to the meanings of the words, and this, in virtue of the instinct which impels him to direct all the forces at his disposal to the satisfying of his wants. In this first reflection the understanding apprehends the fundamental and necessary relations of things; and through these man afterwards learns to use this faculty at pleasure. Now in this apprehension there cannot be any error, because our free will has not yet come into operation. The understanding has apprehended, has judged, but necessarily. This part of *popular* knowledge is, therefore, like the primitive intellectual perceptions, a work of nature, a perception of indivisible things, and, by sequence, wholly free from error. Should anyone wish to call this first, spontaneous and somewhat confused apprehension of the great relations of things by the name of *common sense*, he might, in this signification, be justified in saying that every philosophical speculation ought to be referred to common sense as its criterion.¹

1278. But after this first apprehension of the great relations of things, man has the power to give or refuse them his assent. This second operation does not produce in him new cognitions, it does not cause his knowledge from popular to become philosophic. The judgment by which he assents or dissents may perhaps demand some new reflection, but not that kind of reflection which creates a new knowledge, or

¹ In conceding this to the modern champions of the principle of common sense, I feel bound to observe that in the case here supposed, *common sense* cannot be called the *criterion of certainty*, as understood by philosophers when they propose the question: 'What is the criterion of certainty?' The criterion of certainty sought in this question is a *supreme principle*, one in itself, but universal in its capability of application, *i.e.* serving as a *rule* for knowing if any proposition whatever be true or false. In order to see the difference between this *criterion of certainty*, and such criterion as would be afforded by the deposit of the truths preserved in the common sense of mankind, let us suppose that there were a divinely inspired book containing the solution of all the questions which could

be raised in a given science. Would this book be the *criterion* of that science? No, it would be the science full and complete. Suppose I want a rule for measuring the height of a building: I take a measuring tape, and by applying it to that building, am able to ascertain its height. The tape is therefore the rule I required. But if instead of a measuring tape a string were handed to me equal in length to the height of the building, then this string would not be the rule, but the actual height itself. So in like manner, the teachings of common sense as above defined, can never be that supreme criterion or rule which logicians seek, although they may be true and even infallible, and therefore of good service as a means of testing the soundness of philosophical opinions.

knowledge in a new form. It is simply a recognition of what he had apprehended, and leaves it in precisely the same form in which he had apprehended it. Here it is that error first shows itself; this is the gate through which it enters into the popular knowledge. Error invariably begins with the use of man's own will.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE CAUSE OF HUMAN ERRORS.

ARTICLE I.

Error proceeds from the will.

1279. Error can be found only in *reflex knowledge*, and precisely in that part of it which begins by voluntary action (1274, 1277).

Therefore error proceeds from the will.

ARTICLE II.

An excellent doctrine of Malebranche on the cause of error.

1280. Malebranche saw the truth I am stating, and placed the true *cause* of error in the human will itself, giving the name of *occasions* or *causæ occasionales* to all other things which concur in inclining the will to error.¹

He moreover distinguished between the first operations of the understanding, which are not the effect of the will, and the second, which are: the former could not be marred by error,

¹ Modern philosophy, by reducing everything to the senses, lost this excellent truth; for, since the senses have only direct perceptions, the nature of *reflection*—which, of all the operations of the human spirit, is the most difficult to observe—was no longer attended to or understood, and as a natural consequence the distinction between an *act* of our spirit and the *advertence* given to that act, *i.e.* the turning of reflection on it, could no longer be seen. Hence the belief that we had advertence of everything which took place within us, and that what we did not advert to had no existence. But as it frequently happens

that we fall into error without adverting that our will was the real cause thereof, so an exculpation was sought in the following argument: 'I am not aware of having wilfully committed this error; therefore my will has had no part in the same.' It is the usual vulgar sophism which I have so often refuted in the course of this work. Holy Scripture, on the contrary, tells us of *acts of the will*, even culpable acts, which remain hidden from us, doubtless because we do not advert to them, and it exhorts us to pray that God would cleanse us from our hidden sins. 'Ab occultis meis munda me' (Ps. xviii. 13).

and, as Des Cartes also has said,¹ they were the standard to which the latter ought to be referred for verification.

He also observed, that the *first judgment* (primitive synthesis) might be called mere perceptions, because their formation did not depend on voluntary action, but the understanding, though active, was moved to them naturally and instinctively.² When, on the other hand, we voluntarily reflected on these first judgments or intellectual perceptions, a new class of judgments came into existence which presupposed the first.

¹ If we consider what Des Cartes really meant by the *clear idea* which he called the *criterion of certainty*, we shall find that it was nothing else than the *first idea* of things (the essence, as he himself sometimes terms it), the idea contained in the intellectual perception, or speaking of real relations such as that of cause and effect, in what I have described as the first reflection. In short, the *clear idea* of Des Cartes corresponds exactly with the *popular knowledge*. Let us see. He rested his whole system on the *intellectual perception* of the *Ego*, which belongs to direct knowledge. Then he examined that perception in order to understand its nature, and concluded that 'it was his duty not to admit in the *Ego* anything beyond what he found in that very perception.' This particular proposition he afterwards generalised by applying it also to the popular knowledge, namely, to the perception of the fundamental relations existing between beings, and he laid down the following principle: 'Nothing must be admitted except what is contained in the first perceptions or ideas of things.' For Des Cartes, therefore, as also for those philosophers, who admit in a reasonable way *common sense* as the criterion of certainty, the first perceptions, the first ideas, the direct and popular knowledge, are that criterion. Des Cartes added, that in order not to fall into error, it was necessary to make oneself quite sure of what those perceptions and ideas contained, that is to say, it was necessary to see it *clearly*, a prudential rule, as full of good sense as it is important for the avoiding of errors. We must not, therefore, take up a

hostile attitude against so great a man as Des Cartes, but rather perfect his system by elucidating it, and correcting those defects which are never wanting in the works of man. This is what I shall endeavour to do.

² *De la Recherche de la Vérité*, l. ii. ch. 2. Malebranche did not, however, see that every intellectual operation must be a judgment, and hence he arranged the operations of the mind in the order usually followed in modern handbooks, namely, (1) perceptions, (2) judgments, (3) reasonings. I have shown in the preceding Section, that the intellectual perceptions are nothing but primitive judgments, whence we afterwards extract ideas in the way there indicated. As regards *reasonings*, they are not comprised in *direct knowledge*, but begin to make their appearance in the knowledge of first reflection, which I have called *popular knowledge*. *Judgments* and *reasonings* have two states. In the first state they are not voluntary but instinctive. Their conclusions resemble then the *intellectual perceptions*, because by them the understanding apprehends new things, and seems almost passive, inasmuch as it is moved to its action necessarily. But the judgments and reasonings of *second reflection* do not resemble the *perceptions*, but are *recognitions* of, or voluntary assents to them. In this state they acquire properly and exclusively the name of judgments and reasonings, and have a much greater light and clearness. Hence it is that most men find it very difficult to recognise the fact that their very first judgments and reasonings are true ones.

By these considerations Malebranche was led to see that the seat of error must be sought, not in every kind of judgment, but only in those judgments which are reflex and voluntary.

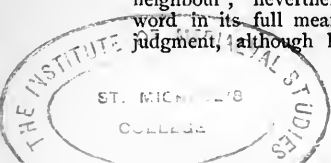
1281. In these voluntary judgments, as he most correctly remarks, error begins the moment we *assent* (in which act the *judgment* consists) to what the understanding in its perceptions and ideas does not present to us or disown what it does present; in other words, we lie to ourselves. Let us hear him:—

‘Comme tout le monde convient que les jugements téméraires¹ sont des péchés, et que tout péché est volontaire; on doit aussi convenir qu’alors c’est la volonté qui juge en acquiesçant aux perceptions confuses et composées de l’entendement.’ And he adds this very sensible observation regarding the intimate union of the will with the understanding: ‘Mais au fond cette question, si c’est l’entendement seul qui juge et qui raisonne, paraît assez inutile, et seulement une question de nom. Je dis l’entendement seul, car il a dans nos jugements la part que je lui ai laissée, puisqu’il faut connaître ou sentir avant que de juger et de consentir. Au reste, comme l’entendement et la volonté ne sont que l’âme même, c’est elle proprement qui aperçoit, juge, raisonne, veut, et le reste. J’ai attaché à ce mot *entendement* la notion de faculté passive ou de capacité de recevoir les idées’ (*De la Recherche de la Vérité*, L. i. & ii.).

The passivity here spoken of is nothing but that necessity under which, as we have seen, the understanding is of perceiving in the case both of *direct knowledge* and of the first part of *popular knowledge*; whilst the voluntary activity is the same understanding in so far as it reflects on and recognises the judgments already made. Hence it appears that the will and the understanding form together, we may say, one sole power. The intelligent spirit is *will* in so far as it is

¹ We commonly call *rash* those judgments which are to the injury of our neighbour; nevertheless, taking the word in its full meaning, every rash judgment, although having no refer-

ence to our neighbour, is an inordination, though sometimes one of those inordinations which proceed from our original corruption, and are, I would almost say, in us independently of us.



considered in the active force which it puts forth when moving towards a known end, or choosing between different ends.

Malebranche observes furthermore, that if it were the nature itself of our understanding which draws us into error, and not the will assenting to what the understanding does not say, God Himself would be the deceiver; since He would have given us a deceitful nature.¹ Hence S. Thomas very appositely says, that 'The understanding, considered purely according to the intellectual virtue, is never false but always true.'²

1282. But against all this doctrine on the cause of error the following objection may be raised:—There are certain truths so supremely evident that it would seem impossible to call them in question; nearly all the theorems of geometry belong to this class. Now, can the assent given to these be called voluntary? Does it not rather seem to be independent of the will, and determined by the force of truth itself?

To this I answer, that the act of the *will* may be either determined to one thing, or not; and in the latter case we say that the will is *free*.³ The will is nothing else than the power

¹ 'La volonté ne se portant qu'aux choses dont l'esprit a quelque connaissance, il faut qu'elle se porte à ce qui a l'apparence de la vérité et de la bonté. Mais parce que tout ce qui a l'apparence de la vérité et de la bonté, n'est pas toujours tel qu'il paraît; il est visible que si la volonté n'était pas libre, et si elle se portait infailliblement et nécessairement à tout ce qui a ces apparences de bonté et de vérité, elle se tromperait presque toujours. D'où on pourrait conclure que l'auteur de son être serait aussi l'auteur de ses égarements et de ses erreurs' (*De la Recherche de la Vérité*, L. i. ch. 2).

² 'The intellectual virtue is a certain perfection which the understanding has when knowing. Now, considered according to this intellectual virtue, the understanding is never false, but always truthful.' 'Virtus intellectualis est quædam perfectio intellectus in cognoscendo; secundum autem virtutem intellectualem non contingit intellectum falsum dicere sed semper verum' (*Cont. Gent. Lib. I. cap. lxi.*). The same is

said in substance by Aristotèle, who, after giving the name of *intellection* to the proper act of the understanding, namely to that first act which the understanding makes by itself independently of the will, adds that *intellection* cannot err.

³ In common parlance the two phrases, *freedom of will* and *freedom of choice* (*libera voluntà e libero arbitrio*) have the same meaning. Now what does the word *choice* (the same as the Latin *arbitrium*) signify? It signifies a *judgment*. Therefore in the common estimation of men, a *free-will* is the same as a *free judgment*. This shows, that according to the popular knowledge the judgment of the understanding is sometimes free, and that the nature of free-will consists in the power of either giving or withholding assent to a proposition. In the use itself of language, therefore, that intimate connection which exists between the understanding and the will, is found to be admirably expressed. The understanding is moved in three ways: (1) by the

of acting for an end. If one only possible end, one only good, were present to the understanding, the will would certainly be determined by it ; but if the will saw before it several ends or goods as possible of attainment, it would then have the power of *choosing* between them. It is true, therefore, that in giving its assent, in pronouncing its judgment, the will is sometimes determined by the evidence of truth, as in geometrical propositions ; but this does not destroy the will ; it only causes it not to be free in such cases.¹ But even here there is this to be said, that the will which does not seem free to judge except in one way, can still, if it likes, refrain altogether from judging by directing elsewhere the attention of the mind. As, how-

instinct of the *Ego*, and in this way it is moved to the first perceptions and ideas ; (2) by the will not acting freely, namely, by an end known and experienced, which absolutely determines its action ; and in this way the understanding is moved in heaven by the knowledge and experience of the Supreme Good ; (3) by the free-will, when the good known and experienced, not being complete, there remains to the will the power of proposing to itself a greater good, and therefore of not being determined by the first one ; and this is the state proper to our present life. The understanding, when considered only as that force by which it moves for an end, is simply called *will* ; and when considered as that force by which it determines itself at pleasure, it is called *free-will*.

¹ The will, however, is more free than is generally supposed, even as regards the assent given to the most evident of geometrical propositions. No doubt the understanding apprehends these propositions necessarily by the first reflection ; but after that, there remains the power of a special assent, which can disown those propositions, deny them, or at least call them in question. Leibnitz was wont to say, that 'If the truths of geometry could interest the passions of men in the same way as moral truths do, he believed they would be demurred to, and made a subject of contention quite as much as the latter.' In modern times the genius of evil woke up to the fact, that all truth was so linked together into a com-

pact whole, that the admission of any one part, would inevitably draw after it all the rest. What followed? Truth was denied altogether ; books were written to impugn the validity of geometrical demonstrations by attacking those demonstrations in their principles, which it was attempted to represent as gratuitous and of no logical value. And when it was found impossible to explain away that force of evidence which those principles exercised on us, recourse was had to the absurd distinction of two kinds of evidence, the one true and the other illusory, so, however, that the illusory completely absorbed the true ! Accordingly man would be nothing but an illusion to himself ! Nay, did not the Critical Philosophy say point-blank that this universal illusion was a necessity? that it constituted the very nature of things, and that the belief one had of being free from it was itself a part of the same illusion? But why name the Critical Philosophy in particular when the Sceptics of all times, from those whom Holy Writ describes to us, to those who in our own day come under the denomination of Indifferentists, have always made a similar profession—viz. never to be certain about any truth, howsoever evident ; to take no reasoning, howsoever cogent, as absolutely conclusive ; to pity as narrow-minded those who think differently, and to make the best of this life? 'And I have found that nothing is better than for man to rejoice in his work, and that this is his portion' (*Ecc. iii. 22*).

ever, this point is very important, let us see how it comes to pass that some propositions present themselves to the mind with such force of evidence, as necessarily to determine it to one mode of judgment only.

1283. Malebranche explains the thing thus :—

‘ Il faut savoir que les choses que nous considérons ne nous paraissent entièrement évidentes que lorsque l’entendement en a examiné tous les côtés et tous les rapports nécessaires pour en juger ; d’où il arrive que la volonté ne pouvant rien vouloir sans connaissance, elle ne peut plus agir dans l’entendement, c’est-à-dire, qu’elle ne peut plus désirer qu’il représente quelque chose de nouveau dans son objet, parce qu’il en a déjà considéré tous les côtés qui ont rapport à la question que l’on veut décider. Elle est donc obligée de se reposer dans ce qu’il a déjà représenté, et de cesser de l’agiter et de l’appliquer à des considérations inutiles ; et c’est ce repos qui est proprement ce qu’on appelle jugement et raisonnement. Ainsi ce repos ou ce jugement n’étant pas libre, quand les choses sont dans la dernière évidence, il nous semble aussi qu’il n’est pas volontaire.

‘ Mais tant qu’il y a quelque chose d’obscur dans le sujet que nous considérons, ou que nous ne sommes pas entièrement assurés que nous ayons découvert tout ce qui est nécessaire pour résoudre la question, comme il arrive presque toujours dans celles qui sont difficiles, et qui renferment plusieurs rapports, il nous est libre de ne pas consentir, et la volonté peut encore commander à l’entendement de s’appliquer à quelque chose de nouveau ; ce qui fait que nous ne sommes pas si éloignés de croire que les jugements que nous formons sur ces sujets soient volontaires’ (*De la Recherche de la Vérité*, L. i. ch. 2).

1284. This is all correct, but Malebranche ought to have added, that on the will depends also the degree of earnestness with which the understanding applies itself to the examination of things, and that no matter how evident a certain thing may be, if the will is averse to consenting thereto, it can withdraw the understanding from giving to the same its consideration. And although the latter faculty may, from its

very first perception of the thing, have apprehended it, so to speak, intuitively, the will has always the power of inventing a pretext for regarding the truth of that thing as apparent only—that is to say, of supposing and believing in general that some reason may exist, which, if discovered, would show it to be an illusion. For in these cases the will knows how to feign humility, and by emphatic professions of the impotency and fallaciousness of human reason, elude the force of whatever truth it does not relish.

Lastly, supposing the will to have enjoined a strict examination, and the understanding to have fully executed it; even then I am persuaded that if there is no sensible experience, the will can still be so obstinate as persistently to go on disowning and denying what the understanding sees in the plainest manner.

ARTICLE III.

On the occasional causes of error.

1285. But that we may see more clearly how it happens that assent is not so readily withheld from geometrical as from moral truths, let us go a little into the question of the *occasional causes* of error.

Error consists in this, that 'the understanding, turning its reflection on what it has apprehended, voluntarily refuses assent to it, and affirms it to be other than it really is.'

Error being therefore a voluntary act of the understanding, its occasions must regard partly the understanding and partly the will.

1286. The share proper to the understanding consists in feigning a thing which has not been perceived or apprehended, and affirming it to be that which *has* been perceived or apprehended. Hence in every error there is a fiction.

The share proper to the will consists in moving the understanding to conjure up that fiction, and make the false affirmation or judgment.

Although the understanding and the will are in part subject to the dominion of man himself, and, considered under this aspect, form what is called the *free-will*, nevertheless

they also depend in part on laws of their own, to which they must conform, and, considered under this aspect, they are not free. Now, it is from these laws that the occasional causes of error arise. I will explain how.

1287. The understanding, when reflecting on its cognitions, is subject to the following law:—‘The more dissimilar those cognitions¹ are to one another, and to other cognitions or perceptions (true or imagined), the easier is it for the understanding to distinguish between them, and the more difficult to confound them. *Vice versa*, the greater the similarity of the cognitions, the greater the facility with which it can take one for another.’

Hence the inference, that what gives occasion to error on the part of the understanding, is the *similarity* which certain cognitions or perceptions (true or imagined) have with other cognitions or perceptions.

As I have shown, the primary idea of a thing perceived or known is what we call the *truth* of that thing. This is what made S. Augustine and other writers say that the understanding falls into error because it takes a semblance of truth for the truth itself.

1288. The law which governs the will is this: ‘The will is impressed with a bias towards one thing in preference to another, from a variety of causes, which result in that thing presenting itself to it as a greater good, and with more vivid force, than another thing. These causes are, principally: (1) the good apprehended by the understanding in the object; (2) the vividness and perfection with which it is apprehended; (3) sensible experience; (4) the instinct; (5) the imagination; (6) the passions; (7) the habits one has contracted.’

1289. Now, although the will, being free, cannot be affected by the bias in question in such a manner as to lose the power of choosing² for itself, nevertheless the bias has this effect, that ‘the will finds it all the more difficult to move the understanding to a full recognition of, and assent

¹ What I say of cognitions taken as a whole must be understood to apply also to their parts.

² That is, unless the bias proceeded from an infinite good acting on the will with a determining force.

to a truth, in proportion as that truth runs more counter to the bias already received from the action of the causes I have enumerated, and also in proportion as the bias contracted is stronger.' Contrariwise one must find it easier to give a ready and full adhesion to the semblance of truth, by taking it for the truth itself, according as the bias of the will in favour of that semblance is stronger, and the adhesion to it more congenial.

Hence the inference, that the occasion of error on the part of the will consists in the *bias* it has contracted towards yielding a ready assent to a falsehood which humours that bias.

1290. The occasional causes of error are therefore two : (1) the *similarity* which the false has with the true ; (2) the *inclination* of the will to consent to that which resembles the true, because congenial to that inclination. We will illustrate this by some examples.

I have said that the mutual resemblance of two cognitions facilitates error on the part of the understanding. These cognitions may originate from any faculty—from the sense, from the imagination, from the understanding itself. In this signification it is rightly said that the sources of error are as many as the faculties of the soul.

1291. Let us see the deceptive similarity to truth in sensible perceptions. Two colours, two flavours, two odours, two sounds, two pieces of woollen or silk, if very much alike, are easily interchanged, so that you can hardly say which is which. Whence this? Is it because your sense does not perceive the difference? ¹ No, for the perceptivity of sense is so exceedingly fine, that even the most trifling differences of things leave their impression on it. The true reason is, that your reflection fails to *advert* to the difference ; and so when it *seems* to you that you have gone far enough in observing, you end by confounding the one perception with the other,

¹ Supposing that the sense could not perceive any difference between two bodies apparently similar, but different in reality, the error would still be in the act of the understanding,

which, instead of taking into account the possibility of a deficiency of power in the sensorium, denies unconditionally all difference, thus making a rash judgment.

or rather by substituting for both of them an imaginary one somewhat confused, or at all events not so distinct as to descend to their slight and almost imperceptible differences.¹

1292. The deceptive *similarity* of which I speak, when it is furnished by the external or internal sense, lies in the very matter of the cognitions; for the matter of cognitions is furnished by the sense, whilst the understanding furnishes their form. Sometimes, however, that *similarity* or fiction of truth does not proceed from the sense, but is added by the understanding. This happens principally in the associations of complex ideas or perceptions, in composing which a false judgment is often added to the sense-perceptions.

As a case in point I may quote the judgment commonly made regarding the course of the sun. The sun's daily motion, as sensibly perceived by us, is not necessarily real, but apparent only. But the perception of this apparent motion resembles other perceptions of apparent motions which are also real. Hence the two kinds of motion are, through an association of ideas, joined into one complex perception, and this complex perception is exchanged with the simple one of the motion purely apparent. Now, where does the similarity of these two perceptions lie?

It lies in this, that there is apparent motion in both of them alike. Their difference, on the contrary, lies in this, that in our first intellectual perceptions the motion we see in things is real as well as apparent. The error, therefore, consists in judging the perception of the motion of the sun to be one of those in which the real must be added to the apparent motion.

This error, then, this deceptive semblance of truth, this exchange of a simple for a complex perception, is produced by the understanding.

A like error is committed whenever the understanding, in

¹ The *similarity* offered by the imagination is like that offered by the senses, the imagination being only an interior corporeal sense. Thus if some one, after composing a number of lines in imitation of a particularly fine passage in Virgil or Horace, were to

judge the imitation perfect, he might perhaps be mistaken, his self-love deceiving him by reason of some points of resemblance between his production and that of the great poet he took for its model.

following the principle of *analogy*, judges amiss by applying this principle to a case which, from accidental causes, forms an exception to it.

1293. Speaking in general, error may be reduced to this formula: 'A consequence which does not legitimately follow from the premisses.' That consequence is created by the understanding, and owing to a certain resemblance or relation it has with the premisses, is declared to be contained in them.

1294. Coming now to the occasional causes of error on the part of the will, let us first of all have a clear notion of what this faculty is. Sometimes by *will* is meant, 'That internal force which determines man to act.' But this definition is too general, and comprises the instinct as well. I hold that there are in man two internal forces determinative of his operations: (1) *Instinct*, which he has in common with purely sensitive beings; (2) *Will*, which is proper to intelligent beings only. I find no better definition of instinct than that given in the following words of Araldi: 'To instinct those actions are attributable in which the soul concurs without the intervention of any knowledge of what is called a *reason*, and yielding solely to the impulse and invitation of some sensation.'¹ The will, on the contrary, is defined thus:

¹ Araldi employed the term *will* to signify in general 'An internal force which determines man to act,' without adding the clause, 'For a known end,' and in this omission he erred like the generality of modern Physiologists. But if he erred in the use of the word, he did not err with them in the substance. Indeed, the rigorous logic so characteristic of all he wrote shows him to have been a man who thought for himself and rose above the prejudices of his time. He defended the existence of *instinct* even as regards man in an essay entitled *Del sonno e della sua ordinaria immediata cagione*, and inserted in the first volume of *Memorie della Società medica di Bologna* (A.D. 1807); and his defence consists in an excellent definition of instinct and in an appeal to facts. But since the prejudices against the existence of instinct are still

entertained by some, I think it right to quote a few of the examples he adduces, which clearly prove that *instinct* works in man also. And first I would observe that, taking the above definition of instinct, it is evident that those first operations which man performs antecedently to the using of reflection—i.e. to having knowledge of the good he obtains from them—cannot be accounted for except by means of a cause which operates wholly without that knowledge, and this cause is precisely instinct. This being premised, I shall mention the following instances of instinctive operations: 'Such' (says Araldi) 'are the movements by which the fœtus, when feeling its position in the womb uncomfortable, turns itself about, seeking through that change of posture to relieve the uneasiness. To instinct likewise is evidently due that very

'An internal activity by which man determines himself to his operations through the knowledge of an end.' I have else-

complicated action by which the new-born infant, on being put to its mother's breast, draws its first aliment. Nor is it of avail to say with Erasmus Darwin (forestalled in this by Haller), that the infant performs on that occasion a function he had learned when in the womb he was sucking and swallowing the juices of the amnion. For, even setting aside the controversies, perhaps not yet ended, on the nutrition of the fœtus, to say this is only to adduce an example of another function due to instinct—that is, according to the notion which Darwin himself gives us of it—linked by a law of nature to certain sensations which determine the fœtus to its performance.' Another operation of instinct is respiration. The illustrious Physiologist describes its commencement thus: 'The fœtus, on being born and passing into the air, begins voluntarily' (he meant *instinctively*) 'to breathe, exchanging the state and name of fœtus for that of infant. It is quickly alive to the new circumstances wherein it finds itself, and it obeys the voice of instinct which speaks by means of certain sensations, foremost among which is a certain internal uneasiness it feels at the chest, and which probably does not begin in it at that moment, it rather being very natural to suppose that it began to feel its stimulus some time before birth. What strongly inclines me to this conjecture are the manifest changes which take place long before birth in the particular channels open in the fœtus to the blood, and in those outlets through which this fluid, having got to the heart, defects in great part from the lung with a force which is wonderful, considering the tenderness of the fetal organism, and passes without traversing it from the vein cells to the arterial system of the aorta. These changes are seen in an unmistakable way in the oval cavity, which narrows in proportion as parturition approaches. Hence we see that those channels have a tendency to contract, and that nature has long before predisposed them for a final closing up. This contraction of the said channels, especially when gestation has come near its end, cannot but be attended with some obstruction

in the circulation, and, with it, some feeling of internal distress which begins to render the fœtus impatient of its confined condition. Hence it must come to pass, on the one hand, that the fœtus, by its more lively and frequent movements, conspires with other causes to produce in the womb the contractions and pains premonitory of parturition; and, on the other, that at birth (as I have said just now) feeling by new sensations the pressure of the air, it hastens to inhale it with avidity.'

Sleep also, according to Araldi, is the effect of instinct, and to prove this is the main object of the essay I am quoting from. And what shows this writer to be a keen and shrewd observer of nature is his having seen quite clearly why it is that we do not *advert* to what goes on within us, nor to the cause whence our own operations proceed. I verily believe that the whole success of my present work will depend on this one accident only—namely, 'Whether I shall obtain by it that thinking men may become reasonably diffident in the observations they make on their inner selves, and be persuaded that many things take place in them, of which, even when felt, even when voluntary, even when cognised, they have no advertence, preserve no recollection, and can therefore give no account either to themselves or to others.' Hence I am anxious to make my readers understand that this truth was clearly seen and thoroughly appreciated by great sages, and that from it they always drew the natural explanation of numberless mistakes and errors. Araldi, whom I do not hesitate to class with these sages, explains why the instinctive operations have been confounded either with the mechanical or the intellectual, in the following way: 'I have already observed, that the voluntary determinations caused by instinct are usually preceded by sensations so rapid and of so evanescent a nature, that we need not wonder if the actions proceeding from them are mistaken for necessary and mechanical actions. I must now add, that this confusion is also very much promoted by the force of habit which sooner or later throws in

where observed, how the powers of beings are invariably so arranged that each *passive faculty* has a corresponding *active* one conjoined with it. Accordingly, to the sense, which is a passive faculty, there corresponds the active faculty of *instinct*; to the *intellect*, a receptive faculty, there corresponds the active faculty of *will*. Consequently, all voluntary action supposes the knowledge of some end, some good to be gained. If, therefore, a man were to do something before having any such knowledge, his action would have to be ascribed to mere instinct. If he knew one good only, his pursuit of that good would indeed be *voluntary*, because guided by knowledge; but it would not be *free*, because necessarily *determined*.¹ But if he knows several goods, independent of one another,² he can then make his choice, his will is *free*—i.e. *not determined*.

1295. Viewing, therefore, all these internal forces in their bearing on the understanding, we find that this faculty can be moved to action (1) by instinct, (2) by a will which is not free, (3) by a will which is free, and all the more free in proportion as the number of independent goods on which the choice can fall is greater.³

1296. To return now to our point. We wanted to see by examples how the bias of the will occasions error in the understanding. Hence it became necessary, in order to avoid confusion, to specify distinctly the three forces capable

its influence with that of instinct, and by widening as it were and smoothing the road of reciprocal communication between the organs of sense and those of motion, renders the latter docile to every even the least impulse which may come to them from the soul. Moreover, there is so much of our life spent in actions performed upon deliberate reflection, and the exercise more or less manifest of the faculty of reasoning, that we, having our thought predominantly engrossed with these actions, are easily led to consider all the others as of the same character, and to imagine that instinct is exclusively the property of irrational animals.¹

¹ It would not do to say, that in the supposition of a man knowing one good only, he is free to suspend the act of the will which carries him towards

that good, for even this he could not do voluntarily without proposing it to himself as an end, and therefore without apprehending the suspension of the act as good for him. Now, such apprehension is posterior to the knowledge of the good contained in the act itself, and whilst the latter is, *relatively*, a direct cognition, the former is, *relatively*, a reflex one—that is, it requires a reflection on the suspension of the act.

² If the good were supreme, and apprehended as such, it would comprise all other goods; hence these could no longer be called independent goods.

³ A distinction could also be made between the *deliberating* will and the *free-will*, which are confounded together even by writers of great name; but I do not wish to prolong this argument.

of moving this faculty, bearing in mind that our present argument relates to the third of those forces only; for the first is exempt from error by its own nature; and so is the second, by reason of the oneness of the good apprehended under its action by the understanding. As we have seen, 'to make error possible, two things at least must be conceived by the understanding: the one true, and the other a *fiction* of the true' (1286); and the hypothesis here is that the understanding has not two conceptions, but one only.

1297. Now, the will may receive its bent towards a false judgment from any of the seven causes we have enumerated (1288). But not to be too lengthy, I will content myself with giving some examples of one of them, as a specimen of the rest.

Consider, then, the influence which the *passions* have on men's judgments. How very prone is an ambitious person to regard as easy of attainment a high post which he covets, though perhaps with no other effect than to render himself a laughing-stock to everybody. To an avaricious man the slightest and most remote dangers of losing the wealth he has amassed appear alarmingly serious and impending. A fond lover, likewise, will feel so enchanted by the object of his affections that her very defects will to him be traits of beauty, and in the loss of her he would, as Dante expresses it, see—

il gran pubblico danno,
E'l mondo rimaner senza il suo sole.

1298. To neutralise this *bias*, and to keep oneself from yielding to false judgments, it is necessary to oppose to the bias a corresponding degree of that innermost energy which man feels in himself, and which constitutes the highest of his faculties—free-will. And in him who is constantly disposed and resolved to withstand the evil bent he has contracted, the degree of merit equals the degree of that free activity which he must put forth in order to effect his purpose.

1299. From all this we may draw the important conclusion, that 'When the *similarity* of the true with the false is greatest, and it is therefore most difficult to distinguish the

one from the other ; and when the *bias* of the will to take the false for the true, or even simply to judge on the spur of the moment, is also greatest, so that the strongest action of the free-will becomes necessary in order to make the true prevail, or to suspend the judgment until the true has been clearly and firmly grasped—in such cases error is most likely to ensue.’

1300. Hence, again, ‘If the judgment in question has to be made by the multitude, error may be predicted as a certainty, for the multitude has not the strength of virtue necessary for avoiding it.’ The multitude—such, at least, as we now find it, and it has always been found hitherto—shows itself incapable of that self-command without which the will can neither embrace a truth it dislikes, nor surrender an error to which it is strongly inclined, nor, lastly, suspend its judgment until it has discovered that clear distinction between the true and the false, which, on account of their close affinity, it will perhaps never discover.¹

ARTICLE IV.

Why, in the case of truths furnished with evident certainty, e.g. geometrical truths, we seem necessitated to yield assent.

1301. Having now found out the occasional causes of error, we can return to the fact indicated in the title of this article, and give a better explanation of it.

We, as a rule, have no hesitation in assenting to truths furnished with evident certainty—as, for instance, the geometrical—because, as a rule, these truths are unaccompanied by the occasional causes of error ; that is to say :—

I. Owing to their perfect distinctness and precision, they are *most dissimilar*² from one another.

¹ This incapacity for suspending the assent has always been observed in the multitude. Hence Cicero writes : ‘Vulgus ex veritate pauca, ex opinione multa existimat’ (*Pro Roscio*, x).

² When there happens to be a similarity between these truths, the mathematician is apt to be at fault ; and this is one of the causes of error

in mathematical calculations. Another cause of error in calculations is found in the slips of the tongue or of the pen. When the hand or the tongue goes wrong in a reckoning operation, error necessarily follows. In this case the instruments used for the operation are *occasional causes* of error. Hence we may lay it down in general, that all the

II. There is nothing in them of a nature to produce in our will a *bias* in favour of one result rather than of another.

ARTICLE V.

Men are exculpated from many errors.

1302. The nature of the assent given or refused to a proposition deserves every attention.

In the first place, although the will has the power to pronounce or not to pronounce, nevertheless when it does pronounce, it can only take one of two courses—that is, it must say either *yes* or *no*. If it remained in suspense, it would not pronounce, which is against the hypothesis.

In the second place, in numberless cases which are of daily occurrence, men are obliged to pronounce a ‘yes’ or a ‘no’ if they wish to act at all, and to preserve their existence. If, for example, we did not make up our minds that the food placed before us has no poison in it, and can therefore be eaten without danger, we should die of hunger, or else live in a continual dread, which would make life a misery. Now, our minds must be thus settled even before we have acquired an apodeictic certainty of the truth of the thing, because this certainty in things necessary for our daily life could never

powers and instruments which the understanding employs for arriving at the conclusion of its judgment may also be occasional causes of error (although more remote than those I have enumerated). Nevertheless, these more remote causes could not produce error by themselves alone, *i.e.* without the more proximate ones, even as the more proximate do not necessarily induce error unless the will itself gives a positive, or at least a negative, consent. To see that the liability to failure in the powers and instruments does not necessarily cause error without some co-operation of the will, it is enough to consider that when I, for example, write down the letter *b* in place of the letter *a*, my hand does this, either voluntarily on my part, or only mechanically. If it acts voluntarily, the co-operation of my will is *positive*; but if it acts only mechanically, the co-

operation is *negative*; that is to say, ‘the error has taken place because, whilst it was my duty as an intelligent being to direct my hand in view of the end of the calculation, I did not do so, but left the hand to go its own way,’ which is an irregularity. Nevertheless, in the case of negative co-operation, the error may be termed purely *material*. When would it begin to be *formal*? At the end of the calculation—namely, if the result obtained were considered as absolutely and infallibly true. Hence the mathematician does not commit a formal error if at the close of his calculation he says: ‘Here is the result, saving always any error of hand or tongue.’ This prudent reserve, which is very often implied, exculpates the will in the event of there being error—which, in fact, would not, strictly speaking, be an error, but only a mistake.

be attained, or only after an examination so protracted that we should, in many cases, be dead long before concluding it. We must therefore, ordinarily speaking, be content to decide on *probable* grounds, and then resignedly take our chance as to that small balance of probability which remains against our decision, unless, indeed, we wish to become an insupportable torment to ourselves, or to fall into a state of insanity, and cause infinite annoyance to everyone around us. Now, shall we say that, because in these cases the will rests fully satisfied with the assent given to things which have only a great weight of probability in their favour, it therefore plunges into continual errors, or exposes itself to them? Certainly not; and the reason of this will be seen when we consider another accident to which assents of this kind are subject. It is as follows:—

1303. The understanding or (what, in this case, comes to the same thing—see No. 1281) the will may give an assent *full* in a certain way, but at the same time more or less *provisional*; and this provisional character of the assent is what distinguishes in these matters a wise man from one who is inconsiderate and rash.

I say, an *assent full in a certain way*, meaning by it that state of mind in which a man, having once formed his judgment on a given subject, stops there, and means to act on it, without further troubling himself about possible contingencies, which would be endless, and hence without being harassed by any of the fears or perplexities which we see in those who, when they have a case to dispose of, keep on indefinitely wavering between the *pros* and the *cons*, and never come to a fixed conclusion.

I have said, however, that the assents here spoken of, although *decisive*, because in them all further inquisition is relinquished, may be simply *provisional*; and that this circumstance makes the difference between prudent and imprudent men, in the assents they give concerning the probable things of life.¹ Now, what do I mean by a *provisional* assent?

¹ The ancients had observed that there are two ways of giving assent to a falsehood. They defined the first thus: 'Qualiscunque existimatio levis,

I mean simply this, that in the event of some reasonable cause presenting itself, he who has given the *assent*, and thus put an end to inquisition, is ready to resume it, and continue it as long as his prudence thinks this necessary under the circumstances. Who has not felt struck by the modesty and reserve with which wise men express their judgments, even on things which would seem least doubtful? 'The thing appears to me to stand thus.' 'This is the conclusion at which I have arrived, but I may be mistaken.' 'Such is my opinion, but I submit it to the judgment of wiser persons than myself,' &c. And should a contrary opinion be put forward by anyone, with what willingness and courtesy do they not listen to it, and to all the reasons he can produce in its favour! How desirous do they not seem to receive light from others, even on matters with which they themselves are perfectly conversant! Their reserve in pronouncing, their readiness to hear, the careful consideration they bestow on what they have heard, in the hope of drawing some profit, even sometimes from the illiterate, and in subjects on which they have already a formed opinion—all this, I say, proves that their assent, although *full* in the sense that it has really settled the question for the time being, is nevertheless *provisional*, namely, such that they are quite disposed to reconsider it on proper cause being shown, and, if necessary, to retract it. Now, this exonerates them from all blame in case of error; for the assent given with such dispositions is neither more nor less than it should be, and the will has not acted therein with precipitancy or rashness.

1304. And if we consider certainty on the part of the *persuasion* and the assent, we shall see that the state of a mind which has concluded its judgment in the way just explained may be reasonably called a state of *certainty*, because

qua aliquis adhæret falso tanquam vero, SINE ASSENSU CREDULITATIS.' The other they defined as *firma credulitas*. It will be seen that this distinction comes to very much the same as I have stated in the text. I have said that the first of these two false assents is not always rash or a proof of a distorted will, because in certain cases it is im-

posed on man by the necessity under which he finds himself of acting; and it is not *firma*. (*firma credulitas*), but *provisional* (See S. Thomas, S. I. xciv. 4). Even the Academical philosophers recognised the necessity of a provisional assent, only that they carried the principle too far.

in that state the mind is no longer hesitating or hanging in suspense, but has pronounced a verdict which is definitive, completed, and therefore well entitled to the appellation of *certain* (*normal certainty*.)

1305. Unfortunately, however, a vast portion of the human race have inherited a deplorable propensity to judge hastily and rashly, so that they hardly ever find the golden mean of *provisional* certainty, but rush headlong to *absolute* and peremptory pronouncements. This is especially the case with the young, who, untaught by experience, have not yet learned how fallacious and shortsighted human reason is, and how easily haste and over-confidence in judging results in error, and in the countless evils which error entails. To this ill-advised presumption in judging, and to its usual attendants—a disdainful refusal to re-examine the grounds of a conclusion once formed, no matter how hastily, or to admit the possibility of its being wrong, or to weigh dispassionately what others have to say on their own behalf—is in great measure attributable the painful fact, that mankind, instead of being, as it ought to be, but one family, is torn asunder by dissensions and strifes, both public and private, and these so bitter that oftentimes two brothers, because differing in opinion, cannot live together under the same roof! Contrariwise, the wisdom of cautious men is the parent of charity, and secures a union of hearts even when intellectual agreement is unattainable.

1306. By the assent, therefore, *full* on the one hand, and on the other *provisional*, to which prudent men have most frequent recourse in the affairs of life, many dangers are avoided; for (1) that assent being *full*—*i.e.* definitive, completed, certain—the mind feels none of that suspense and disquietude which doubt naturally engenders; actions are rendered possible, and room is made for that steadfastness and decision of character which is so necessary in life's undertakings; (2) the same assent being *provisional*, it saves from errors which would be inevitable in case it were absolute and unchangeably determined upon; it leaves the way open for intellectual progress, renders the inter-communication of

thought feasible as well as agreeable, and reconciles the advantages accruing from the union of many with a becoming modesty and the toleration of opinions differing from one's own.¹

ARTICLE VI.

We cannot always avoid material error, but we can avoid the evil effects of it.

1307. *Formal error*, then, *i.e.* the error committed by man's own will, can always be avoided; but, as we have just seen, the same cannot be said of *material error*: I mean those erroneous judgments which men form on data that cannot, or ought not, to depend on them.²

But can the *evil* resulting from *material error* be avoided?

1308. If we speak of the essential and final evil, that evil in which all evils are contained, man can certainly avoid it, and dispel all fear thereof by means of a firm belief in the existence of God and His Sovereign Providence.

The existence of God is a truth immediately deducible

¹ As I have said, this prudent reserve is the means of preventing *material* error from becoming *formal*. *Material* error, being independent of the action of our will, is not always avoidable. Let me give an example. In measuring a piece of ground I make use of a foot-rule made by a first-class hand, and by trusting to it I obtain a wrong result, owing to some slight inaccuracy in the instrument. Am I to blame for this error? In order to say that I am, one would have to prove that it was my duty, before using the instrument, to rectify it, which was not my business, but the maker's. If I were under such an obligation, the consequence would be that one man is bound to meddle with the work of another, and so each of us would at last have to mix himself up with all trades and professions! Briefly, that minute and interminable scrutiny which would be necessary for avoiding all material errors (1) is *impossible*, because no man has either the capacity or the time requisite for such an achievement, and (2) even if it were possible, it would be *injurious* to one-

self and others. *Material* error, therefore, must often occur, and this without any fault of ours. But we can and ought to prevent its becoming *formal*, by taking care that our assents or the conclusions we form upon just grounds, while *definitive*, are also *provisional*—namely, accompanied with the implied condition, 'Unless on a better examination they should be found erroneous.'

² As in the case of the *accuracy* of instruments made by a first-rate hand (see the preceding note). This accuracy ought in common reason to be assumed, and taken as the basis of our judgment, at least so long as we see no special reason for mistrust. In fact, suppose we were bound, whenever we have need of using an instrument, to test its accuracy beforehand, how could we do so except by means of another instrument on which entire reliance can be placed? This is sometimes impossible, and were it obligatory, we should have to say, among other preposterous things, that anyone who wishes to make a geodetic observation must begin by measuring anew the degree of the meridian!

from the form of human reason, being implicitly contained in it.¹

Given, therefore, an infinitely good God, Who governs all things, those who trust in Him may rest assured that any material error they may happen involuntarily to fall into will be one of those many accidents which, under the over-ruling guidance of that omnipotent goodness, are, in the end, made to work together for good. In this sense Des Cartes said truly, that God's existence is man's security, not, indeed, that he shall be exempt from all error, but that he shall not be harmed by involuntary error.

On the other hand, they who do not believe in a Sovereign Providence can have no reasonable ground for expecting either freedom from error, or deliverance from the evil consequences which naturally follow it. Theirs must, therefore, be a life of continual uneasiness and fear. Nor does God save from the natural effects of their own errors those who will be self-sufficient, and depend on their own resources alone.

ARTICLE VII.

On the limits within which material error may take place.

1309. As I have several times made mention of *material* and of *formal error*, it seems right that, before proceeding further, I should consider more particularly in what these two kinds of error differ, and especially what the limits are within which *material error* can take place.

I have to observe, therefore, that we always base our judgments on some *data*. But in these data there are differences. Some are such as to exclude all possibility, and hence all suspicion, of error, as, for example, the intellectual perceptions, which constitute direct knowledge; while others are not equally trustworthy, for instance, those depending in

¹ This does not exclude the fact that God has made Himself known to man from the very beginning by means of a positive revelation. Philosophy finds that the *first reflections* could not easily have been made by man without a language; this language might, however, have been communicated to man

without any positive manifestation of God's existence. The necessity of this positive manifestation must, therefore, be deduced from other principles than that of the absolute need which men had of it for rising to their *first reflections*.

some part on faculties which act blindly—say the faculty of instinct. Suppose I take up a pen to work out an algebraical calculation: my hand writes a 2 instead of a 3, and my whole calculation goes wrong. This slip of my hand was undoubtedly the effect of a momentary distraction, so that the hand, moving according to the direction casually given it by its previous motion and the instinctive and mechanical laws combined, wrote 2 instead of 3. Now, could this momentary inattention have been avoided? I cannot say; but this I know, that a continual stretch of the attention is fatiguing, and that I am unable to prolong it beyond a certain time. From this fact of experience I conclude that, my power of sustained attention being limited, I am not its absolute master, and cannot therefore command the use of it to any extent I wish. On the other hand, that instantaneous failing of my attention while my hand writes the 2 passes off so quickly that I do not advert to it, nor are there any traces thereof left in my memory; so that my being *distinctly aware* of it after it has gone is utterly out of the question. That slip of the hand may therefore have proceeded, not from myself, but from the limitation of my volitive force, and from a deficiency of attention not noticed by me, and not noticeable by reason of that limitation. Hence it comes to pass that I have no reasonable ground for believing that an error had occurred at that moment more than at any other. Will it be said that I was bound to revise what was then taking place, because of the abstract possibility of there being some error in it? Certainly not; for this would be the same as saying that I ought also to have revised all the other steps as well, and then to revise this new operation also, and so on *ad infinitum*; in other words, that I must be always at the beginning, which is the dull and impossible game of the Sceptics. The inference I draw from this is, that there are certain material errors against which I have no power to guard myself; and now, what are these, according to the principles I have laid down?

1310. In examining the error just described, we find that it was produced concurrently by two causes: (1) a momentary

ceasing in the voluntary attention of my understanding ; (2) an instinctive or habitual force which moved my hand independently of that attention. But these two causes did not concur in the same way ; the first, namely the will, concurred negatively, and was therefore only an *occasion* of the error, whereas the motion of my hand was its positive and efficient cause.

From this analysis we may conclude that, while the cause of true cognitions is the understanding, the cause of material error is some blind faculty which continues to act even after the understanding has suspended its functions, and by so doing produces an erroneous datum, on which the false judgment is afterwards based.

1311. But is the *blind faculty* I speak of the only cause from which material error can proceed? No ; for sometimes the *data* are not produced by a blind faculty, nor indeed by any of our faculties, but come to us from the authority of others,¹ by relying on which authority we implicitly assume the truth of those data, and as a consequence fall into error. Now, do we do right in accepting such data without examination? Yes, whenever we ought in reason to do so, and our assent, though *full*, is given *provisionally*, in the sense I have explained. I say *yes*, because the contrary would oblige us to incur, both against ourselves and others, a greater evil than the one we might seek to avoid by long and timorous investigations.

1312. To sum up, then : material error may arise from our judgment being based (1) on *data* supplied by some blind faculty (2), on the testimony of a fallible authority ; and in both cases the error is purely material so long as we have reasonable grounds for supposing these data to be true, and consequently for not undertaking the task of verifying them.

1313. The two causes of material error being thus ascertained, we can easily define the limits within which this kind of error may occur.

¹ When I use mathematical instruments made by a first-class hand, and implicitly trust to them in my calculations, I rest on the *authority* of the

maker, who guarantees their accuracy, and is held in great repute for exquisite skill in such things.

Material error is possible only in those judgments which rest on data devoid of absolute certainty, and accepted without further inquiry in order to avoid a greater evil.

On the contrary, when the understanding judges upon *data* which (1) do not depend on a fallible authority, and (2) are not the effect of a blind faculty, such as the instinct or the force of habit; but the understanding forms the judgment by itself alone, without the co-operation of any other faculty, then the error must be formal.

1314. This gives us the following important truth:—

Material error may happen in the mathematical and physical sciences; but as regards the principal truths of the moral and metaphysical sciences, none but formal errors are possible.

The reason of this is manifest from what we have said. The moral and metaphysical sciences are solely the fruit of reflection on our first cognitions, and on all that is found in our consciousness. The *data* are, therefore, infallible. They do not depend either on the authority of others or on the action of *blind forces*; they are simply the work of nature or of the understanding itself. With respect to the judgments formed on these *data* nothing can be done while the action of the understanding is impeded or suspended, since there is then no other force which acts and leaves a fresh *datum*, or the clue to a pronouncement. Here, therefore, either the understanding is present with its actual attention, and judges; or, if it is not present, no judgment takes place in the interval.¹

ARTICLE VIII.

In what sense Holy Scripture and the Fathers of the Church say that truths are manifest, and that all who wish it can become possessed of them.

1315. The truths necessary to man are the metaphysical and the moral; and with regard to these, there can be only formal error—the error caused by the human will.

¹ Whether it be ever possible for man to fall into a formal error *necessarily*—that is, without being free to help it—is a delicate and extremely difficult question.

It is therefore to this species of truth that the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers of the Church must be understood to refer, when they declare that if man does not know the truth, this is because he voluntarily rejects the invitations of wisdom.

'Wisdom,' says the Book of Proverbs, 'preacheth abroad, she uttereth her voice in the streets. At the head of multitudes she crieth out, in the entrance of the gates of the city, she uttereth her words, saying: "O children, how long will ye love childishness, and fools covet those things which are hurtful to them, and the unwise hate knowledge? - Turn ye at my reproof: behold I will utter my spirit to you, and will show you my words. Because I called, and ye refused: I stretched out my hand, and there was none that regarded"' (Prov. i. 20-24).

It is therefore the evil disposition of the will that, alas! draws men back and turns them away from those great truths which constitute wisdom. In another place, Holy Writ enjoins on man to seek after truth with the same love and eagerness of desire with which he seeks after riches, promising that he will thus surely find it. 'If thou shalt seek her as money, and shalt dig for her as for a treasure, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and shalt find the knowledge of God' (*ibid.* ii. 4, 5); which is precisely that knowledge of metaphysical and ethical truths of which I am speaking. It says, moreover, that 'Wisdom loves them that love her, and they that in the morning early watch for her, shall find her' (*ibid.* viii. 17). From these and many other passages it is evident that the condition demanded of man by the Inspired Pages in order that he may find the wisdom 'which meditates and speaks truth' (*ib.* 7), is a good and perfect will, ever vigilant and earnest in the pursuit of truth.

1316. These teachings of Holy Scripture are faithfully re-echoed by the Fathers. Take S. Augustine: no sentiment, perhaps, is more familiar to him, or more gracefully expressed in his writings than this, that if a man remains deprived of truth, he has only himself to blame; that truth responds to

all ; that we have it within ourselves, and can consult it whenever we please. Here is a quotation : ‘ In every place, O Truth, thou presidest over those who consult thee, and simultaneously answerest all, be the things about which they ask never so different. Thy answers are clear, but not all understand them clearly. All frame their questions according to what they wish, but do not always receive the response they wish. He is thy perfect servant, who, instead of expecting to hear thee say only what he wishes, wishes to hear only what thou hast to say.’¹

The great thing to do, therefore, in order to be possessed of the truth is, not to approach it with a prejudiced mind, or with a will already biassed in favour of one answer rather than of another ; for then we should no longer be loving what truth speaks, but only what we wish it to speak. Let truth be consulted with a perfect readiness to receive indifferently all its *dicta*, whatever they may be, nay, with a resolve not to love what is pleasing to us, except for the reason that it is pronounced by truth.

1317. According to S. Augustine, then, every man can, if he will, find the truth within himself ;² and, in fact, as we have seen, every man has the light of truth innate in him, and has, moreover, the direct knowledge which is exempt from error, and by reflecting on which he is able of himself to recognise the great metaphysical and moral truths. Nor must any one suppose that in the above passage S. Augustine refers to that supernatural truth which is communicated to men

¹ ‘ Ubique, veritas, præsidet omnibus consulentibus te, simulque respondet omnibus etiam diversa consulentibus. Lique tu respondes, sed non lique omnes audiunt. Omnes unde volunt consulunt, sed non semper quod volunt audiunt. Optimus minister tuus est, qui non magis intuetur hoc a te audire quod ipse voluerit, sed potius hoc velle quod a te audierit’ (*Con. x. 26*).

² I do not mean to say that this *truth* which man has in himself always gives the particular truths ready formed ; but it shows the way and indicates the

means by which to find them. Hence, when an individual feels the need of seeking the assistance of others in order to be instructed in some science or enlightened on some particular truth, it is the truth he has in him that directs him to them. Therefore, the interior truth, far from shutting us up within ourselves, or excluding recourse to authority and the other means of gaining knowledge, is that which makes us see the necessity of these means, and recommends to us their use.

by grace ; for against this interpretation we have his positive statement, that the truth of which he speaks is present even to the ungodly, who are free to see it if they will only reflect dispassionately within themselves. Let us hear him : 'The impious themselves, even while turning away from that immutable light of truth, are in a certain way touched by it. Hence it is, that even the impious think of eternity, and pass many right judgments, either of approval or of condemnation, respecting the manners of men. But by what rules could they so judge, except by those wherein they see what is the right way of living, although they themselves deviate from it?' (*De Trinit.* xiv. 15.)

1318. Now, what are, according to this Father, the reasons which cause man, though he has the truth within him, not to recognise it, but to fall into error? They are the two I have named—that is, the *resemblance* between the false and the true, and the *passions* which incline the will to take a fictitious thing for the genuine one. Hence, in his book *De Vera Religione*, he describes the occasional causes of error as follows : 'Man errs, not because of any deception played upon him by the things themselves, for the things exhibit to the sense exactly that appearance which they have according to their several degrees of beauty ; nor yet owing to any deception caused by the senses, since the senses report to the soul which presides over them simply what they feel according to the nature of the corporeal organs ; but the real cause of the deception of souls lies in the disordered affections. These it is which make them feign to seek the true while setting aside and neglecting truth' (xxxvi. 67). Further on he says : 'No one can be rejected by truth, unless he be decoyed away by some semblance of the same. Now, inquire what it is that detains a man in the pleasures of the body. Thou wilt find that it is nothing else but *fitness* ; for if things which disaccord with the sense give pain, those which suit it give pleasure.' Then, after observing that man can, if he chooses, know what *fitness* is, S. Augustine argues, that he can also, if he chooses, know very well the *Supreme Fitness*, namely God, and that this depends on how his will is affected in regard to it. 'Recognise, then, what the Supreme Fitness

is. Go not outside thyself, but turn into thyself ; IT IS IN THE INNER MAN THAT TRUTH DWELLS.'¹ Again, 'To find truth, thou must seek it, not in any part of space, but in the interior affection' (*non locorum spatio, sed mentis affectu*).²

1319. Passages of the same import might be adduced in great numbers from the other Fathers and Doctors ; but, not to be too prolix, I will limit myself to the testimony of the author of the *Itinerarium*, whom I have often quoted before. He says, very positively, that man has within himself the means of discovering the truth if he so wishes, and does not

¹ See here the *observation of the internal facts* pointed out by S. Augustine as the source of the highest truths. This kind of observation was abandoned by the modern philosophy, which contented itself with external observation, and thus reduced the whole of man to the external senses ; hence its materialism, and its degradation. By comparing the philosophy of Des Cartes with that of Locke, we find that they are derived from two different sources : the first from an observation exercised on our inner selves, and the second from an observation purely external. Both these philosophies were to have their day, and they had it. After these two systems, it seems natural that the world should expect a philosophy which, without excluding either the *internal* or the *external* observation, is derived from the two conjoined. A philosophy of this description—not arbitrary and partial, but true and complete—would be the only philosophy capable of satisfying the present needs and expectations of civilised mankind. God grant that the writer of these pages may have in some little degree helped in bringing about so desirable a consummation. It is, however, well worth noting how powerful is the influence which the sensuousness of the age has in turning away men's minds from the path of *internal observation* which had been shown to them by Des Cartes. Things have come to such a pass, that the very name of *internal observation* seems to have been forgotten, so that it sounds as a novelty. Let us hope that it may now be, for many, as a ray of light to excite and wake them up from a deep intellectual slumber. Des Cartes had

spoken of *internal observation* with the greatest clearness ; and had remarked that by means of it alone we could form correct notions about the soul, while, without it, our ideas of the soul could only be materialistic and confused (983, etc.). Let us hear the grave admonition he has given on this point in his celebrated discourse on *Method* :—

'Mais ce qui fait qu'il y en a plusieurs qui se persuadent qu'il y a de la difficulté à connaître Dieu, et même aussi à connaître ce que c'est que leur âme, c'est qu'ils n'élèvent jamais leur esprit au delà des choses sensibles [*external observation*], et qu'ils sont tellement accoutumés à ne rien considérer qu'en l'imaginant, qui est une façon de penser particulière pour les choses matérielles, que tout ce qui n'est pas imaginable leur semble n'être pas intelligible. . . Et il me semble que ceux qui veulent user de leur imagination pour les comprendre [*God and the soul*], font tout de même que si pour ouïr les sons, ou sentir les odeurs, ils se voulaient servir de leurs yeux' (Part IV).

² cxxxix. So deeply impressed was S. Augustine with the truth of this doctrine, and so well did he know that error on the principal truths of metaphysics and ethics never takes place except through an act of the will, that in his *Retractions* (Book I. c. xiii) he felt no hesitation in penning the following very acute remark : 'Indeed, even he who sins in ignorance, does so by his will, inasmuch as he judges that to be lawful which is not so !' 'Et qui peccat ignorans, voluntate utique facit, quod cum faciendum non sit, putat esse faciendum.'

allow himself to be deceived by sensible things which incline his will to error. 'It is manifest that our understanding is conjoined with the eternal truth itself; for, without that teacher, it could not know any particular truth with certainty. Thou canst, therefore, by thyself see the truth which instructs thee, provided the concupiscences and the phantasms do not impede thee, nor interpose themselves like clouds between thee and the light of truth.'¹

1320. Finally, that the human soul, if its eye be darkened by unrighteous passions, is unable by reflecting within itself to discover the truth, was held as a thing beyond questioning by all antiquity; and the *purifications* of the soul, which the most ancient and celebrated schools of philosophy taught and required of their disciples in order that they might be capable of understanding the doctrines to be communicated to them, had no other reason than this truth. Hence our Divine Master also demanded of His hearers that they should have the ears of the heart open to hear. 'Qui habet aures audiendi audiat' (Mat. xi. 15).²

¹ 'Ex quo manifeste apparet, quod conjunctus sit intellectus noster ipsi aeternæ veritati, dum nisi per illam docentem nihil verum potest certitudinaliter capere. Videre igitur per te potes veritatem, quæ te docet, si te concupiscentiæ et phantasmata non impediunt, et se tanquam nubes inter te et veritatis radium non interponant' (*Itin.* iii).

² What is said in the present article refers wholly to *reflex knowledge*, which consists, not in the *first perception* of things (direct knowledge), but in a *recognition* of that perception. As regards direct knowledge, however, although there cannot be *error* in it, there may be *ignorance*. I mean that a man may be more or less destitute of it, since he receives it from without, and must depend for its acquisition, (1) on external sensible things, which supply its matter, and (2) on the in-

ternal needs of his bodily organisation, which in all probability are the first occasion which moves the understanding to the perception of external things. As to the *first reflection*, by which *popular knowledge* is produced, its sources are also, in part, external to man—namely, (1) *language*, which is the occasional cause of the act of reflection; (2) the things communicated through language, which are the *object* of that act, and which may also be supernatural, such as are those contained in Divine Revelation. Nevertheless, the true *cause* of our understanding and reflecting is always within ourselves; hence the author cited above says: 'VIDERE IGITUR PER TE POTES VERITATEM'; which sentence must be taken with the implied clause, 'Given the conditions necessary for reflection to come into play.'

ARTICLE IX.

*An example of error in popular knowledge, as pointed out by
S. Augustine in the case of Idolatry.*

1321. Having found that the cause of formal error is the will which yields to the inclination to error, especially when the false has a great resemblance to the true, let us apply this doctrine to some grave form of error, in order that it may thus receive greater light and evidence. S. Augustine, from whom the whole of what I am saying is taken, will be our guide.

We have distinguished two species of knowledge, the *popular* or of first reflection, and the *philosophic* or of ulterior reflection. We have seen, that error insinuates itself into this second reflection much more easily than into the first; but that sometimes it perverts the first, because in this also there is reflection. S. Augustine gives us an example of popular as well as of philosophic error, and shows that both the one and the other arise from the weakness and cowardice of the human will in letting itself be influenced and corrupted by the passions.

As regards popular knowledge, the example he proposes is nothing less than the capital and universally spread error of Idolatry. His account of how it came to pass that the minds of well nigh the whole human race fell into such fatal darkness is so accurate and clear, that I am induced to reproduce it in full.

‘Since men *loved* [behold disordered affection as the occasion of error] the works more than the Artificer and the Art itself, they were punished WITH THIS ERROR (Idolatry), by which they seek in the works the Artificer and the Art. And as they cannot find Him [for God does not fall under the bodily senses, but stands supereminently even above the mind itself], so they take the works themselves for the Art and the Artificer. Here lies the origin of every impiety, not only of those who sin, but also of those who are lost by reason of their sins.’

Then the saint describes the progress of Idolatry, which

goes hand in hand with that of moral corruption. In proportion as the false bears a greater resemblance to the true, error becomes easier, and a less degree of depravity suffices to make the will yield to it. Hence the blindness of the understanding, and the grossness of the error, proceed in direct ratio to the moral corruption, which may reach to such an extreme, that the will can no longer make a proper use of the understanding, or discern even between things which are most dissimilar. Such appears to have been the case in the progress of Idolatry. As S. Augustine observes, the first wrong thing men did was to *love* creatures, and the next, to *serve* them, which denotes an increase in corruption. So, likewise, with the error by which men believed in Idolatry. At first, only those creatures were taken for the Creator which stood highest in beauty, and thus seemed to resemble Him most. But in course of time this confusion of mind extended to all creatures, not excepting those which by their great deformity were farthest away from any even apparent similarity with the perfections of the Godhead. Let us hear S. Augustine himself:—

‘Not only will men scrutinise creatures in defiance of God’s precept; not only will they *love* them instead of loving law and truth; but, sinking themselves still deeper into perdition, they will also *serve* creatures in preference to the Creator; and worship them in their every part, from the highest even to the lowest.’

Here we see distinctly characterised the two grades of moral corruption, to which correspond the grades of error.

First, the understanding errs by exchanging God for the things that are most similar to Him: ‘Some are satisfied with worshipping, as though it were the Sovereign God, the soul—this first intellectual creature which the Father made by means of the truth, that it might always gaze on the truth, and through this truth know itself,¹ because the soul is in every way MOST LIKE unto him.’

¹ I beg the reader to observe how S. Augustine constantly insists on this, that the soul, in order to know itself, has need of the *truth* (our primal idea): in his opinion, the substantial feeling

which we express by the word *Ego* is not enough for that purpose; in a word, according to him, the soul is not known to itself through itself.

The second and grosser error is, to take for God the things which are most unlike to God. S. Augustine continues: 'But after this, they pass on to offer worship to the genital life, or that creature by which the eternal and immutable God imparts to visible and temporal things the generative virtue. Thence they come down to animals; and from these again they lapse into giving divine honours to mere inanimate bodies; and among these they select in the first instance the most beautiful of all, I mean the celestial bodies.

'Foremost among the latter is the Sun, and some content themselves with its worship. Others consider that the Moon also ought to be worshipped, because being, as is said, nearer to this earth, it exhibits a nearer beauty. Others add, furthermore, the stars which people the boundless expanse of the heavenly spaces. Others, again, associate with the ethereal heavens our atmosphere, and to these two superior corporeal elements they bow down in slavish adoration. But the most religious of all, in their own estimation, are they whose idolatry embraces all creatures generally—that is, the entire universe with whatever it contains, and the life by which we have animation and breath; which life some believe to be corporeal and some incorporeal. In short, all this immense aggregate of things taken together they look upon as a huge Divinity, whereof each thing is a part; for they have not known the Author and Framers of all creatures. Nor is this enough for them; but by a yet deeper fall they must needs worship even the *images* of things (*simulacra*)—that is, after having with a horrible impiety changed into God the works of God, they change into Him the works of their own hands also, which nevertheless have still this in them, that they are visible.'¹ In this last form of Idolatry S. Augustine justly sees a worse error than that of the worship of nature; since nature is at least incomparably greater and more august than the productions of man, and, in a certain way, more like to God, being His work.

¹ *De vera Relig.* c. xxxvi, xxxviii.

ARTICLE X.

An example of error in philosophic knowledge, as pointed out also by S. Augustine in the case of Unbelievers.

1322. After referring to Idolatry as an error of *popular* knowledge, S. Augustine passes on to speak of *Unbelief* as a good instance of error in *philosophic* knowledge.

This also he describes as the effect of a will inclined towards evil and yielding thereto. 'There is,' he says, 'a worse and more debased worship of images. It is that by which some men idolise their own fancies, and, under the name of Religion, pay homage to whatever their ERRING mind, prompted by pride and presumption, has happened to imagine; and so they go on until at last they become possessed by the notion that no religious worship should be offered to anything, and that what men call worship is only a stupid superstition and a degrading *servitude*.'

Thus, according to S. Augustine, the true origin of unbelief lies in the desire of unrestrained liberty, or of withdrawing oneself from under the just dominion of God. Such, indeed, is the spectacle presented to our view by the entire history of Unbelief, from the antediluvian giants down to the sophists of our time. 'But' (continues the holy Doctor) 'this is a vain notion; for these men do not by it escape from servitude. The vices which draw them to and keep them in this way of thinking remain, and it is therefore clear that, in point of fact, they pay homage to these vices. The truth of the matter is, that they serve a threefold passion, namely, either the concupiscence of the flesh, or the pride of life, or the concupiscence of the eyes. I contend, that among those who profess to believe that worship ought not to be given to anything, there is not one who is not a slave to carnal lusts, or to the greed of a vain pre-eminence, or to a mania for what dazzles the eye. Hence, as the world is filled with these transitory things, it follows that those who, from the love of them, give way to the belief that nothing ought to be worshipped, serve the world in its every part.'¹

¹ *De vera Relig.* c. xxxviii.

1323. From all this we may fairly conclude, with S. Augustine, that 'There COULD HAVE BEEN NO ERROR in Religion, had not man, instead of giving his affection and worship to God, given them to the soul, the body, or to his own imaginations.'¹

1324. But those who have fallen victims to the fatal error of which we are speaking have their minds confused, and are no longer in a condition calmly to recognise the truth.

Hence their return to the truth must begin rather by *faith* than by *reasoning*; and this is that excellent service which *authority* renders, as I have already observed (1155 etc.). *Authority* makes up for the infirmity of reflection, disturbed and uncertain in consequence of a distorted will. 'Although' (writes the great thinker whom I have been following thus far) 'these unhappy men have sunk so low that their vices hold complete mastery over them, . . . nevertheless, so long as life continues, they can still wage the battle anew, and even gain the victory; but on this condition, that they commence by believing what they cannot as yet understand' (*si prius credant quod intelligere nondum valent*).²

ARTICLE XI.

The analysis of error is continued: error supposes CONFUSION in the mind.

1325. Material error arises from certain *erroneous data* not dependent on ourselves.³ Formal error, on the contrary, depends entirely on ourselves.

¹ 'Quamobrem sit tibi manifestum atque perceptum, NULLUM ERROREM in Religione esse potuisse, si anima pro Deo suo non coleret animam, aut corpus, aut phantasmata sua' (*De vera Relig.* c. x).

² *De vera Relig.* c. xxxviii.

³ How a blind power, in which there is neither truth nor error, can nevertheless give *erroneous data*, has already been explained (1309, 1310). It can give *conventional signs* whence error proceeds. For example: when in an arithmetical calculation the hand, moved mechanically, writes a 4 instead of a 3, the 4 thus written is what con-

tains the error. It is true that, considered in its own proper entity alone (which is all that the mechanical action of the hand produces), this figure cannot be said to be either true or false. But the calculator does not look at it in this way; he simply takes it as a sign denoting four units which must be reckoned up together with all the rest. It is he, therefore, who unintentionally adds to it the error called material. In taking the figure at the established conventional value, he does quite right; nor is there any other rule which he, or anyone else, could properly follow in the reading of numbers. But,

This last is always preceded by a certain amount of *confusion* in the mind.

In fact, formal error takes place when we, reflecting on our perceptions and ideas, take one for another, which is a confusion. The better to understand how this comes about, let us reduce error to its most common formula: 'Error consists in attributing to a subject a predicate which does not belong to it.'¹ Now, by examining this formula we can easily see that it is exactly equivalent to this other: 'There is error whenever we take one intellection for another.'

In fact, when I attribute to a subject a predicate which does not belong to it, what do I do? I conceive that subject to be what it is not, to have what it has not; in a word, I form of it a concept at variance with the truth. Thus there are, in reference to it, two possible intellections between which I have power to choose: one is the true concept, or that by which I conceive it without this predicate; the other is the false concept, or that by which I conceive it with this predicate; and I give preference to the second, saying, for example; 'The thing known by such a name, or the thing which has produced in me such and such sensations, or is determined for me in some other way, has the said predicate.' There takes place, therefore, in my mind an interchange or confusion of two intellections: first I invent a union which has no existence, and then I affirm it to exist.

1326. It is evident that, in looking with the eye of reflection into my mind, I cannot see what is not there, or see what is there different to what it is, unless my reflection, guided by the will, plays false. If, then, I seem to myself to apprehend what in truth I do not apprehend, this simply means that I have set up to myself an idol of my own creating. But a true creation is a feat transcending all human power. Conse-

although this his intellectual act is what it ought to be, it so happens, nevertheless, that, owing to the same act being associated with the blind act of the hand, the calculation ends in a *wrong result*. The error here would therefore consist in taking the result as the work of an intelligent faculty alone, whereas

a blind faculty also had a share in it.

¹ It is manifest, as we have said, that in this formula may be comprised also that error which consists in denying of a subject a predicate which belongs to it, provided the predicate be taken as an unknown value, which may be negative as well as positive.

quently, whatever a man is said to create to himself can only be an agglomeration of things pre-existing in his mind. In this agglomeration, however, he would not err so long as he acknowledged it to be his own work alone, and did not take it for what nature itself has produced in his mind—in other words, for the truth of the thing.

Man, then, has in his mind the true things known by *immediate perception*, and he has also his *fictions*; he takes the latter for the former: here is the error. But in substituting fiction for perception¹ he performs a twofold operation: (1) he conjures up a false appearance; (2) he disowns and rejects the truth by putting the false appearance in place of it. This voluntary rejection of the truth is what completes the error, and makes it formal.

1327. Now, an operation like this cannot be accomplished except through a greater or lesser degree of mental darkness and confusion of ideas, as its very nature proves. To accomplish it, man's reflection must be diverted from what has been produced in his mind by nature, and fixed instead on what is purely artificial and fictitious; it must, so to speak, compenetrates these two things into one, or, rather, it must cause the true intellection to be superseded by the feigned one, and this in reality amounts to an attempt to destroy it, if that were possible. But although, by an immutable law of nature, the true intellection cannot be destroyed, the perturbation of reflection may increase to such a degree as at last to disable it altogether from discerning the truth which it has persistently sought to stifle and deny. Now, this state of reflection is exactly what we call *confusion* or *darkness*, and, when it has become habitual, intellectual *stupor*, *blindness* of mind.

ARTICLE XII.

Error takes place through an unjust suspension of assent.

1328. By analysing the nature of error considered relatively to the understanding, we have found that it consists

¹ Or the *relations* between the perceptions, as well as all the consequences which are determined by the perceptions, and are virtually contained in them.

in a *confusion* of ideas, one of them being exchanged for another.¹

Let us now consider error in relation to the act of the will which moves the understanding to its production.

The nature of this act may be expressed by the following formula: 'Error arises from our pronouncing a judgment while our ideas are as yet indistinct and confused, in which state it is easy to exchange one for another.'

1329. Let there be in a man's mind two ideas—a predicate and a subject—in a state of perfect mutual distinctness,² and let his idea of their *nexus* be equally clear and precise: it is impossible, while the mind remains in this state, that he should sincerely assent to error, as I have shown when speaking of the evidence of geometrical propositions (1293 etc.).

But if the man's will is badly disposed, if he is decidedly averse to a certain truth, and has made up his mind in favour of the error contrary thereto, what will he do in order that he may indulge in that error?

He will seek some argument presenting a semblance of truth, some colourable pretext on the strength of which he may be able to *suspend* his assent, and so introduce some

¹ Who is the efficient cause of this exchange of one idea for another? Man himself. But to which of the human faculties does such an operation belong? Not to the faculty of *ideas*, but to that of *affirmation*, or, in scholastic phrase, of the *word of the mind*. I will explain: the faculty of ideas has for its term the *universal*; the faculty of the word singles out, in the universal, the *particular*; that is to say, it pronounces, and by pronouncing places some particular in a class determined by the universal. The *faculty of the word*, therefore, is the faculty of judgment. Now, we have seen that it is in our interior judgment alone that error is found (1249 etc.), namely, in the *result* of the judgment. This result is susceptible of being expressed also externally; for, unlike the simple apprehensions, proper, as I have said, to the faculty of ideas, it is an effect of the energy of the human subject, which, by exciting in itself a greater force than it was exerting before, gives, as it were,

a body to what it had till then conceived but faintly, and vests it with all the determinations which are necessary in order that it might truly subsist, and so be expressed in words. Behold all that human nature can boast of as being in any way similar to a creative act proceeding from itself—the creation of error!

² All ideas, considered in themselves, are essentially distinct from and inconfusable with one another. The indistinctness and confusion lies in our *reflection*, which, when in a disturbed state, has not the clear and steady vision it ought to have, and as a consequence exchanges one idea for another. Moreover, complex ideas—the product of our reflections—involve sometimes whole sentences which are not adverted to. But the faculty of reflection is guided by the will. We can therefore see that the confusion here spoken of does not arise from the *object* before the mind (ideas), but from the thinking *subject* (act of reflection).

confusion in his ideas and do away with that clearness which he had at first. Nor is this, in most cases, a difficult thing to do ; for there always are general reasons which one can, if so minded, allege as a justification for, at least, suspending the assent. As an example in point, I may refer to those persons who are obstinately attached to a certain opinion. When no longer able to meet the objections you bring against that opinion, will they perhaps yield? No, they will be content with attributing their inability to answer your argument simply to a want of sufficient knowledge on their part ; nay, they will be very apt to cut the question short by assuming all of a sudden the tone of persons deeply impressed with the necessity of intellectual modesty and caution, and to lay great stress on the ignorance and fallaciousness of human reason itself ; and all the benefit you will have derived from your earnest efforts in the defence of truth will consist in being gravely reminded that sobriety and moderation in expressing one's views is a duty incumbent on all ; that human knowledge has its limits ; that there are things too obscure for anyone to pretend to fathom, and so forth. All this may appear very ridiculous, but it is none the less a fact of no very rare occurrence ; and it plainly shows that a man who does not mean to give his assent to a proposition will never give it, because he will always know how, for his purpose, to avail himself of some general reason, of an 'Who knows?'—in a word, of a refuge either in the plea of ignorance or in an affected scepticism.

1330. But, leaving aside this extreme case of obstinacy in error, a man who honestly loves the truth, at least in a general way, may be too irresolute and timid in giving his assent to a certain truth which shines to his mind, simply from that sort of nervousness which is engendered by an excessive fear of error. For persons of this temperament the following rule will be found very serviceable :—

'Make it a fixed principle never to delay in acknowledging a truth when once known : the moment you clearly see that truth, give it your assent then and there, resolutely and unreservedly.'

An ingenuous promptness in cheerfully assenting to the truth as soon as presented to the mind, is characteristic of upright and virtuous men, who therefore exhibit a sterling good sense for discerning and recognising the truth, precisely because they interpose no delay or resistance in accepting its light.

On the other hand, an affected suspension of assent, or an excessive pusillanimity caused by an exaggerated fear of a certain error, often leads to that very error,¹ since it gives

¹ If I were asked for an example of error produced by an excessive suspension of judgment and hesitation in yielding one's assent, I would refer to that series of blunders into which the Sensists fall in consequence of never being contented in their inquiries in relation to abstract propositions. These philosophers find an immense difficulty in admitting that we are possessed of *universal concepts*, that is, concepts by each of which our mind sees at a single glance a whole *species* of possible individuals; and this difficulty of the Sensists has become very common nowadays, owing to the general diffusion of their principles. Its origin lies, undoubtedly, in the total exclusion of *internal observation*, for which they seem to have a horror, their thoughts being wholly engrossed with external or material things. But how does so great a difficulty arise? In this way:—A Sensist will take up a universal concept and set himself to fix his attention on it. But his mind cannot long continue in that attitude without the imagination coming into play. This faculty is very active in all men, and by the Sensists it is used almost exclusively, because it brings before them the images produced by the corporeal senses, from which alone their philosophy is derived. Now, the images or phantasms presented by the imagination relate solely to *particular* things; hence the mind, occupied solely with them, loses sight altogether of that *pure universal* which it contemplated at first. From this his experience, therefore, the Sensist concludes that *pure universals* have no existence. He would not do this if, instead of lingering on the Universal, and pretending to form an *image* of it—which is impossible except in the case

of corporeal and particular things—he were to take the same just as he sees it at the first. Here I may observe, that the steady fixing of our attention on a pure Universal is all the more difficult in proportion to the degree of its abstractedness; and therefore the conception of *being* or *truth* in general, being the most abstract of all conceptions, is also that from which *images* must be kept furthest removed, and to the light of which one must yield the quickest assent. I very well foresee that this will be the greatest obstacle to the acceptance of my theory by the Sensists, and by all those who are accustomed to think like them. I wish, however, to observe, that the fact which these persons allege in support of their denial of abstract or universal concepts—namely, that they very soon vanish from before the eye of our reflection—was not unknown in antiquity even to those philosophers by whom these concepts were fully admitted. Nevertheless, they did not consider this fact, which arises from the composite nature of man, as any reason for rejecting the other fact, namely, that man has knowledge of Universals. One of these philosophers, S. Augustine, referring to that prompt and unhesitating assent which ought to be accorded to truth, writes as follows: ‘When thou hearest me say “God is the Truth,” do not stop to inquire what truth is; for, if thou dost that, the corporeal images and phantasms will quickly rise up and disturb the serenity of that light which shone to thy mind while I was pronouncing the word *Truth*’ (*quæ primo ictu diluxit tibi cum dicerem Veritas*) (*De Trin.* L. viii. c. 3). The observation that man cannot long keep his attention fixed on an

time for the mind to become confused, and for the reflection to be disturbed through the shifting of the phantasms and ideas.

ARTICLE XIII.

Error is sometimes committed through hurry or precipitancy in giving the assent.

1331. Error always supposes a state of mental confusion (1328 etc.).

But even after the mind has cleared up its ideas with full distinctness, the will may still produce error; not, indeed, while this distinctness continues, but by suspending the assent for a few moments, and taking advantage of the interval for dimming that serenity and clearness of mental vision, and bringing into it perturbation and confusion (*ibid.*).

When, on the other hand, the will gives an assent contrary to truth before the ideas have attained to a state of distinctness in the mind, then the error is due to hurry or precipitancy of judgment. Let me say a few words on this.

In precipitating its assent and, for that purpose, moving the understanding to close the judgment while the ideas of

abstract concept; that there is in us a natural tendency to clothe that concept with corporeal forms; and that when we have arrived at the last and most universal of all concepts, the concept of *truth in general*, we must be instantly satisfied therewith, because further inquisitiveness would only throw us down again from that apex of thought to the sensible things which we had left behind us—this observation, I say, is to be met with in all the best philosophical writers of past ages. Thus (to quote only one of them) the celebrated John Duns Scotus, about the beginning of the fourteenth century, commented on the above passage of S. Augustine in the following terms: 'When a universal concept is abstracted from the singular, the difficulty of keeping one's mind long fixed on that concept increases in proportion to its greater universality. The reason of this is, that a *natural inclination* prompts us, whenever we understand a Universal, to imagine a Singular in place of it. For the same

reason, the more nearly a universal concept resembles the Singular which is seen in the image, the more easily can our attention be detained in that concept. Hence it follows, that as the most universal concepts are the furthest removed from the Singular, so the greatest difficulty is found in keeping them steadily in sight. Such being the case, when our mind conceives God under the most universal concept of *truth*, we must not (says S. Augustine) inquire "What truth is"; *i.e.* we must not seek to descend to some particular concept. . . . For by descending to such concept as is suggested by the phantasm which the imagination very quickly presents, we lose the genuine vision of that truth wherein God was perceived by us. I mean, that by this descent we come to perceive the truth in a restricted form, and consequently a form not applicable to God, of Whom truth taken in the most unlimited sense can alone be predicated' (*In I. Sentent. Dist. iii. 3*).

which this faculty makes use in judging are as yet confused, the will may be actuated by two motives—*i.e.* it may thus act, (1) because it has a partiality for the error, and therefore seizes quickly on the moment of confusion for embracing the same instead of the truth ; (2) because it wishes, by a prompt decision, to get rid of the annoyance of being detained in a state of suspension and uncertainty.

1332. The first motive arises from the first five of those seven things which I have described above as having power to influence the will—*i.e.* (1) the good which the understanding apprehends in the object ;¹ (2) the vividness and perfection of that apprehension ; (3) sensible experience ; (4) the imagination ; (5) the passions (1288).

The second motive arises from the two last things—*i.e.* (6) the instinct, and (7) the habit which has been contracted of judging on the spur of the moment ; and this, as I have said, not so much from love or hatred of the object itself, as from a desire to avoid the annoyance one feels at keeping the judgment in abeyance (*ibid.*).

In point of fact, the suspension of judgment is naturally distasteful to us until reflection has made us sensible of its necessity ; then only do we begin, on principle, to take thought before pronouncing.

1333. Any ordinary observer will find that the instinctive tendency to judge upon first appearances, and before making sure that one sees the case properly and fully, reveals itself in man from the very beginning of his intellectual development. Its cause, as I have said elsewhere, lies in the needs of the animal life. When these needs are felt, the human subject, owing to its unity, sets in motion all its forces, and hence the intellectual also, in order to its own preservation. Now, since this instinctive movement of the reason proceeds from the cravings of the animal sense, it is natural that it should be impulsive and hasty, for the sense knows no delays, and it has essentially a tendency to act hurriedly.²

¹ The same must also be understood of the evil apprehended in the object.

² The reason is, because the sense

goes on to its goal without perceiving anything outside of it, and consequently in its operation it has no regard for anything save its own satisfaction.

From this inclination to haste which begins in us from the cradle, we very soon drift into that precipitancy of judgment which, if not kept in check, will accompany us as a habit through life, and which may be noticed especially in the multitude. The only effectual means for counteracting its force are the cultivation of our faculties, patient study, and continual reflection.¹

1334. Now, whether the inclination of the will to move the understanding to a false judgment proceed from partiality to error and dislike of the contrary truth, or from a desire to shirk the pain caused by delay, certain it is, that if the will resists this inclination error will not occur. Hence, whosoever has a general love of truth, and yet feels in himself that in this or that particular case he is not free from passions and impulses adverse to a just pronouncement, must make it his duty to follow the first of the four rules on method laid down by Des Cartes, which is directed against precipitation of judgment, and may be formulated thus:—

‘Never conclude the judgment until, by using all due diligence, you have succeeded in rendering quite clear and distinct to your mind the idea of the predicate and that of the subject, as well as the *nexus* between the two.’

¹ We often find an admirable rectitude of judgment in children, as also in the collective pronouncements of a multitude when not disturbed by agitators. This, so far as children are concerned, is owing to the fact that they are not as yet corrupted by the passions, or at least feel their influence but slightly, and likewise have not contracted the evil habits, prejudices, etc., of adult persons. In the multitude the just discernment is due to their being, by reason of their social *status*, exempt from *refined* passions, as well as unacquainted with the subtle reasonings and sophistries which are proper to the highly cultured, and aided or encouraged by the means which wealth has at command. Nevertheless, the intellectual rectitude either of children

or of the multitude does not prevent them from falling sometimes into errors which are avoided by those prudent men who to scientific pursuits have joined a virtuous life and a practical acquaintance with human things. Men of this description are the least liable to error, because on the one hand they abhor it, and on the other steadily hold the passions under restraint. Moreover, having learnt by experience how easy it is to err, they make it a great point to keep a strict watch over the natural instinct which would hurry them on to precipitate conclusions. Hence their habitual reserve and the rule they lay down to themselves of never judging of a case unless with full knowledge of cause.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE REFLEX PERSUASION OF TRUTH AND OF ERROR.

1335. After having spoken of the natural and spontaneous *persuasion* we all have of the first principles of reason (1143 etc.), it seems right that I should say something about the voluntary and reflex persuasion which we form in ourselves by consenting to truth or to error, and to which belongs in a special manner the name and nature of *persuasion*.

ARTICLE I.

On reflex persuasion in general.

1336. What has been said thus far proves to evidence that the reflex *persuasion* one acquires of an opinion is the joint effect of the Will and of the Reason.

‘This persuasion is the repose of the understanding in an assent given voluntarily to a proposition.’

The will moves the understanding, and the understanding, invested as it were with the force of the will, adheres to a proposition and acquiesces in it : thus is reflex persuasion formed.

1337. When the proposition is formally erroneous, the persuasion is caused by the will more than by the understanding. The will, wishing for it, takes advantage of whatever confusion there remains in the ideas for hurrying on the understanding to a *belief* of which it does not distinctly see the falsehood ; and then, with reprehensible levity, it *believes* and approves the false exchanged for the true. But it will not be amiss to point out in detail the different degrees in which the action of the will contributes to produce persuasion in the various cases of assent.

ARTICLE II.

On intellectual evidence, and on the persuasion which the primary criterion of certainty produces in us concerning the first principles of reason.

1338. Our apprehension of the first principles of reason, as well as the assent we give to them, is not an optional, but a necessary act.

The apprehension of them is natural—*i.e.* produced in us by *nature* itself; the assent is irresistibly determined by their *evidence*.

1339. *Evidence* springs from the universality and necessity of the idea of being,¹ wherein the first principles are rooted (559–569); for as that idea embraces the whole of possibility, nay, constitutes possibility itself (395, 423), so it is impossible for anything to be otherwise than is indicated by it.

Now this, the simplest of all ideas, is the supreme logical rule of which the mind must make use in forming all its judgments, whether true or false, with this difference, however, between them: that when a judgment is false, the error can in no way be attributed to the rule itself, which is infallible, but must be attributed solely to the wrong application made of it by the *thinking subject*.

1340. But the word *evidence* requires some further elucidation, since it is a word that has been much misused and taken in diverse significations.

This misuse and this uncertainty in the signification of the word *evidence* has been, in part, caused by its etymology, according to which it simply denotes 'A clear vision or perception.' Now, a simple vision or perception is nothing more than a contingent and accidental fact; and one does not see how the contingent and accidental can demand a necessary assent. Nay, there have been philosophers who maintained that there is a fallacious as well as a true evidence, and seriously proposed the question as to what is the criterion for distinguishing the first from the second.

¹ Objectively considered.—TRANSLATORS.

In fact, the pure vision (idea) of a thing in general, however clear it may be, does not as yet include in itself a judgment ; and between the vision of the thing and the thing itself there is so substantial a difference, that were we to judge of the thing solely by our vision of it, we might be deceived—*i.e.* induced to take the thing for what it is not.

To remove, therefore, those ambiguities which cause the *intellectual evidence* to be transformed into a simple vision like that of the corporeal sight, it becomes necessary to state precisely in what this evidence consists, and to show that the concept of it includes an apprehension, not merely *clear*, but also *necessary*: Accordingly, I would define intellectual evidence as follows :—

‘Intellectual evidence is the apprehension of the *logical necessity* of a proposition.’

Thus understood, the phrase *intellectual evidence* expresses, not simply the fact of *apprehension*, but furthermore the *reason* which irresistibly wins our assent and determines our judgment ; this reason, included in the intellectual evidence, being the logical necessity of the proposition assented to.

1341. Now, the persuasion which the intellectual evidence produces respecting the first principles of reason is the strongest possible on the part of the understanding, and does not depend on our free-will ; for, as I have already said, no human power can destroy nature, or cause the understanding not to see what it necessarily sees.

ARTICLE III.

On the persuasion which the primary criterion of certainty produces in us concerning deduced propositions.

1342. Intellectual evidence is always a *logical necessity* seen by the understanding in a proposition (1338 etc.).

The primary propositions or first principles of reason are of a logical force so cogent that one cannot help feeling it.

But what about those propositions which consist of a mere deduction, and do not, therefore, present in themselves any logical necessity ? Is there no *intellectual evidence* for such ?

This question cannot be answered without first defining in what the evidence of deduced propositions consists.

I say, then, that 'We have intellectual evidence of a deduced proposition when we see it in the first principles of reason'—that is when we clearly apprehend its *nexus* with the supreme principle, and see that if that proposition were false, the supreme principle itself would be false; which is an impossibility.

1343. Now, a deduced proposition may be contained in the supreme and self-evident principle in two ways—namely, (1) by its very nature itself, and nothing else; (2) dependently on the presence of a contingent fact or condition. In the first case the proposition carries with it that kind of logical necessity, and therefore intellectual evidence, which is called *apodictic*; in the second case the proposition carries with it that other kind of logical necessity, and therefore intellectual evidence, which is called *hypothetic*. I will explain this by some examples.

Take the two following propositions:—

'At this moment I must be either moving or standing still.'

'At this moment I am moving.'

The first of these propositions is one of those that are termed *necessary*; and the second is one of those that are called *contingent*, for the reason that the opposite to what it states is possible.

Now, this denomination of the two propositions is quite correct so long as we consider them in the abstract, in the realm of pure possibilities; but if we consider them in the concrete—*i.e.* as they actually are in an individual who has assented to both of them—then we must say that the *certainty* which this person has regarding them, and consequently the reasonable assent through which that certainty has been acquired, are equally characterised by logical necessity, *apodictic* for the first proposition, and *hypothetic* for the second.

This will be better understood if the assent given to these necessary propositions be indicated in the wording of them. They will then run thus:—

'I am *certain* that at this moment I must be either moving or standing still.'

'I am *certain* that at this moment I am moving.'

1344. In both propositions the certainty is expressed. Whence comes this certainty?

Certainty never comes except from a *logical necessity*.

The logical necessity which makes me feel certain of the truth of the first proposition lies in the nature of the proposition itself, wherein I see that nothing could be conceived different from what it announces, for to move and to stand still are the only alternatives *possible*. The proposition therefore absorbs in itself all *possibility*, and this absorbing is precisely what constitutes *apodictic* necessity. It is a case of the *principle of cognition* (565).

The logical necessity which makes me feel certain of the truth of the second proposition does not lie in the nature of the proposition itself, which has nothing necessary in it; but it springs from a fact presupposed, that is to say, from the consciousness I have of being in motion, and from my immediate and natural perception of what takes place in my consciousness.¹

Given, therefore, the fact of the intellectual perception of motion, the motion must be admitted, because it is an element of the fact itself (1158 etc.).

If, while I have intellectual perception of my being in motion, I could be standing still, my motion would be existent and non-existent at the same time. Through the fact of intellectual perception, therefore, that proposition which,

¹ Hence the ancients taught that knowledge taken in the true sense of the word—I mean intellectual knowledge—is always about *necessaries*. Thus Aristotle lays it down that 'Intellection and wisdom and science do not relate to the contingent, but to the necessary' (vi. *Ethic.* c. 6); and S. Thomas says that, although the *things* dealt with by the sciences are sometimes contingent, it is not so with the sciences themselves—that is, with the *universal concepts* by means of which the contingent things are considered.

Here are his words: 'Nothing is ever so contingent but it has in it something necessary. For instance, that Socrates runs, is in itself a purely contingent fact; but the relation in which his running stands to motion is necessary. For if Socrates is running, he must be in motion.' Then he goes on to show that the necessary element in contingent things comes from the understanding, which invariably considers them in relation with its universal concepts (*S. I. q. 86, a. 3*).

considered by itself, is contingent, becomes logically necessary, and presents a particular case of the *principle of contradiction*.

Thus we may conclude that *apodictic certainty* exists when the logical necessity, which constitutes the intellectual evidence of a proposition, is derived solely from the *form of truth*—*i.e.* the first principles of reason—without the intervention of anything else; whereas *hypothetic certainty* arises from the application of those principles to a contingent fact of consciousness.

1345. When deduced propositions are clearly seen in the first principles, our persuasion of them is very strong, and proceeds much more from the understanding than from the will. On the other hand, the more remote is the deduction, and the more numerous are the contingent facts on which the certainty depends, the easier is it for the will to make the understanding suspend its assent, and to obscure it by confusing its ideas.

ARTICLE IV.

In what state our mind is when we have in us a persuasion produced by the primary criterion of certainty. A description of this state by the author of the ITINERARIUM and by S. Thomas.

1346. The state of a mind which, by using the primary criterion of certainty, has become possessed of the truth and actually sees it, ought to be clearly described, because this description is, in ultimate analysis, the criterion by which man not only is *certain*, but also, reflecting on his certainty, *knows* that he is certain, and says it over and over again to himself, thus gaining increased security and a fuller interior satisfaction, and rendering his persuasion of the truth complete and immovable.

1347. Those philosophers who, overlooking the distinction between *direct*¹ and *reflex* knowledge, took only this last into account, did not speak of the criterion of certainty except under a partial aspect. Instead of the general criterion,

¹ Even a cognition which is in itself *reflex* may be called *direct* when one considers it in relation to another reflexion exercised on it.

they gave the particular one of *reflex certainty*—that is, they described the *state* of a mind already possessed of certainty, forgetting that, to come to this state, the mind must have made use of an antecedent criterion, and that therefore the criterion proposed by them could serve for no other purpose than that of enabling us, through reflection, to advert to the certainty pre-existing in us, and render our adhesion to it stronger.

1348. Moreover, in describing this state, the philosophers I speak of contented themselves with appealing to the *evidence* of the thing, and said, therefore, that *evidence* was the criterion of certainty.

But this, owing to the diverse meanings attached to the word *evidence* (1340), gave rise to many controversies. For a proper settling of the question, it would have been necessary to find the true characteristic of *intellectual evidence* (1342), and thus prevent the so-called evidence of the senses from being confounded with the evidence of the understanding, as it has been in our times, thanks to the miserable narrow-mindedness which has been induced by materialistic and sensistic philosophies.

In no such ambiguous manner was the state of a mind in possession of certainty described by the greatest among the Schoolmen of old. Let the author of the *Itinerarium* and the Angelic Doctor suffice as examples. These deep thinkers placed the characteristic of intellectual evidence in the *intrinsic necessity* of the thing, or, what comes to the same, in the intuition of the impossibility of its contrary, and declared that the mind is in a state of certainty when it sees clearly that what it thinks could not possibly be otherwise than as it is thought ('IMPOSSIBILE EST ALITER SE HABERE').¹

¹ Here is the entire passage of the *Itinerarium*, describing the state of a mind which has become possessed of intellectual evidence by means of the primary criterion:—'Our understanding is said truly to comprehend a proposition when it knows with absolute certainty that the proposition is true; and to know this is to have knowledge indeed, FOR IN SUCH COMPREHEN-

SION THE UNDERSTANDING CANNOT ERR, because it knows that that truth CANNOT BE OTHERWISE THAN AS IT IS. It knows, therefore, that that truth is immutable.' 'Tunc intellectus noster dicitur veraciter comprehendere [propositiones] cum certitudinaliter scit illas veras esse; et hoc scire est scire: QUONIAM NON POTEST FALLI IN ILLA COMPREHENSIONE; scit enim quod

Now, when the certainty obtained through the use of the primary criterion is expressed by this formula, one has arrived at the last link of the logical chain, at the last of all propositions, and for which, therefore, it would be absurd to seek another reason, another criterion.¹

ARTICLE V.

On the persuasion produced by the extrinsic criterion of certainty, and especially by authority.

1349. The certainty which we acquire by means of the *extrinsic* criterion (1050 etc.) does not come from the vision of the *last reason* or of the *intrinsic necessity* of a given proposition, but it comes from a *sign* which guarantees to us the truth of that proposition, such sign, for instance, as the testimony of authority.

With the *assent* proper to this kind of certainty the action of the will has more to do than it has with the assent given in the case of a proposition which presents itself to the mind as intrinsically necessary.

1350. Nevertheless, when the *sign*, as well as its connection with the proposition which it distinctly singles out, is known to us as indubitably true, our *understanding* cannot help yielding assent. But the *will* can easily do away with the clearness of the knowledge both of the sign and the connection, and produce in our ideas that state of confusion in which the understanding, actuated by the will itself, can easily suspend, and even refuse, the adhesion and assent (1325 etc.).

Hence, if the persuasion rests on the testimony of an infallible authority, our *certainty*, as regards the adhesion of the

veritas illa NON POTEST ALITER SE HABERE. Scit igitur veritatem illam esse incommutabilem' (*Itiner. Ment.* etc. c. 3). S. Thomas likewise gives *intrinsic necessity* as the characteristic of intellectual evidence, in these words: 'To understand a thing is to know its cause, and to see that the thing cannot be otherwise than as it is.' 'Scire est causam rei cognoscere, et quoniam IMPOSSIBILE EST ALITER SE HABERE (*De Verit.* q. x. a. 10).

¹ To seek for the criterion of intellectual evidence would be to attempt the impossible: for either this new criterion would have in it intellectual evidence, or it would not. If it had not intellectual evidence, it would be useless; if it had, we should have come back to the primary criterion itself, *idem per idem*. Hence that excellent saying of the Schoolmen: 'Ratio non est querenda eorum quorum non est ratio' (I. Duns Scotus, *Quodlib.* q. 16).

will, may be stronger than the certainty we have of the first principles of reason. On the contrary, the *understanding*, considered as such, is more necessitated to assent by the vision of the first principles than by the testimony of an authority even infallible.¹

ARTICLE VI.

Whether and in what sense the extrinsic criterion of certainty may be of service for producing persuasion concerning the truth of the first principles of reason.

1351. The first principles of reason being contained in the supreme criterion itself of certainty, have an intellectual evidence, or an intrinsic logical necessity, which no individual capable of using his reason can withstand. To see them,

¹ *Assent* is a product of two causes : (1) the force of the *reason* which determines the understanding ; (2) the force of the *will*. The action of the will predominates in the production of *Christian faith*, and it is from this circumstance that Christian faith acquires the nature of a virtue. On the contrary in determining the assent of the *understanding*, the logical evidence of the first principles of reason has a more immediate force than even infallible authority. In order fully to understand how solid these distinctions are, it is necessary to keep in mind the difference between *certainty* and *truth*. Unquestionably, in truth there are no degrees, because truth is simple and immutable. But certainty is the *perception* of truth *by us*, or 'A firm and reasonable persuasion in conformity with truth' (1044). In our perception of truth, therefore, in our adhesion, in our *persuasion*, there may very well be a greater or lesser intensity and firmness, and, by consequence, the *certainty* may vary in degree, not, I repeat, on the part of truth, but on the part of the act of our faculties. Such is the view taken of this matter by the two great authorities whom I have so often quoted, I mean S. Bonaventure and S. Thomas of Aquin. The former compares the certainty of faith with the certainty of reason in the following terms :—' If one speaks of the CERTAINTY OF ADHÆ-

SION ' [namely, as he had just explained, *certainty on the part of the will*], ' it is true to say that Faith is more certain than philosophical knowledge. . . . But if one speaks of SCIENTIFIC CERTAINTY, which indeed regards the understanding alone ' [not the will], ' and truth pure and simple, then it may be conceded that there is, in some science, a greater certainty than in Faith, inasmuch as we may, by means of the former, come to know something with a certainty so absolute that it would be simply impossible for us either to doubt or disbelieve it, or in any way contradict it in our heart ; as is manifestly the case with the knowledge we have of axioms and of the first principles of reason.' ' DE CERTITUDINE ADHÆSIONIS verum est fidem esse certiorē scientia philosophica. . . . Si autem loquamur de CERTITUDINE SPECULATIONIS, quæ quidem respicit ipsum intellectum et nudam veritatem, sic concedi potest quod major est certitudo in aliqua scientia, quam in fide, pro eo quod aliquis potest aliquid per scientiam ita certitudinaliter nosse, quod nullo modo potest de eo dubitare, nec aliquo modo discredere, nec in corde suo ullo modo contradicere ; sicut patet in cognitione dignitatum et primorum principiorum' (In III. Sentent. Dist. xxiii. a. 1, q. 4). And the very same is taught by S. Thomas in his treatise *De Veritate*, q. 10, a. 12.

and to be persuaded of their truth, are one and the same thing.

But could these principles be proved also by the secondary or extrinsic criterion? Or to say this in other words, besides the *intrinsic logical necessity* which makes the first principles intellectually evident, is there not also an *indubitable sign*, through which, even if there were no other means, they can be known for certain, and distinguished from all other conceptions?

To ask such a question would at first sight seem an absurdity; for, as I have said (1054), the knowledge of the existence of the *indubitable sign* necessarily presupposes the use, and therefore the knowledge, of the *first principles* themselves.

Nevertheless, if we carefully take note of the distinction between direct and reflex knowledge, we shall find that the question is not altogether meaningless.

As I have before observed, it is only in the exercise of reflection that the inturbidation and confusion of ideas which induces error can take place. Now, we have the power, by a reflex act, to deny what is known to us by direct knowledge; and this is precisely what the Sceptics do. By a distorted application of reflection, they deny the first principles of reason, while their direct knowledge necessarily says the contrary, and while they are making use of these very principles; for without such use their denial, and indeed every other act of thought, would be impossible (1152).

But if the first principles of reason are necessarily admitted by each individual, it follows that they are admitted universally by all. Hence the unanimous agreement of mankind respecting them is what constitutes the *sensus communis*—a *sign* of their truth. This is why I have said that the *sensus communis* is an excellent rule for guiding those persons who have fallen into a state of mind so confused, and of reflection so inturbidated, as to *believe* that they doubt the first principles.

This *rule* is a particular case of the extrinsic and secondary criterion of certainty; and, with regard to the first

principles, it serves as a voucher of their certainty, not in general, but only in relation to reflex knowledge, which by its means can be rendered steady and sure, and discern these principles from among all other conceptions.

1352. With reference, however, to the unanimous agreement of mankind, I wish to remark that the name of *sensus communis* cannot properly be applied to it except when it is produced by *truth*. For although any primary truth which is essentially necessary to man must, beyond doubt, ensure a universal assent, nevertheless this same effect might also sometimes be produced by an error; since not the *individual* only, but collective mankind itself, is fallible; and even if such a thing never did happen in point of fact,¹ yet it is not intrinsically incompatible with human nature.

In what sense, then, do I say that the general *consensus* of mankind may enable a Sceptic to discern what are the first principles of reason, and that therefore such *consensus* may not inappropriately be called a criterion fit to serve as a guide to reflection? I answer:—

1353. In however inturbidated and confused a state the Sceptic's reflection may be, he still clearly sees the first principles by direct knowledge. Their light is never extinguished in him. Now, what I say is, that this light, which in his mental aberration he fancies he does not see, may be brought back to his conscious vision by means of the authority of his fellow-men. It is not, therefore, *authority alone* which constitutes the criterion for reflection in this case. Human authority, taken only by itself, could never constitute a *reason* entitled to submission from an intelligence; but it is serviceable in this sense—that it can assist and add force to the ever-shining light of these principles, or, to speak more properly, can direct the

¹ The case of universal error here spoken of is not to be seen in fact; but this is not because of a sustaining power essentially inherent in human nature, but because the light of positive divine revelation has not permitted it. What can, however, be seen in fact is, that 'A man may find involved in one and the same error all those persons with whom he comes or can ever come in

contact during his life-time,' and consequently that he has no means of knowing that there are now, or there ever will be, other men holding a different opinion. To many slaves in ancient times, and to many who are still such in Mahometan or pagan countries, it was and is impossible to find in human authority the way to dispel a variety of errors.

eye of the mind to look in the right way for recognising them.

Accordingly, an individual who has recourse to the authority of mankind for the purpose of making himself certain of the first principles of reason, can, by the light which is always in him, restrict that authority within just bounds. He can, if he wishes, judge when the things it says, the principles and conclusions it proposes to his acceptance, are true, and when they are false. He can distinguish from all the others those cases in which its utterances accord with the first principles. He can, in fine, thus fix as first principles those alone which, besides being sanctioned by the authority of mankind, meet also with an harmonic response in his understanding. This interior response is a testimony by which one can interpret authority, even as authority in its turn interprets and illumines that testimony.

To conclude: the authority of mankind is not, by its own pure self, the criterion for rectifying the disordered reflection of which I am speaking; but when taken as an auxiliary to that remnant, so to speak, of reason which still remains to the Sceptic, it forms, together with it, one sole criterion, one sole rule of truth.

ARTICLE VII.

How erroneous persuasions are formed.

1354. Erroneous persuasions¹ are more the work of the will than of the understanding, while the contrary takes place in those diverse kinds of persuasion which I have described as proceeding from the truth, known through either the intrinsic or the extrinsic criterion of certainty.

1355. In the case of persuasions produced by truth, there is in truth itself a force sufficient to determine the assent of the understanding.

But no such force is to be found in the subject-matter of false persuasions—that is, in error; for error, unlike truth,

¹ The reader need not be told that this discussion is *formal* error.—TRANSLATORS.

does not exist in itself, nor yet in our direct knowledge, either explicitly or virtually.

Hence have I said that error is always a *fictitious knowledge* (1326). Now *fictions* are created by the will. The distorted will moves the understanding while in a state of confusion, and the understanding, yielding to that motion, exchanges error for truth and makes thereof an idol to itself (*ibid.*).

This falsehood, therefore, which the understanding has fixed its gaze upon, is, like all fictions, an entity purely mental; and the operation by which it is formed belongs to the faculty of *judgment*, or, as the ancients expressed it, of the *word of the mind* (1249). Hence errors may with propriety be called *false words* or interior lies (1326).

1356. I do not mean to assert that the mental entities formed by the understanding are false *per se*; they only become false (1) when the thinking subject considers them, not as purely mental, but as existing in themselves; (2) when, though taking them as mental, it judges them to have a foundation in direct knowledge, which they have not.

1357. I may, however, observe, that a *mental entity* always evinces the *limitation* of the human understanding, inasmuch as it is a mode of conceiving which corresponds but imperfectly with the nature of the thing conceived. In this imperfection the ancients placed that *subjective* element which, as I have shown elsewhere, is mixed up with our cognitions (1225); but they also noticed that the subjective element does not necessarily deceive us, nor render our cognitions false, because, in virtue of that universality which characterises our intellectual faculty, we can know that the said element is *subjective*, and are in no way obliged to take it as *objective*, in which case alone there would be error.¹

¹ S. Thomas distinguishes the *act* or mode of the intellection from its *object*. The first belongs to the thinking *subject*, and is conformable to its nature, while the second is wholly independent of the thinking subject. For example, we know material things by an act which is simple and immaterial, but we do not attribute simplicity and

immateriality to the things themselves. Contrariwise, we know God by acts which are manifold, but we do not on this account ascribe multiplicity to Him. Hence our understanding, precisely because of its *universality*, can distinguish between what we, the thinking subject, contribute in the mode of our intellection, and what appertains

1358. Error, therefore, may occur in two ways:--

(1) By taking for a true mental entity what is only an imaginary phantom of our own; for example, if the absurd proposition 'There can be an effect without a cause' were put forward as a true object of intellectual apprehension. In this species of error the ideal or mental entity itself is wanting.

(2) By taking as really and externally existent an entity which is only mental; for example, if I were to say, 'Maurice is living,' when in fact he is dead, my proposition, considered intrinsically or in the abstract, would express a true mental entity, since there is nothing absurd or self-contradictory in its terms. But the fact of Maurice having died causes it to be false. Clearly, what constitutes this second species of errors is the absence of the real or external entity.

Error, then, is simply an effort to see with our interior eye an entity where there is none, or else to see it different from what it is. In other words, by error our internal vision miscarries, terminates in nullity.¹

to the thing known. Therefore the thing known is not altered by the thinking subject--is not subjectivised: the only thing that remains subjective is the *mode* or *act* of the intellection. This excellent distinction suffices to annihilate the scepticism of the Critical Philosophy—a system which, as any one may see, is based entirely on a confusion of ideas, whereby the *mode* or *act* of the intellection is identified with the object understood. Here are the words of the Angelic Doctor, and they will show how accurate the Schoolmen were in discriminating between these two things:—'Our understanding does not attribute its *MODE* of cognising to the THINGS COGNISED: for instance, it does not attribute immateriality to a stone, although the stone is cognised by it in an immaterial way.' Then, speaking of the propositions which we form concerning God, he says:—'If in the forming of these propositions there is some diversity, let this be referred to the understanding' [*i.e. the diversity is a subjective element placed in the propositions by the thinking subject*]; 'but the unity' [*in which they terminate*] 'ought to be referred to the thing cognised. This is why sometimes our

understanding, in making a pronouncement about God, introduces into it some proposition expressive of diversity, as when we say, "In God there is goodness." The effect of this is, on the one hand, to indicate some diversity, which belongs to the understanding' [*the thinking subject*], 'and, on the other, some unity, which must be referred to the thing' [*the object cognised*]. 'Non enim intellectus *MODUM* quo intelligit *RERUM* attribuit *INTELLECTIS*, sicut nec lapidi immaterialitatem, quamvis eum immaterialiter cognoscat. Et ideo . . . si qua est' [in propositions respecting God] 'diversitas in compositione, ad intellectum referatur; unitas vero ad rem intellectam. Et ex hac ratione quandoque intellectus noster enuntiationem de Deo format cum aliqua diversitatis nota præpositionem interponendo, ut cum dicitur, Bonitas est in Deo: quia in hoc designatur aliqua diversitas, quæ competit intellectui, et aliqua unitas quam oportet ad rem referre' (*Cont. Gent. L. i. c. 36*).

¹ I have said that there are three different kinds of persuasion:—

(1) That which comes to us from the primary criterion of certainty, showing us a truth intrinsic to the proposition

ARTICLE VIII.

Continuation.

1359. The persuasion of error, then, is a fictitious thing: it is solely the work of man himself, a striving against nature, an attempt on the part of the will to seduce the understanding, which, if left to its own action, would be attracted and determined by the light of truth alone.

Again, direct knowledge being, as I have said, always true and indestructible, the persuasion of error can only be found within the domain of reflection—an operation which is, so to speak, superadded to human nature. Thus in the deeper recesses of the mind there always lies the truth, and that truth always visible to a reflection actuated by a pure motive: whence it comes to pass that a false persuasion is never, perhaps, free from misgivings.

1360. Error, therefore, is purely superficial, and never possesses itself of the inmost part of man's nature. However strongly rooted a false persuasion may be, it is generally full of hesitations. Doubts which seemed to have been set at rest will again make their appearance; and a mysterious

to which we assent: and in producing this the understanding has a larger share than the will.

(2) That which comes from the secondary criterion, whereby we know that the proposition assented to by us is true, not because we see this truth as intrinsic to the proposition itself, but because we have an *indubitable sign* of its being there—for example, an infallible authority: and in producing this kind of persuasion the will has a larger share than the understanding.

(3) That which comes from error: and here the principal agent is the will, the understanding playing simply the part of an obedient instrument.

S. Augustine has treated of these three kinds of persuasion—called by him respectively *understanding*, *believing*, and *opining*—in his book entitled *De Utilitate Credendi*. He compares together these three states of the human soul relatively to persuasion in the following manner:—‘There are in

the human soul three things akin to one another, but each very different from the others; I mean *understanding*, *believing*, and *opining*. The first of these’ [i.e. *understanding*], ‘considered in its own self, is always exempt from moral obliquity; the second’ [i.e. *believing*] ‘is sometimes vitiated by moral obliquity; the third’ [i.e. *opining*] ‘is never without such obliquity. For understanding we are indebted to *reason*; for believing, to *authority*; and for opining, to *error*. But everyone who understands believes also’ [i.e. as he says lower down, *yields belief to truth itself*—*IPSI VERITATI CREDIT*], ‘and the same is the case with every one who opines; but none of those who opine understand’ (c. xi.). Hence we see that, according to this Father of the Church, error is a non-intellection, a privation of knowledge; while, on the other hand, knowledge is identified with certainty.

uneasiness never, perhaps, forsakes entirely the victims of error, though it may not have in itself sufficient power to bring them back to the tranquillity of truth.

ARTICLE IX.

Error is always an ignorance.

1361. By assenting to error the understanding terminates, not in truth, but in a mere fiction, in an object devoid of entity (1354 etc.). Hence did I say that in error the term of the understanding is *per se* a nullity. Therefore error does not give man a cognition, but deprives him of one. Man sees nothing, but *persuades himself* that he sees something, and *says* so; in a word, he lies to himself. Such is the sort of knowledge which man acquires by error.

1362. It is always ignorance, but of a kind far worse than the ignorance usually so called. For whilst the latter consists in a simple negation of knowledge, error, under the prompting of the will, adds to that negation an effort of the understanding to create a mere phantom which may stand in lieu of the real knowledge which is wanting, and thus serve as a pretext for affirming to oneself that one knows. Now, to credit oneself with a knowledge one does not possess, is nothing else than a fabrication of pride. Pride, therefore, lies at the bottom of every formal error, and is essentially characteristic of it.¹

To express this species of *negation* of knowledge as distinguished from simple ignorance, the ancients appropriately gave it the name of *privation*.

¹ This is an observation of S. Augustine, that wonderful genius who had so keen an insight into the secrets of the human heart. He says:—'To opine' [i.e. *to be in error*—see preceding note] 'is a most reprehensible thing, for two reasons: (1) because he who is already persuaded that he knows' [as those are who firmly adhere to error] 'cannot learn even what he might otherwise learn; (2) because his presumption in forming such persuasion is of itself a sure sign of an evil-disposed spirit. For a man, therefore, to opine that he knows what he does not know is a *vicious credulity*'

(*De Utilit. Credendi*, c. xi.). In like manner S. Thomas calls presumption the 'mother of error' (*mater erroris*) (*Cont. Gent. L. i. c. v.*). Who, then, are the persons justly chargeable with *credulity*? Those only who yield themselves up to *error*. For the Sceptic, therefore, to say that he will believe in nothing is a very poor way of guarding himself against the vice of credulity; for to believe in nothing is to be *credulous* to error—the one very thing in which, according to the great authorities I have quoted, vicious *credulity* properly consists.

PART V.

CONCLUSION.

CHAPTER I.

S AUGUSTINE'S ANALYSIS OF THE ERROR OF THE MATERIALISTS IS ADDUCED IN ILLUSTRATION OF THE ABOVE DOCTRINES CONCERNING ERROR.

1363. S. Augustine, analysing the error of Materialists, describes it as being nothing but a *privation* of knowledge, so that when the Materialist says to himself that his soul is corporeal, he does not express what he *knows*, but only what he *reputes* (*putat*) the soul to be.¹

This reminds us, therefore, that to *know* and to *repute* that a thing is such or such are two intellectual operations quite different from each other.

It is the second of these operations that is liable to error. When the thing is not what one reputes it to be, there is an opinion, an error.

1364. Now, a most important inquiry suggests itself: 'How does it come to pass that a man, without having *knowledge* of a proposition, gives assent to it, affirming to himself that he knows what he does not know?' And not only this, but he affirms and assents to the contrary of what he knows, as in the case of Materialists. I say, *as in the case of Materialists*, because S. Augustine holds that the immateriality of the soul is naturally known to every man by the testimony of consciousness.² Hence the question arises:

¹ 'Cum ergo, verbi gratia, mens aërem se putat, aërem intelligere putat, se tamen intelligere scit: aërem se esse non SCIT, sed PUTAT' (*De Trinit.* L. x. c. 8).

² In the X. Book *de Trinitate*, S. Augustine proves at length that every man, by the testimony of his consciousness, knows that he has *life, sense, and understanding*, and that for a man to

‘How does a man come to *affirm* that his soul is corporeal, when he *knows* by his consciousness that it is spiritual?’

1365. There are here two contradictory things: on the one hand the Materialist has in his inner self the *knowledge* of his soul as a living, sentient, and intelligent subject; and on the other he entertains the *opinion* that his soul is corporeal. This contradiction cannot be explained otherwise than by means of the distinction of the two intellectual functions I have already described, namely: (1) the apprehension of the truth, whence *direct* knowledge proceeds; (2) reflection, whence *reflex* knowledge proceeds. The Materialist, by *direct* knowledge, supplied by the intimate feeling he has of himself and by his consciousness, knows that the soul is of a spiritual and intellectual nature; but, setting aside this intimate knowledge, he, by another act of the understanding, seeks to know what the soul is, as though he did not already know, and, in defiance of the known truth, declares the soul to be *corporeal*.

1366. At this point S. Augustine proposes to himself the objection: ‘If every one of us naturally knows his soul, how is it that we are all enjoined by a special precept to know ourselves?’ And he replies: ‘I take this precept to mean that we ought to *think* of what our soul is; for it is one thing *not to know* what the soul is, and another *not to think* of it.’¹ We may *know ourselves* without thinking of it—*i.e.*, without actually reflecting on what we know.

1367. But by what steps can a man’s *reflection* become inturbidated to such a degree as to induce in him the opinion that his soul is corporeal? As to this, says S. Augustine, we must observe that ‘Those who opine that the soul is corporeal err, not because in their concept of the soul they do not in-

know this is the same as to know his soul—a living, sentient, and intelligent subject. Hence, if any one errs in this matter, it is because he *attaches* to the said knowledge something heterogeneous and not found in his inner consciousness, but derived from the external senses, which have not perception of the soul, but of bodies only.

It is clear, then, that S. Augustine looks upon *internal observation* as the proper means for knowing what the soul is.

¹ ‘Ut quid ergo ei [animæ] præceptum est ut se ipsam cognoscat? Credo ut se ipsam cogitet . . . ; cum aliud sit non se NOSSE, aliud non se COGITARE’ (*De Trinit.* L. x. c. 5).

clude the intelligence' [for they do include it], 'but because they' [arbitrarily] 'conjoin with that concept certain things without which they would be unable to conceive any nature; for, in their estimation, whatever one would wish them to conceive, apart from corporeal images, is nothing at all.'¹

1368. But why cannot these men think of anything except bodies, and whenever they begin to think of something, their minds are at once haunted by corporeal images? Here it is necessary to consider that, in order that a man may, by the use of reflection, find what he seeks, he must know how to *direct* the reflection aright. Failing this, he will go wrong, and easily exchange that thing for another. Now, by what is man's reflection directed? Principally by the *will* and its *habits*. Why, then, does the reflection of Materialists, when engaged in looking for *spirit*, find nothing but *body*? The reason, answers S. Augustine, is that Materialists have never practised their reflection except on corporeal things; and this because their will has made these things the all-engrossing object of its delight. Hence they have never learnt the way in which a reflex knowledge of the spiritual substance is obtained, and which is the very opposite of the way to be followed in reference to the bodies outside of us. In order that reflection may perceive what these bodies are, recourse must be had to external observation; whereas internal observation alone, or the concentration of reflection on our inner selves, can enable it to perceive the true nature of the soul. But let us hear S. Augustine himself:—

'Let not the rational soul, therefore, seek itself as though it were at a distance from itself. For what is so present to thought as what is present to the soul? Or what is so present to the soul as the soul itself? . . . What is in the soul so intimately as the soul? But since the soul is in those things of which it thinks with love, and since in our case' [*that of Materialists*] 'its love has been and is habitually engrossed with sensible, that is to say, corporeal things, the result is that it cannot think of itself without the images of such things. From this inability to distinguish from itself

¹ *De Trinit.* x. 7.

the images of the things it has sensibly experienced, and thus see its own pure self alone, there is born to it the foul stain of error. For these images have, through the adhesive force of love, become wonderfully attached to it; and its *impurity* lies in this, that when trying to think of itself alone, it fancies itself to be that without which it would be unable to conceive itself.¹

1369. From this we see that the *confusion* of ideas which, as I have said, is always presupposed by error, proceeds from the bad disposition of the will, which does not know how to move the understanding to make the necessary distinctions, and closes the judgment while that confusion still remains. The holy Doctor goes on to anatomise with his characteristic sagacity every fibre, so to speak, of the error of Materialists thus: 'When the soul, therefore, is commanded to "know itself," let it not seek itself as though it were detached from itself, but rather let it get rid of what it has conjoined with itself. For the soul is interior, and not only more interior than these sensible things which are manifestly external, but also more than their images, which are found in a part of it, and with which the beasts also are furnished, albeit, they have no understanding—a faculty proper to the rational nature alone. But this soul, essentially interior, when sending forth its love to these, as it were, vestiges of many intentions (*in hæc quasi vestigia multarum intentionum exerit amoris affectum*), goes in a certain manner outside itself. . . . Let it therefore know its true self, and not seek this self as if it were something external. Let it fix on its lone self the intention of the will whereby it was wandering through other objects, and let it think of itself (*intentionem voluntatis, qua per alia vagabatur, statuat in semetipsam, et se cogitet*). It will thus see that there never was a time when it did not . . . know itself²; only that by loving those objects

¹ *De Trinit.* x. 7, 8. This kind of *impurity* we carry with us from birth, but it grows worse by evil habit. As a matter of fact, the rational part of man is found to proceed with faltering steps; whereas his senses are from his

earliest infancy most active, and absorb him, as it were, wholly to themselves, before his reason has come to a state in which it can hold dominion over them.

² By a *direct* knowledge, to which reflection was wanting.

together with itself, it CONFOUNDED itself with them, and joined them, so to speak, to itself. This it was that caused it to repute as identical things which were widely different.¹

1370. Now, how does S. Augustine propose to assist the inturbidated and straying reflection of Materialists, so that it may find the soul's true self, and steadily fix its eye on it? In two ways: (1) by bringing them to consider what those points are on which all men think perfectly alike, and what those upon which opinions differ, leading them to advert that while there is uncertainty in the latter points, in the former there is certainty²; (2) by calling their attention, on the one hand, to those things which it is impossible for anyone to doubt, and, on the other, to those concerning which doubts may be entertained. After laying it down that error can be found only in these latter things, he shows that the error arises simply from these things being gratuitously added to the truth.³ S. Augustine, therefore, recognises the general *consensus* of mankind, and the logical *necessity* inherent in the intellectual perception, as the two means available for the purpose of enabling a *reflection* that has gone utterly wrong to recover itself.

1371. Another consequence flowing from all these things is, that false persuasions are never so firm as those which rest on the clear truth, nor can they long continue without being disturbed by uneasiness and doubt. Hence it is that many,

¹ *De Trinit.* x. 8.

² 'Secernat (mens) quod se PUTAT, cernat quod SCIT: hoc ei remaneat, unde ne illi quidem dubitaverunt, qui aliud atque aliud corpus esse mentem putaverunt. Neque enim omnis mens aërem se esse existimat; sed aliæ ignem, aliæ cerebrum, aliæque aliud corpus, et aliud aliæ: OMNES tamen se intelligere noverunt, et esse et vivere; sed intelligere ad quod intelligunt referunt, esse autem et vivere ad se ipsas,' etc. (*De Trinit.* x. 10.)

³ 'Sed quoniam de natura mentis agitur, removeamus a consideratione nostra omnes notitias quæ capiuntur extrinsecus per sensus corporis; et ea quæ posuimus omnes mentes de se ipsis nosse certasque esse, diligentius atten-

damus. Utrum enim aëris sit vis vivendi, reminiscendi, intelligendi, volendi, cogitandi, sciendi, judicandi; an ignis, an cerebri, an sanguinis, an atomorum, an, præter usitata quatuor elementa, quinti nescio cujus corporis, an ipsius carnis nostræ compago vel temperamentum hæc efficere valeat, dubitaverunt homines; et alius hoc, alius aliud affirmare conatus est. Vivere se tamen, et meminisse, et intelligere, et velle, et cogitare, et scire, et judicare quis dubitet? . . . Non est igitur aliquid eorum; totumque illud quod se jubetur ut noverit, ad hoc pertinet ut certa sit non se esse aliquid eorum de quibus incerta est, idque solum esse se certa sit, quod solum esse se certa est' (*De Trinit.* x. 10.)

after striving for a length of time to secure a steady peace of mind by a false persuasion, but all in vain, abandon themselves at last to the belief that certainty is an impossible thing, thus ending their laborious intellectual wanderings in a melancholy scepticism.

As an example of the unsteadiness of false persuasions, I could not produce anything better than what is said by S. Augustine on the divergence or mutability of the opinions harboured by Materialists in that part in which they err. It is as follows:—

‘The whole drift of the precept which says “know thyself” is this: that the soul should make itself certain that it is none of those things about which it has uncertainty, but is that only which it indubitably knows itself to be. For the soul which thinks itself to be fire, or air, or some other corporeal thing, does so with uncertainty; and surely no one could expect it to think itself as being what it truly is in the same manner in which it thinks itself as being what it is not.¹ For, of all such things as fire, air, this or that body, this or that part or structure and complexion of body, the soul thinks by means of images presented to it by the phantasy; and, nevertheless, it does not affirm itself to be all these things together, but only one or other of them. If, however, it were one of these things, it would certainly think of that one differently from all the others, that is, not by means of a phantasm, as is the case with things which are detached from us and are touched by the bodily sense—either themselves or others similar to them—but by an interior presence, not simulated, but true² (for there is nothing more present to the soul than the soul itself); in which way, indeed, it thinks of itself as possessed of life, and memory, and understanding, and will. For it knows these things in its own self, and does not picture them as though they were outside of it and had been touched by the sense, as bodies are. Now, if the soul will not take

¹ In all this reasoning of S. Augustine we can see the distinction of the subjective from the objective, and the extra-subjective elements, in the confusion of which all Materialism origin-

ates, as we have seen (988 etc.).

² Here we see again how, according to S. Augustine, interior observation is the only means by which correct ideas of the soul can be formed.

from the thoughts of these corporeal objects any thing in order, by a fiction, to attach it to itself, and to repute it as being its own self, whatever remains to it (after the external objects of those thoughts have been removed), that, and that only, is its true self.¹

¹ *De Trinit.* x. 10.

CHAPTER II.

EPILOGUE ON THE CRITERION OF TRUTH.

1372. I shall now present in a brief summary all the points which have been discussed in this Section.

There are two kinds of knowledge—the *direct*¹ and the *reflex*. The first kind, as compared with the second, is the truth² of which all men are in possession. Reflex knowledge consists simply in developing direct knowledge, joining together its several parts, and submitting it to analysis. It is true when it faithfully corresponds to and accords with the direct; and it is false when the reflection which forms it, instead of basing itself upon and honestly accepting the depositions of the direct, chooses to invent, to create. Hence *error* is a sort of creation which man makes for himself through a wrong use of reflection.

The results of the first reflections constitute what I have called *popular knowledge*; those of subsequent reflections constitute *philosophic knowledge*. Knowledge is the more liable to error in proportion to its greater dependence on *reflection*. Consequently, philosophic is more liable to error than popular knowledge.

¹ *Direct* knowledge is composed, as I have said, first, of the *form* of human reason, or the *idea of being in general* (*ens communissimum*); next, of the *intellectual perceptions*; and then of the first ideas which man has been able to obtain through the functions of universalisation and *integration*. Should anyone prefer to exclude from the sphere of direct knowledge the ideas which are obtained through *integration*, on the ground that this function supposes a previous reflection, I would not oppose him, provided he distinctly admits that these ideas are in themselves

of an entirely new formation, and constitute a fundamental class of cognitions. This natural knowledge is not subject to error, and is the *exemplar*, the standard by means of which all other cognitions are verified and corrected.

² The idea of *being* is the same as logical *truth* taken in its most general sense. The first *ideas*, or the essences first known by us, are special *truths* or exemplars, which serve us for knowing and verifying, as also, with the aid of analysis, explicitly distinguishing from one another the various cases of things falling under them.

1373. Reflection adds *luminousness* and perfection to human knowledge. Hence philosophic knowledge, while on the one hand having the disadvantage of being very liable to error, possesses, on the other—when it seizes on the truth—a luminousness and perfection immensely greater than that of popular knowledge.

Reflection—the fount of this more luminous knowledge as well as of that which men usually understand by the word *knowledge*—is moved by the instinct and by the will ; but we may say straightway by the will, because the will always co-operates, at least by way of habits, or else negatively. Hence, according as the will is righteously or unrighteously disposed, it causes reflection to result in truth or in error.

When the will is habituated to give a wrong turn to reflection, the latter falls into a state of confusion, and no longer sees anything clearly, not even what is evident. The interior eye is darkened, and man in this condition denies even the first principles of reason.

1374. But if *direct knowledge* is the rule or criterion to which reflection must, in order to avoid error, be conformed, the question arises : Whence does this knowledge derive an authority and force of so binding a nature ?

From intellectual *evidence* ; which evidence is not a subjective fact,¹ but an evidence possessed of a force of its own, and *binding* on man precisely because it is intellectual and not sensible ; in other words, because it has an intrinsic *logical necessity*, in virtue of which man cannot help feeling in his inmost consciousness that to think contrary to it would be an impossibility.

But whence so stringent a *necessity* ? From the source of all intellectual cognitions, the *idea of being*. This *idea* absorbs in itself alone all possibilities, the union of which is exactly what we call logical *necessity* ; for whatever is, must necessarily be contained in them. Hence the conclusion, that the true and ultimate principle of *certainty* is not and cannot be anything else than the *idea of being*, which is ever-present to the human spirit, and manifests itself to it, not only as most

¹ *I.e.* does not derive its force from the thinking subject itself. —TRANSLATORS.

evident, but also as intrinsically necessary, in such a manner that outside of it nothing could be conceived. Therefore all men must conduct their reasonings in accordance with this principle, if they wish to find the truth.

1375. But do men naturally reason in conformity with this supreme criterion of truth? As regards direct knowledge, they certainly do so; but this kind of knowledge would be utterly inadequate to supply the needs of men living together in society. As to what takes place in them when they pass to reflection, is a question of merely contingent fact; and the only way to its solution is by diligently observing the history of the human race. This course may not, perhaps, seem quite philosophical to those who look upon philosophy as a thing too abstract to mix itself up with concrete facts. But, whatever may be the worth of such an opinion, I shall not refrain from giving a few hints on this point; and even though these hints were not deemed philosophical, it will be more than enough for me if they are true. I say, then, that the history of mankind presents to us a sad spectacle. Corruption of heart, perturbation of mind—behold the universal heritage of the human family. Such is man's history; and the *massa corrupta* of S. Paul (Gal. v. 9) is its theory.

'Scarcely' (says Cicero) 'are we come into this world and taken in hand, but we begin to be involved in every kind of ribaldry, and in an extreme perversity of opinions; so that it would seem as if we were sucking in error with our nurse's milk. And when we are given back to our parents, and placed under the care of instructors, we imbibe such a variety of errors that truth is displaced by vanity, and nature itself succumbs under the confirmed habits of false opinions. The poets also come in, and, by a great show of learning and wisdom, charm us so much that we greedily listen to the reading of them, read them ourselves, learn them by heart, so that our minds become quite saturated with their teachings. But when to all this there is added the multitude—that multitude which, while on the one hand it may not unfitly be called the most influential of all our teachers (*quasi*

maximus quidem magister populus), has, on the other, abandoned itself all round, and with one accord, to all vices—then indeed is it that we are vitiated to the core (*plane inficimur*) with depraved opinions, and make our life a standing contradiction to nature.¹

1376. Clearly, then, the individual would not have found in the general sense of *mankind* a sure means for rectifying his inturbidated and straying reflection. The case is, however, totally different with men placed in *Christian society*. Here each individual finds in the authority of other men (provided only he sincerely desires to know how to choose them)² a safe means by which to sustain and reassure himself when groping his way in fear and uncertainty; so that they who do not avail themselves of this means are without excuse. Truth is immovably established, not in *humanitarian*, but in *Christian society*. In *this* society, and not in any other, has been laid, to use a Scripture phrase, 'The pillar and foundation of the truth' (1 Tim. iii. 15). Only a positive divine aid could enable man's reflection to proceed on its path with certainty and security; even as only a divine virtue could instantaneously make a confirmed paralytic walk, or one who is blind see.³

1377. But was it enough, in order adequately to provide for the requirements of men, to secure the existence of truth upon this earth? No; it was also necessary to ameliorate their *will*, since it is by *voluntary* action that they have to

¹ *Tuscul. L.* iii. 1, 2. Anyone may see that this and what follows is a refutation of De Lamennais.

² This choice could not be made except by means of the light of reason, which no man ever loses, however much his reflection may have gone astray. This light would not, by itself, suffice to bring one back to the truth; not, indeed, owing to any defect in the light itself, but owing to the defect of the eye, which does not look in the right direction. What, then, ought a man to do? To associate his own light with the light of other men, to make use of what little virtue there remains to him, in order that he may find faith-

ful counsellors. Thus what assists the man who has lost his way is not his individual light alone, nor yet the light of other men alone, but it is the two lights combined. And so the individual does not seek counsel without knowing who his counsellors are—that is, he chooses them not because they are men, but on account of the *lights* which he knows them to possess.

³ According to S. Gregory the Great, the blind man whom our Blessed Lord cured signifies, not the individual, but the entire human race.—*Cæcum quippe est genus humanum.*—(*Hom. ii. in Evang.*)

adhere to that truth which, even when not heeded by them, is always before their eyes. Hence we find that Christianity has led men to the truth by correcting their vices. It made them *good*, and, as a result, they became *enlightened*; culture and civilisation sprang up from the root of virtue. For really doing good to men, therefore, it is but a small thing to point out in what the criterion of certainty consists; one must furthermore inculcate to them the necessity of a *pure love of truth*, and implant that love in their hearts.

Hence S. Augustine said: 'He alone is the true Teacher, who has power, not only to impress upon us the species, and to infuse the light, but also to give VIRTUE to the heart of his hearers.'

SECTION VII.

ON THE FORCE OF À PRIORI REASONING.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT THE AUTHOR MEANS BY À PRIORI REASONING.

1378. I have distinguished the *form* of knowledge from *knowledge* taken in a strict sense,¹ and have shown that the first is innate in us, but the second acquired.

Knowledge in the strict sense is first *direct* and then *reflex*. That which is reflex of the first reflection—namely, *popular* knowledge—adds to the direct the notion of new beings.² That, on the contrary, which we acquire through ulterior reflection—namely, the *philosophic*—does not, in fact, reveal any new objects; but it throws greater light on those already known, and intensifies our persuasion of the truth, thus giving us a contentment which is, as it were, a little foretaste

¹ The philosophical vocabulary is not yet perfectly fixed, so that, in order to make oneself understood, one must sometimes use the same word in different significations. Nor am I sure that the limited nature of language, and the affinity which exists between ideas, will ever permit of anything else being done. When, however, a writer uses a word in different meanings, it is his duty to state in which of those meanings he employs it in each case.

² These beings are the cause of the universe and, in general, the invisible powers. The knowledge we acquire of them, however, as I have already demonstrated, is of the negative kind only. Under the word *knowledge* I have sometimes included the *form* of knowledge; here I add the clause *in a strict sense*, to

intimate that I am using that word to signify a knowledge obtained through some judgment. Men do not generally speak of the *form* of reason as distinguished from everything else, or, if they speak of it, they prefer to call it the *light of reason*. And though the etymology of the word *intellect* (*intus legere*) shows that in the common estimation the faculty of understanding implies something essentially understood, nevertheless this 'first understood' is not, so far as I am aware, designated in common parlance by the name of *knowledge*. This may serve to account for that kind of universal persuasion, which we find also in antiquity (excepting the few philosophers who rose above the common), that all knowledge is acquired through the senses.

of the beatitude that will be produced by the full and open manifestation of truth itself.

The knowledge—whether direct or reflex of first reflection—which terminates in new objects, may appropriately be called *fundamental*,¹ inasmuch as whatever reflex knowledge one may afterwards acquire is, in substance, therein contained. Hence, by simply analysing the fundamental knowledge we shall find it easy to discriminate between what is *à priori* and what *à posteriori* in human knowledge generally.

1379. The *fundamental*, like all other knowledge, is made up of two elements: (1) the idea of being, and (2) modes or determinations of being. The idea of being, by absorbing in itself all possibility, is the source of whatever there is of necessary and universal in human cognitions. Now *necessity* and *universality* are precisely the characteristics of *à priori* knowledge (304–309). Therefore, whatever *à priori* element can be found in any cognition is included in the idea of being taken universally, and the diverse special cognitions partake of it solely because this idea is commingled with them (408 etc.).

Hence that knowledge which is composed of the idea of being taken universally, and of determinations or modes of being, is not wholly *à priori*, but mixed, nor does it actually exist until its two constituent elements are present and joined together. Consequently its formation depends on sensible perceptions, and a first intellectual attention turned on them, which is the same as saying that its existence is acquired *à posteriori*. To find, therefore, *pure à priori* knowledge we must ascend to the idea of being itself, and confine our thought to it exclusively.

1380. It must, however, be observed that the two expressions, *à priori* and *à posteriori*, appear by their etymology to have been invented for indicating a reasoning rather than a simple intellection; for the first of them signifies 'An argument drawn from that which goes before,' and the second 'An argument drawn from that which comes after.' By that which

¹ The *fundamental knowledge* is, therefore, composed (1) of *perceptions*, which contain a *positive* knowledge, and (2) of *reasonings*, which give a *negative* knowledge.

'goes before' was generally meant the *cause* of a thing, and by that which 'comes after,' the *effect*. Hence the reasonings which proceeded from cause to effect were said to be *à priori*, and *à posteriori* those which ascended from effect to cause. I take the phrase *à priori knowledge* in a more restricted sense—that is, I mean by it that knowledge which terminates, not in the cause—efficient or otherwise—of the thing reasoned about, but purely and simply in the *formal cause of knowledge* and of reason, or in what is deduced solely from it; for this *formal cause* is the *first fact*, anterior to all others in the order of our cognitions, and it is because of *it* that *à priori* knowledge, taken in this restricted sense, has the characteristics of necessity and universality.¹

But is there, in this sense, any *à priori* reasoning? And if there is, how far is it possible for us to go with it? Such are the investigations which I propose to make in this Section, and to which the doctrines already expounded have prepared the way.

¹ The phrase *à priori knowledge* was taken by Kant in a sense similar to this, as I have pointed out in note 1 to n. 306. There is, however, some difference between Kant and myself in the definition of *à priori* knowledge, and I must, for the sake of clearness, indicate where that difference precisely lies. According to Kant, what distinguishes *à priori* from *à posteriori* knowledge are the characteristics of *necessity* and *universality*. I also assign to *à priori* knowledge these two characteristics; but I derive them from an antecedent one, which constitutes the essence of this knowledge. In fact, Kant finds *à priori* knowledge in the *forms* which our spirit adds from within its subjective self in the intellectual perceptions of sensi-

ble things. Hence his *à priori* knowledge is, properly speaking, acquired, although emanating from our spirit. His *forms* are only so many particular powers or activities of the spirit itself, and not anything objective—*i.e.* truly *understood* by it. I, on the contrary, maintain that our spirit *ab initio*, and by its very nature, *understands* something—*i.e.* *being in general* and all that is therein contained, not, however, so as to *advert* to it, or distinctly perceive its various characteristics and properties. Thus, while in the Kantian system our intellectual development is made to begin by an accidental *act* of the spirit, I place the starting-point of that development in an *object essentially understood* before any accidental acts are formed.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE STARTING-POINT OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE ACCORDING TO SOME THINKERS OF THE GERMAN SCHOOL.

ARTICLE I.

Object of this chapter.

1381. *À priori* reasoning, then, is that which has for its subject-matter the idea of *being taken universally*, and into the making of which no other element is introduced (1378 etc.). It is termed *à priori* because this idea is the first, and does not depend on any other.

Now, before entering on the difficult inquiry, 'What reasoning can we institute upon this pure and universal idea, and how far can such reasoning take us?' it may be well to confirm by new evidence the title which I claim for this same idea of being considered the starting-point of all human cognitions.

I will therefore defend the *primacy* of the idea of being against those very subtle systems which are broached nowadays, and all of which have originated in the speculations of studious Germany.

I have already shown that the multitudinous forms of Kant are, every one of them, radically vitiated with the fatal defect of being *subjective*, and that on examining the use for which they respectively serve we find them ultimately resolving themselves into the one *true* form, essentially *objective*. Indeed, they are only so many particular modes which this one form assumes through receiving various, though still general, determinations. They seem to be knowledge of the *pure* kind, but they are not, since each has in it something restrictive and partial (368-384).

ARTICLE II.

The principal difference between the forms which some modern writers have assigned to the human intelligence, and that one form which is claimed for it by the author.

1382. Other writers after Kant have reduced the primitive forms of the intelligent spirit to a smaller number than his ; and I must show against these also that there cannot be in it more than one form.

But, before doing this, I think it right again to call the reader's attention to the characteristic difference which exists between all the *forms* proposed by the thinkers of whom I speak—men, it must be acknowledged, of great ability, especially the Germans—and that *one form* for which I contend. In dealing with the question, 'What is the principle of human knowledge ?' they, one and all, have placed this principle in the *act* of the spirit, and not in its *object*, and have dwelt on the analysis of the former much more than in that of the latter. Their mistake arose in great part from not understanding the nature of the human faculties, and particularly of the intellective faculty. I have endeavoured to establish the fact that the nature of a *faculty* consists 'in a permanent conjunction either with a *term* or with an *object*.' And I have said, that when this conjunction is with an *object*, and this object essential to the faculty in such a manner that it draws the subject to the act which terminates in it (the object itself), then the object takes the name of *form* of the faculty ; and such is exactly the case with our Intellect (1005 etc.). Accordingly, I found the nature of the intellective faculty to consist essentially in a *primitive act* terminating in an *object* which is absolutely necessary to it, and constitutes its *form* (the form of *truth*). Likewise I found that, with respect to that object, the intelligent subject stands merely in the position of a recipient, so that its attitude towards it does not depend on its own spontaneous motion, but is determined by necessity ; nor, again, does the act by which the object is thus contemplated affect or modify the latter in any way whatever.

It will thus be seen that I began by the analysis of the

object essential to our Intellect. That such is the only proper course to pursue in this matter was well understood by the ancients; but the moderns have not, as far as I know, risen so high, and have, instead, begun only by the *act* of the spirit, not perceiving that this act must necessarily be preceded by the object, and that the nature of an act is known through its object, and not that of the object through the act.

ARTICLE III.

On the starting-point of the philosophy of Kant.

1383. Let us, then, take a brief survey of these systems; and that the train of our ideas may not be interrupted, let us commence by resuming our observations on Kant.

The fact of this philosopher imagining that everything which our spirit conceives must be vested with *forms* by the spirit itself, shows that in his inquiry he had risen a step higher than his modern predecessors.

Des Cartes had started from the minor premiss of a syllogism, and, unawares to himself, assumed the major (979, etc.).

Locke assumed, without any explanation, even more than Des Cartes. Not understanding the nature of mixed knowledge enough to distinguish in it the formal from the material part, he straightway took the second for his whole and sole starting-point. Indeed, of the first or formal part he did not speak any more than if it had no existence.¹

¹ In the chronological order of our cognitions, we first advert to their *matter* and then to their *form*, because the chronological order of our *advertences* runs inversely to that of our *direct knowledge*. Hence the strongest of the arguments adduced by Locke against innate ideas is founded purely on a defective observation: 'Since,' says Locke, 'no proposition can be innate unless the ideas about which it is be innate, this will be to suppose all our ideas of colours, sounds, tastes, figure, etc., innate, than which there cannot be anything more opposite to reason and experience' (B. i. ch. ii. 18). To this I reply, in the first place, that the absurdity which Locke would fain see

in the admitting of any proposition as innate in us is certainly not made out by his words, because not all propositions are about colours, sounds, and other sensible things, but many of them are wholly super-sensible. In the second place (and this is what concerns us here), the ideas of sensible things contain not sensible elements only, but also an intellectual element, which entirely escaped his attention; and this purely intellectual element is the *form* of all ideas. He therefore started from the *matter* of ideas, overlooking the *form*, and gratuitously assuming it through the whole course of his argument.

Condillac exhibits to us his statue as engaged in reasoning from the very instant it begins to receive sensations, not considering that all reasoning necessarily presupposes the possession of some intellectual principle. He also, therefore, starts from the *material part* of knowledge, which absorbs his attention so completely that the thought of the *formal part*, and consequently of the necessity of accounting for it, never occurs to him.

Kant, stimulated to reflection by the productions of English, but especially of Scottish, authors who came after Locke, noticed very distinctly the higher or formal element contained in all our cognitions, and felt bound to explain how it came there. His starting-point was, therefore, more elevated than that of any other modern philosopher.

1384. But in seeking for the explanation in question he, as I have before observed, contented himself with having recourse to the *act* and the *nature of the intelligent spirit*, whereas he ought to have passed further on, till he reached the *essential object* thereof. Owing to this defect, instead of discovering the *supreme form* of human reason, he stopped at certain inferior forms, dependent on it, impure, restrictive, subjective. He said, therefore, that our spirit in its cognitive acts operated according to laws proper to itself, and conformed to these laws whatever things it conceived. To make matters worse, he based his whole argument on *analogies*¹ taken from sensations. In a word, the principle on which he built his system was simply the following: 'What is presented to the senses must take that mode which is determined by our sensitivity, in accordance with certain dispositions of the spirit; by parity of reasoning, therefore, what is presented to the understanding must take that mode which is determined by concepts belonging to the spirit itself.'²

Hence it would follow that things in themselves (*noumena*)

¹ How many errors proceed from an inconsiderate application of the law of analogy!

² Discoursing on motion, he speaks thus: 'In order that the representation' (*i.e.* the *intellectual conception*) 'of motion may become experience' (*i.e.*

be *perceived* with the *senses*) 'it is necessary that the determination of the *object* should be framed according to the representation which is in the subject' (*Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft*, ch. iv).

remain absolutely unknown to us, because the experience of the senses gives us nothing but *phenomena* or appearances, and the understanding gives us nothing but an *ideal order* which does not present any being in itself—that is, any *real* being.

This our absolute ignorance of things in themselves is insisted upon by Kant in many parts of his writings. See, for instance, how he concludes his treatise entitled *Fundamental Elements of the Metaphysics of Physical Science*: 'Wherefore our metaphysical inquiry about bodies ends in the void, and consequently in the incomprehensible. Such is, to say it once more, the fate of reason—a fate it meets with whenever, by going back to principles, it attempts to discover the first foundations of things. In fact, whilst on the one hand reason is so constituted that it cannot comprehend things except as determined¹ by certain conditions, on the other hand, and in consequence of this very law, reason can neither stop at that which is determined by conditions,² nor fathom that which is wholly exempt from determinations. Hence, whenever a misguided curiosity impels reason to try to comprehend the absolute whole of all conditions, there is nothing left for it but to withdraw from the objects into itself, in order to search and determine, instead of the last limits of things, the last limits of its own powers when abandoned to itself.'³

1385. But although Kant had so clearly professed his absolute ignorance of *noumena*, it seems that many did not

¹ I have shown, on the contrary, that our intellect is so constituted as essentially to conceive what is perfectly indeterminate.

² Is not this a manifest sign that our reason has the notion of the *unconditioned*?

³ 'Und so endigt sich die metaphysische Körperlehre mit dem Leeren und eben darum Unbegreiflichen, worin sie einerlei Schicksal mit allen übrigen Versuchen der Vernunft hat, wenn sie im Zurückgehen zu Principien denersten Gründen der Dinge nachstrebt, da, weil es ihre Natur so mit sich bringt, niemals etwas anders, als so fern es unter gegebenen Bedingungen bestimmt

ist, zu begreifen, folglich sie weder beim Bedingten stehen bleiben, noch sich das Unbedingte fasslich machen kann, ihr, wenn Missbegierde sie auffordert, das absolute Ganze aller Bedingungen zu fassen, nichts übrig bleibt, als von den Gegenständen auf sich selbst zurückzukehren, um anstatt der letzten Grenze der Dinge, die letzte Grenze ihres eigenen sich selbst überlassenen Vermögens zu erforschen und zu bestimmen' (*Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft*, 3 Auflage: Leipzig, 1800, p. 126, Conclusion.—Sämmtliche Werke: Leipzig, 3 vols., ed. 1867, p. 462).

properly understand him. Certain it is that some of those who came after him, instead of resting satisfied with the simple admission of a region inaccessible to man's knowledge, peremptorily denied the existence of anything outside the sphere of human experience; and much was said of 'The *great nothing* that lay beyond the boundaries of the knowable,' as of a sublime discovery. I say a *sublime discovery*, because in Germany it is, unfortunately, too much the case that phrases enveloped in a cloud of mystery and obscurity take the place of solid philosophic learning. Others seemed bent on doing the contrary. Opposed alike to seeing man fettered by restrictions, and to its being said, or at least left open to doubt, that there might be a region hermetically closed against human knowledge, they strove to penetrate into that region also, by proposing a system in which everything was made to emanate from the human spirit itself. Kant did not go quite so far as this, for although he drew a vast deal from the human spirit, he nevertheless ended by declaring that *possibly* there was, beyond all that, something which this spirit could not give. So, indeed, thought he, though forsooth it is passing strange that he could have discovered such a secret¹ and communicated it to the world. If neither he nor—if his theory be true—any man had ever been able to gain any knowledge whatever of the regions to which these *noumena* belonged, how could he have conceived even a suspicion of their existence? The fact is that Kant, as I have observed elsewhere, is wont to speak, not as one of us plain mortals, but like one of the Genii who, scanning from on high the wretchedly narrow bounds within which this unlucky nature of ours is inexorably inclosed, derides or pities its poverty and misfortune!

1386. Here I beg leave to state more clearly than I did

¹ How, in fact, could he even give a name to these *noumena* unless he had the concept of them? How could he know that the *phenomena* did not embrace the whole, if he had not the idea of the whole, an idea which is essentially universal, and absorbs in itself all possibilities? Therefore the distinction drawn by Kant between *noumena* and

phenomena proves that our understanding is not limited to *phenomena*, nor to the Kantian forms alone, but embraces all the possible. A man who was truly limited to *phenomena* would not know that there *might be* such things as *noumena*. It would be impossible for him to conceive, not only their existence, but also their possibility.

before my reason for saying that Kant set out from a subordinate point only, and fell short of the true principle of all philosophy. I have shown already that this arose from his defective analysis of human cognitions, and as a consequence from his not having a correct idea of their different species. Now if we reflect well on this cause we shall see that it contains also the origin of the other defect of the Kantian theory—the declaring the *noumena* entirely beyond the reach of our knowledge.

The French Encyclopedists of the last century would not admit of any degrees in human knowledge, and professed to believe that between *comprehending* and *not knowing* there could be no middle term. It was a vain quibble. As I have already shown, between *comprehending*—*i.e. knowing perfectly*—and *not knowing at all*, there undoubtedly is a *middle kind of knowledge*, which is itself susceptible of gradations. Any one who takes note of what happens in himself will find that sometimes he knows a thing up to a certain point, though not perfectly. Voltaire, and many others of that stamp, inspired by hatred to Christianity, abused this their ignorance, real or affected, for the purpose of insinuating that God, because incomprehensible, was an object so absolutely unknown that no sensible man could afford to waste his time in speaking or thinking of Him. Kant felt (perhaps unawares to himself) the influence of these writers, and, owing to a like defect of observation, denied the possibility of our having any knowledge of *noumena*; in other words, of substances.

1387. A glance at the degrees noticeable in human knowledge will be enough to dispel this error.

Substance is 'that act by which the abstract specific essence exists in a given being' (657).

In order, then, that we may have knowledge of a substance we must think (1) a being, and (2) its abstract specific essence.

Now the *essence* of a thing may be known by us in different modes and degrees which I have elsewhere explained (646–656); and according as these modes and degrees in which we know that essence vary, so likewise do the modes and degrees of our knowledge of it.

What we know of a thing is called its *known essence*, and it is of this alone that we are able to speak.¹ Sometimes all that we know of a thing is a *relation* which it has with other things known to us—a relation whereby we distinguish it indeed from all the rest, but at the same time know it only in that negative manner of which I have spoken at length (1230–1234 etc.).

Thus we see that Kant (1) did not understand the nature of *being in general*, which causes us to know things *objectively*, that is, in themselves, in their essences; (2) he did not observe that there is, besides what is presented to us by sensations, another means by which we can both know the *determinations* of beings, and have an unmistakable sign of their subsistence. That means consists in the application of reasoning to sensible things; in other words, in the use of the principle of causation, which is nothing but the same idea of being in general (570). Seeing that this principle gave us no representations or positive qualities of the thing inferred through it, he supposed it to have no validity outside the sphere of phenomena. He overlooked the obvious fact that the same principle is no less *objective* than *being* itself, of which it is an application; and that, therefore, when by means of it we infer as *necessary* the subsistence of a being which does not actually fall under our perception, the inference is valid, and the negative idea or the relation perceived by us is quite enough to determine that being in such a manner that we can clearly distinguish it from all others.

ARTICLE IV.

On the starting-point of the philosophy of Fichte.

1388. Fichte, a disciple of Kant, pretended to draw everything from the human subject (*Ego*), and boldly took it upon himself to declare that nothing subsisted beyond what he could trace to this one source. Hence the refusal of the founder of the Critical Philosophy to acknowledge this as his

¹ For this reason, when, in speaking of bodies, I wished to indicate that part which is unknown to us, I called it, not *body*, but *corporeal principle*.

doctrine, and the declaration he made to the effect that this clever pupil of his had misunderstood him.

Kant had divided the activity of the human spirit into a number of forms or partial activities; he had also (I cannot say whether advertently or not) attributed to thought some passivity, and had excluded from its range the *noumena* or things as they are in themselves. Fichte insisted on reconcentrating the action of thought; he considered thought in its unity, and would have it to be all pure activity. In this system the activity of the *Ego* was the starting-point, the middle and the end of that philosophy which has received the name of *Transcendental Idealism*.

1389. The *Ego*, according to Fichte, posits, or, what amounts to the same, creates itself. But this primal act which the *Ego* makes in positing itself is both one and complex. The *Ego* does not posit itself without at the same time positing the opposite of itself—*i.e.* the *non-Ego*. That identical act which renders it conscious of itself renders it also conscious of the external world, and of all things falling under the denomination of *non-Ego*; or, to speak more accurately, that act which renders it conscious of the non-self renders it conscious of itself. Now to be conscious of self is, in this system, the same as to exist. Prior to self-consciousness, therefore, the *Ego* does not exist, has not yet posited or created itself, for its very essence lies in this consciousness.¹

But, according to Fichte, this act of self-consciousness which constitutes the *Ego* is not done except by the act whereby the external world or, in general, the *non-Ego* is known. Therefore by the same primal act whereby the *Ego* feels itself, it also feels, or, to use Fichte's way of speaking, thinks, posits the *non-Ego*.² The *Ego* and the *non-Ego* is all

¹ Fichte's error here consists in not having observed that the primal act by which the *Ego* exists, and in general, the primal act by which anything that has a beginning exists, though an act of the thing, is an act created by a cause anterior to the thing. To say that a thing has begun to exist by its act means simply that it has been created by God in act. This defect of the philosophy of Fichte gave occasion afterwards to

the system of Schelling.

² The confusion arose from this, that in the acts of our spirit there is a passive as well as an active element, as I have already shown (662 etc.). Fichte observed the *active element* and reduced all to this alone, forgetting to consider the *passive*, even as some of the Sensists had considered the *passive element* and passed over the *active*.

that man knows. Now the *non-Ego* does not exist before the *Ego*, but simultaneously with it. That same activity of thought, therefore, which posits the *Ego*, posits also the *non-Ego*. Consequently the existence of all thinkable things flows from the primal activity of the *Ego*. One of these thinkable things is God, and He accordingly belongs to the *non-Ego*. Hence the strange, the monstrous announcement by which Fichte one day promised his audience that he would, in the next lecture, 'undertake to create God!' Thus did the pride of a created intelligence give utterance to its last expression in the most concise and most elegant formula ever suggested by the malice of the fallen Angel. In these few words is contained the very quintessence of self-contradiction, a destruction at once necessary and impossible, an annihilation ever present and yet never accomplished. Man, finding he cannot dispense with the recognition of a God, that is, of an Infinite Being infinitely superior to himself and the source of all, rushes at the mad idea of making this God, this Infinite Being, emanate from himself, and by an essential lie gives himself out as the creator of Him. Not that I wish to attribute to Fichte personally this extreme of malice, which belongs only to the principle of evil; my object is simply to point out the import of his words, which would for ever remain a frightful monument of the age in which they were invented, if, together with them, there did not also go down to posterity the knowledge of the levity with which at that period, without serious reflection, without any intimate conviction, the most portentous extravagances were uttered.

1390. Reinhold, finding that in Kant's philosophy there did not appear to be any one principle from which all its parts could be seen to flow, so as to form a harmonious whole, and thus entitle it truly to the name of *system*, had, by way of supplying that deficiency, taken for his starting-point the fact of consciousness. But the expression, *fact of consciousness*, contained many ambiguities; hence those interminable disputes to which it gave rise. In fact, one might, for example, argue thus: 'To think the fact of consciousness is the same as to think of what takes place in our consciousness.' Sup-

posing, then, for the sake of argument, that the thought of the fact of consciousness is the first act of our spirit, will it be true to say that we, by the first act of our spirit, have *started* from that fact? By no means; for in reality, instead of *starting from*, we have *terminated in* it. Therefore, said Fichte, very justly, the first act of our spirit is anterior to the fact of consciousness. Therefore philosophy ought to begin, not with the *fact of consciousness*, but with the *activity* of thought reflecting on itself—*i.e.* on one's own consciousness.

Such, then, was the *primum philosophicum* which Fichte considered preferable to, because higher than that proposed by Reinhold.

1391. But there was evidently an ambiguity here. The starting-point of *reasoning* is one thing, and the starting-point of the *human spirit* is another. Undoubtedly reasoning must start from the fact of consciousness, because reasoning, especially the philosophical, does not begin from what man knows by *direct* knowledge, but from what he *advert*s to, or knows that he knows. Now the chronological order of *advertences* or reflections proceeds, as I have often said, inversely to that of *direct cognitions*. Man reflects first on the fact of his consciousness, and then on the act by which he so reflects. This reflective act is, therefore, *adverted to* posteriorly, though it *exists* anteriorly to the advertence of the fact of consciousness. Thus the first thing adverted to by the philosopher who meditates on his own self is the fact of consciousness. This is, therefore, the starting-point of reasoning. But a time comes when the philosopher asks himself the question: 'How did I observe the fact of my consciousness?' And he then answers: 'By reflecting on it.' Consequently this reflex act is a starting-point of thought more elevated than the reflex act by which the fact of consciousness became known.

1392. I beg the reader to note that I have said 'a starting-point of *thought*,' and not 'a starting-point of the *human spirit*.' This distinction escaped the notice of Fichte. He started from 'the reflection of thought on itself' as from the

primal and radical act capable of accounting for all the facts of the human spirit. Hence he reduced everything to thought, and, moreover, confounded thought with *feeling*; whereas the two are most widely dissimilar, as I believe I have fully proved, and this shows that the baneful plant of Sensism has struck its roots deep even into Transcendental Idealism. Had Fichte not made this confusion he would have expressed the starting-point of the human spirit, not by the formula, 'the activity of thought reflecting on itself,' but by the formula, 'the activity of thought exercised on the feeling we have of ourselves.' And he would then have seen that the spirit could not be described as starting from the second of these activities, for the simple reason that the *feeling* must exist antecedently to the *act of thought* which reflects on it. On the other hand, by no amount of ingenuity will it ever be possible to save the first of these two formulas from being a contradiction in terms; for by saying 'the act of thought reflecting on itself,' that formula makes the reflecting thought identical with the thought reflected upon—that is, it concentrates and confounds the *passive* and the *active* into one sole essence, or rather it makes the passive active, and *vice versa*; which is a palpable contradiction.

1393. To this intrinsic contradiction involved in the fundamental principle of Fichte I attribute in great part the fierce opposition made to his system, and to meet which he, most acute though he was, could not bethink himself of anything better than the following: 'To grasp the true nature of the primitive act of thought from which he had started, one must be possessed of a peculiar sense, which nature did not give to all; those, therefore, who were not gifted with this sense could not understand his philosophy.' Verily the making of a reply like this is tantamount to giving oneself up to a kind of philosophical despair. I do not, however, mean to deny that it is extremely difficult for us to fix our mental gaze on the *first act of reflection* we ever made; on the contrary, I maintain that Fichte himself was not successful in this, or, to say better, that having caught a glimpse of the act in question he failed to observe its genuine nature with

the attention which was necessary. Hence his strange opinion about the creative force of such act, and, as a consequence, the tendency of his philosophy to arouse in those who embrace it an enthusiasm which is not, as enthusiasm ought to be, a thrill of pure joy arising from the vision of truth, but a mad presumption which they feel through believing themselves possessed of a certain unheard-of power, the play of their intellectual imagination in league with that greed of usurped greatness which is ever vitiating the inner depths of fallen humanity.

Had Fichte been truly cognisant of the nature of *reflection*, he would have perceived that no act reflects on itself, but only on a pre-existing act, which thus becomes its object. Consider any of your reflex acts you please: you will find that by it you reflect on another act, which may also, in its turn, be reflex; and the same must be said of other reflex acts following in succession. Now the series of these acts cannot be protracted *ad infinitum*: it must necessarily stop somewhere; and if you retrace each of the steps you have made up to a given point in the series, you will again find yourself, of necessity, brought back to an act of reflection which was the first of its kind, and the object of which must have been a *direct* act of thought.

Now a direct act of thought may be of two species: (1) *intuition*, (2) *perception*. *Perception* is an act of thought [a judgment, TR.] by which we, the *one human subject* (1042), join together two things of which we have experience, namely, the corporeal feeling and the intuition of being in general. These two things, then—the intuition of being in general and corporeal feeling—are the basis of all, and therefore exist antecedently to every act of *reflection*. Their union, effected by our *radical activity* (1042), gives us *perception* pure and simple; and it is only on the perception thus formed that our power of *reflection* begins to operate. But this analysis was omitted by Fichte; and I shall now state what it was, in my opinion, that led him astray.

1394. When I make an act of thought, I know indeed the object in which that act terminates; but the act itself

remains unknown to me. In order that I may have knowledge of that act, I must turn my reflection on it, make it the object of another act of thought ; but then the second reflex act will again remain unknown to me. No matter how often this operation may be repeated, the result will, and always must be, the same ; so that we may lay it down as a law (and a very important law it is) of our manner of knowing, that 'Any act whatever of our understanding gives us knowledge of the object in which it terminates, but not of its own self.'

This may suggest the following question : 'Have we, then, no *consciousness* of the acts with which objects are cognised by us ?' In reply, I must call attention to the fact that there is a great difference between having *consciousness* of a cognitive act and having simply a *feeling* of it. To be *conscious* is to know our act as our own—that is to say, to know the act, and at the same time to know that we are its authors. Now this knowledge we cannot have except by means of another act by which we reflect on what takes place within us. On the other hand, we never perform any act without having the *feeling* of it ; but feeling is a blind thing. Nevertheless, to most men it seems impossible to persuade themselves that they ever make an act without being also conscious thereof. The reason is because they usually find that, as soon as an act has taken place within them, they can immediately turn their *reflection* on and advert to it—or at least they think they can ; and in the meantime this internal act, whereby they *reflect* and advert, escapes their notice. Hence they are apt to believe that the act of which I am speaking is adverted to and known through itself, and not through another act superadded to it ; whereas of itself it is neither known nor adverted to, although they can, or think they can, render it both the one and the other whenever they please. Now Fichte saw very clearly this common error, and, in his desire to avoid it, fell into the opposite extreme. He did not content himself with saying that the act in question was not reflected on and adverted to, but denied its existence altogether ; and hence he attributed to reflection

the power of producing it—nay, attempted to identify it with reflection itself.

1395. I hold, on the contrary, that every act of our spirit exists in us even before it is known or reflected on; but it exists purely as *felt*. Consequently in every act of the intelligent spirit there is an *idea* and there is a *feeling*. The *object* seen is that which is illumined, and it is called *idea*; the *act* itself, by which an object becomes known, is a blind feeling, and nothing more. Now, nothing is known except through an idea. So long, therefore, as man has *feelings* only, he does not really *know* anything; and, speaking in particular of the state of man anterior to his reflecting on himself, it is, as I have so often said, a state which cannot be observed. It seems, therefore, to be a mere non-existence, whereas it is only a state unknown to the human subject. Hence Fichte, confounding *non-knowing* with *non-existing*, declared that the *Ego*, by a peculiar kind of reflection, posited both itself and the *non-Ego*. Nor is it of avail to say that the essence of the *Ego* consists in knowing, in thinking; for the *Ego* is not, originally, a thought of itself, but a *feeling* only (1195, 1196); and it was to making one of two such immensely different things as *thought* and *feeling* that Fichte owed his strange and profound errors. And though the *Ego*, because of its intellectual faculty, has also an intellectual feeling, it nevertheless does not, with this feeling, terminate in itself, but in universal being. But this elementary thought can in no way be taken for the reflection of Fichte, since it has nothing reflex in it, and constitutes the immovable and perpetual part of man. Here, however, Fichte seems to have come somewhat near the truth, and to have caught a faint glimpse of it when enunciating the excellent proposition, 'That whilst thoughts are transient, there is in man a part which contemplates immutably.'

ARTICLE V.

On the starting-point of the philosophy of Schelling.

1396. As we have just seen, Fichte's *primum philosophicum* 'The activity of thought reflecting on itself'—was plainly

an error. In the human subject (*Ego*), before the existence of any determinate thought, there is the existence of feeling, the substantial feeling of itself. This subject can therefore very well exist, radically, prior to making any reflection on itself, and simply by that direct act whereby it feels itself both as animal and as intuiting being. Of this error of Fichte Schelling seems to have been partially aware; and, in order to correct it, he proposed to substitute for Fichte's 'Activity of thought' an 'Activity consisting of pure feeling.' This latter activity, then, was for him the starting-point of the human spirit, and he dignified it by the imposing title of *The Absolute*, drawing all things from it much in the same way as Fichte had drawn them from his thinking activity. But although attributing to it the production of Fichte's *Ego* as well as *non-Ego*, he dissented from Fichte as to these two things being mutually opposed—in fact, as to their being different things at all. He maintained that there was a common root or germ in which the *Ego* and *non-Ego* were perfectly identified; hence he called his system the system of *Absolute Identity*. In this last root or germ of all things he placed the mystery of life, giving to this primitive and radical life the appellation of *dynamic*, *i.e.* consisting of a primitive force divested of all limits. For the *Ego* of Fichte he appears to have substituted the term *ideal*, and for the *non-Ego* the term *real*. The primitive and infinite *Ego* of Schelling, therefore, harmonises and creates, in and from itself, the *ideal* and the *real*, thus producing what, to his thinking, is a sublime and marvellous trinity in unity.¹

¹ Fichte had said that the *Ego*, by the identical act with which it posited or created itself, posited also or created the external world or the *non-Ego*. Schelling observed that it was possible to conceive an act of the *Ego* divested of *objects*, and that this was the proper starting-point of philosophy. Now that act is a *feeling*, and not a *thought*, for feeling differs from thought precisely in this: that it has no *objects*, and, as I have said, is one and simple (488 etc.). The error of Schelling consists in ascribing to this primal act

of feeling a greater activity than belongs to it. It is like the error of Fichte, only that Fichte exaggerated the activity of *reflection*, and Schelling that of *feeling*. Let us hear Schelling himself:—

'It is clear,' he says, 'that the spirit cannot, as such, have consciousness of itself except by *raising itself* above all that is *objective*. But, by isolating itself from all *objects*, the spirit no longer finds itself.'

In this first proposition, which Schelling gives as self-evident, his

1397. Before proceeding further I must show the reason why Schelling imagined an *Ego* without limits, infinite. Fichte

whole system is contained and assumed as a tree in its germ. He assumes that our spirit, by separating itself from all its objects and remaining pure *subject*, has raised itself higher than it was before. But this, I contend, was a point to be proved, not to be assumed. If the *subject* were nobler than all its *objects* we might certainly say, in some way, that its concentration into itself was an *ascending*; but if amongst the *objects* of its thoughts there were some greater and higher than itself, then to abandon these in order to remain with itself alone would be rather a *descending*. Now my firm belief is, not only that the latter is the case, but that the perfect clearness which Schelling claims for his proposition is all on the opposite side. I believe that the *object of our understanding* is always essentially more noble than the *subject* which perceives it, and that consequently to remove from us all the objects of the understanding is to reduce us to a state of absolute ignorance, to a state of mere feeling, where our activity is far inferior to what it was before. And with regard to taking that pure subject which is found in us by a mental abstraction as a ground for inferring the real existence of a primal and absolute subject, I would observe that the rule of *analogy* on which this argument proceeds is very fallacious, and that to adopt such mode of reasoning is like taking a fatal leap, since it is an attempt to throw oneself from the *psychological* order into the wide sea of *ontology*.

'But,' continues Schelling, 'this action, by which the spirit detaches itself from all objects, cannot be explained otherwise than by the *determination* which the spirit gives to itself. The spirit determines itself to act, and in determining itself it acts.'

This affirmation also, which our author puts forward with such confidence as evidently true, totters on all sides. Why could not our spirit be determined by a foreign force instead of determining itself? Why could it not, in that its first motion, be passive or receptive instead of being active? Is it not an absurdity to say that the spirit, which is supposed at first per-

fectly inactive, and even non-existent, does, without any sufficient reason, determine itself? Nay, as it is pretended—posit, create itself? Can the negative produce the positive? Can naught produce something? Schelling goes on:—

'This is an upward impulse which the spirit gives to itself in order to rise above the finite. It annihilates to itself all that is finite, and, having done this, it contemplates itself in that *positive absolute* which survives.'

It would be necessary to demonstrate that, when our spirit has cast away from itself all finite objects, the infinite presents itself to it. The fact, on the contrary, is, that finite objects are the only ones of which our spirit has positive ideas; if, therefore, these objects were cast away, it would remain divested of all knowledge. Schelling's way of arguing resembles that of a person who sought to prove that by putting out all the candles in a room at night the full light of day would be obtained.

'That determination' (it is again Schelling who speaks) 'which the spirit gives to itself is called *will*. The spirit *wills*, and it is *free*. No foundation can be assigned to its volition, since this action is *will* precisely because it is done absolutely.'

This is curious. Man *wills freely*, but does not know what he wills, because there are no *objects* to his volition! We have here again the same wild hypothesis that man, without any sufficient reason, determines himself to his primal act in such a way as to be *absolutely and solely active* without any passivity whatever. It could be proved, on the contrary, that to the primal act of his feeling, the act by which he is, man is drawn and determined passively and necessarily. But a mere assertion, such as Schelling has here contented himself with, is sufficiently answered by citing the well-known aphorism: *Quod gratis asseritur, gratis negatur*.

Then from man's primal act, as above described, Schelling deduces all at once the Practical Reason, the Intelligence, the Moral Law, and Truth.

had placed the *Ego* in contraposition to the *non-Ego*, and defined the latter as 'the termination of the *Ego*.' Briefly, in Fichte's system the *Ego* put a limit to itself, and this limitation constituted the *non-Ego*. This was the primitive fact in his philosophy, a fact therefore of which no demonstration was, or could be, given. Schelling justly observed, that to leave such fact undemonstrated was a serious flaw in the system, because a philosopher must prove, not indeed everything which he admitted, but everything which was not *evident*, or what comes to the same, carrying its proof with itself. As, therefore, Fichte had pledged himself to push philosophy on till it came to the principle *evident per se*, and thus put an end to all controversies,¹ Schelling contended that that object had not been attained. The objection was certainly reasonable, for in the notion of an *Ego* necessarily limiting itself there is something absurd. If the *Ego* limits necessarily its own nature, it is subject to a law, a necessity. Therefore the nature of the *Ego* does not impose the law of its limitation, but receives it. There is, therefore, something more potent than the *Ego*, and to the action of which the *Ego* must unavoidably submit.

To understand well the force of this objection we must concentrate our attention on our own selves. We shall then see that the only things done by us are those which we do voluntarily, and that what takes place in us in virtue of a necessary limitation of our nature is not done by, but independently of, us. Indeed, if the imposing or non-imposing of limits on ourselves depended on us, we should certainly not impose them, because every limitation is a restriction of our power, a lessening of our force, and we naturally wish to have all the power and force we can. Nor should we ever voluntarily put a limit to them, unless it were for avoiding a greater

Quite so ; from a principle invented by yourself, and fashioned purely in accordance with an extremely excited imagination, you can deduce anything. (See the *Philosophical Journal*, formerly edited by Schelling and Hegel, Vol. vi. N. 2).

¹ Fichte in his celebrated work, *Wis-*

senschaftslehre, and in other writings, assures us that he composed his philosophy in order to destroy scepticism. Such is the professed aim of all modern philosophies ; but what is its actual result ? To establish scepticism more and more firmly. It proposes to travel south, and it always journeys north.

limitation which would befall us in spite of ourselves if we did not submit to that limit; as, for instance, is the case when we find ourselves under the necessity of choosing between respect for the moral order and the satisfaction of our subjective inclinations. Hence limit, as such, can never proceed from ourselves, but is laid on us by something superior to us. Now this something, whatever it be, which limits us, cannot itself have any limit, because the absolute necessity of nature is such that there can be nothing superior to it. And even if we supposed that this something which limits us was itself limited, the same remark just made in reference to ourselves could be applied to it, so that we must needs come at last to an *Absolute* exempt from all limitations. Now Schelling, having carried his thought up as far as this Absolute, imagined that he had reached the *primum* of all philosophy, the point beyond which it was impossible to go.

1398. The *Absolute* of Schelling is, then, the offspring of the *non-Ego* of Fichte. But that this link between the two systems may be more clearly seen, it will be necessary to say a few words on the practical part of Fichte's philosophy, where the germ of that of Schelling is more apparent than even in the theoretical part.

The *non-Ego* of Fichte comprises a sensible world, a first intelligible world, and a super-sensible *order* belonging to the same. That activity of the *Ego* which has produced from itself the *non-Ego*, namely, all these worlds, is also that which believes in them. Now this faith renders the universe subjectively real; that is to say, the *Ego*, believing in it, unhesitatingly takes it as real. In this *faith*, according to Fichte, lies the possibility of human *free-will*. For this supreme activity by which the *Ego* believes in the reality of the *non-Ego* produces an *efficacious persuasion* of being able to act for an end, in conformity with the super-sensible order, in which conformity the *Ego* sees its own *happiness*. This *faith*, this persuasion, constitutes free-will itself, whilst the super-sensible order of the universe constitutes the moral limit of man, obligatoriness, absolute duty. But whence is it that amongst the things which the *Ego* sets up in contraposition to itself, and

thereby limits itself, there is this order, this obligatoriness, this duty? From the nature of the *Ego* itself. Moreover, the same faith, by virtue of its inmost activity, believes itself to be free in this moral limitation, and by so doing realises or creates, as I have said, the faculty of free-will. But free-will thus realised or created by *faith* is not satisfied with itself except when entirely conformed to that super-sensible order, which takes the name of moral obligation, absolute duty; and to have this conformity it must believe in the reality of that order. Hence the *Ego*, through its activity manifested under the form of faith, strives to realise such order. Now in this effort by which the *Ego*, through faith in the moral order of the universe, realises the same to itself, there arises in it the concept of God, as a necessary condition of the perfect realisation of that moral order.

Such is the God of Fichte, originating from the Practical Reason in the manner I have described. The announcement of a God conceived after this fashion brought down on this philosopher the accusation of Atheism; and although he tried hard to defend himself, his justification does not seem to have fully satisfied public opinion. In several writings he attempted to reconcile the views of other thinkers with his own, and one of the latest of these productions bore the title, *The last state of the world deduced from the first*. In this treatise, which is a strange admixture of two such opposite things as Idealism and Realism, he starts now from the activity of the *Ego* as though it were the only reality existing, now from the Divine Absolute as the only reality which manifests itself to us in an image or idea, and thus becomes consciousness.

In Germany this was considered as a modification made by Fichte to his system in order that it might be more in harmony with the common way of thinking; but to me it seems nothing but the self-same system dressed up in a new form, and for those who can see the whole thing to the bottom even that apparent difference vanishes. Fichte says that the activity of the *Ego* positing the *non-Ego* manifests itself in two ways, namely, through the representation of, and through faith in the *non-Ego*. The faculty of positing and representing

the *non-Ego* is the *Theoretical Reason*; the faculty of believing in the *non-Ego* is the *Practical Reason*—the source of obligatoriness, of Ethics, and of Jurisprudence. According to the theoretical reason the only reality is the activity of the *Ego*; everything is produced by this activity. According to the practical reason the only reality is the Divine Being; all things spring from Him, and the procession from, and dependence of all things on, Him is precisely the moral order, the source of obligatoriness. Evidently in such a system the word *reality* is taken in two different meanings—the true reality (*i.e.* true according to Schelling, TR.), and the reality *believed* to be true: the true reality, *apprehended by the understanding* and producing all things, is the activity of the *Ego*; the reality *believed* to be true is the *Divine Being* only.¹

To present this system in the least unfavourable light possible one would have to formulate it in the following proposition: 'Human nature is intrinsically so constituted as to demand absolutely (*i.e.* independently of all proof) a belief in the supreme reality of the Divine Being.' In this way the belief in God is truly a necessity, because human nature craves for it with the highest and most irresistible of its aspirations. Nevertheless, man believes himself to be a free agent in this matter; hence his first duty, namely, that of admitting the existence of God. A thought similar to this was enunciated by Seneca, who said: 'Our first duty towards God is to believe in His existence' (*Ep.* xcv.). But although this thought has some foundation, if we suppose the existence of God to be at least *capable* of being proved also by reason, it is absolutely worthless on the assumption that a blind necessity of nature, an inevitable illusion, a feeling of self-interest—however supreme that interest may be—is the whole and sole ground of that belief.

1399. It is easy to see that in the practical or moral part of Fichte's philosophy there already lay the germ of the system of Schelling. To the *faith* necessary to human nature

¹ Whatever reality this Fichtean God has, springs from the reality of the *faith* which produces Him; but is not this latter reality always relative? [Con-

sequently, in the Fichtean system, the existence of a real God can never be absolutely, or, what comes to the same, objectively certain.—TR.]

there was one only reality, consisting in the absolute order of the *non-Ego*, the Divine Being, and it was here that Schelling fixed the standpoint of his system ; only that, unlike Fichte, he considered the Absolute, not as realised or produced simply by the faith of human nature, but as a reality in itself, the reality from which all activities and all force originated. He thus hoped to have carried philosophy up to *the supreme principle of evidence*, because the *Absolute*, according to him, requires no demonstration. All other things depend on the Absolute for their existence, but the Absolute itself has need of nothing, and is seen by immediate intuition. Without the Absolute, then, things would be inconceivable, hence their certainty is conditional upon its certainty, being only a participation of it. There is a certain amount of truth in this reasoning ; but Schelling did not stop here, and his over-eagerness to know all, even the unknowable, betrayed him into great errors. For when man obstinately insists on knowing what it is impossible for him to know, he must necessarily take imagination for reason, wild dreams for truth. Let us see how this came about as regards this philosopher.

1400. Three great classes of beings are represented to human thought, namely, the *material universe*, the *human subject*, and *God*. Kant said (erroneously, as I have shown in the preceding section) that these representations (styled by him *phenomena*) have no power to make us know their objects, the things in themselves (*noumena*). Our *belief* in the real existence of these *noumena* is a free act, constituting what he was the first to call by the name of *Practical Reason*. Nevertheless in his system they can exist, provided they emanate, in their *formal* part, from our spirit. How it is that they are devoid of subjective forms [do not really exist in themselves, TR.] remains a profound secret ; still it is permissible to admit a *materia* in general as regards the universe, and a last *root* of things as regards God.

According to Kant, then, man is conscious of *phenomena*, but remains wholly in the dark as to *noumena*.

Fichte and Schelling, not liking the thought of this dark-

ness, sought to expel it from philosophy. Fichte said to Kant: 'You start from a phenomenal *Ego* as the source of all the human knowable, consisting, as you say, of mere appearances or *phenomena*; and on the plea of the natural limitation of our understanding, you would have us profess complete ignorance as to whether or not there really exists anything else. I, on the contrary, start, not from a phenomenal, but from a *real Ego*, and therefore a *noumenon*. All that exists is an emanation from this *Ego*. Thus it is that we have the representation of the universe, of God, and in general of *noumena*, comprised under the denomination of *non-Ego*, and that representation is made a reality by the *faith* which the *Ego* yields to it through the use of the *Practical Reason*. As, then, everything which exists is produced by this *Ego*, so there is nothing excluded from the field of human knowledge, and therefore that dark region of which you have told us is inadmissible.'

Schelling considered it necessary to go yet further, and to ascend to a *noumenon* which produced a phenomenal *Ego* as well as a phenomenal universe. This *noumenon* was the pivot of his whole philosophy. It needed no demonstration, but was intuitively seen as the necessary basis of all phenomena, and hence more certain than they, indeed self-evident. Such is the God of Schelling.

But since this is the only *noumenon*, that which alone has activity in its own self, it follows that there is no real activity outside of it. Consequently, whatever activity is found throughout the material world, no less than in the human subject, belongs to it. What is proper to these things is the phenomenal element. That infinite essence is the only essence that subsists, and in it lies the being of all phenomena. In it, therefore, all things are identified—the subject, the object, the ideal, the real, the representations, the parts, etc.—because the being of each of these things is no other than that of the Absolute, which, *phenomenally*, transforms itself into them all, so that the differences to be found in things are not *qualitative*, but *quantitative* only, since the being of all is one and the same. Thus the human soul and the material world

stand on one and the same level ; their individual existence is alike purely phenomenal, while their real existence is merged in the great whole, the Absolute. All individualities are absorbed and lost in the boundless nature of God, much in the same way as the Stoics said was the case with man after death. This system, which it would seem impossible to acquit of Pantheism, is wholly based on the following reasoning: 'The Critical Philosophy¹ has shown that no man can be certain of the reality of *noumena* (things in themselves). But as to the reality of an *Absolute*, no doubt can be entertained, because such reality is a necessary condition of the possibility of all the phenomena which the Critical Philosophy admits. This is therefore the only reality of which we are certain. Hence, to be consistent, we must say that all things issue from, are parts, emanations, transformations of it.'

1401. But this reasoning has several weak points in it.

(1) The Critical Philosophy, in order to deny the knowledge of *noumena*, has made use of a chain of reasoning. It has therefore, by implication, assumed the validity of reasoning. If, then, reasoning when properly conducted leads to irrefragable conclusions, one does not see why its use should be admitted only partially, that is to say, for denying the knowledge of *noumena*, and not for establishing it. The Critical Philosophy is therefore in contradiction with itself, and Schelling ought not to have allowed himself to be deceived by it.

(2) If the Critical Philosophy were not tainted with this capital vice, or if one did not wish to charge it with the same, it could defend itself from the objection urged against it by Schelling, and from which he deduced his system, thus:—

'You say that the phenomena or representations suppose an Absolute really existent. But how do you infer this Absolute? Certainly by the use of reasoning. But amongst phenomena or representations the Critical Philosophy reckons also the laws of thought. These laws, according to it, are purely subjective and, so to speak, phenomenal. Therefore the conclusions to which their applications lead can have no

¹ The Philosophy of Kant (TRANSLATORS).

other than a subjective and phenomenal value. Fully granting, then, that the *absolute* is called for by the laws of thought (and Kant himself, when speaking of reason, has recognised the absolute as the supreme result of thought); you must still allow that it can only be a phenomenal absolute, devoid of objective certainty, but which is admitted as real and certain because man feels that he cannot do without it' (this is the practical reason).

(3) Supposing, however, that the existence of the real absolute of Schelling were well established and self-evident, and supposing, moreover, that nothing else than this absolute could, through the use of reasoning, be recognised as real, would it follow that no other reality could exist? No; the utmost one would be justified in concluding from this would be that no other reality was known to man. In this case we should have an *unknown region*, such as Kant supposed, though more restricted, because Schelling withdraws therefrom the *absolute*, investing it with reality. But good logic will never permit us to say: 'I do not know of any other reality, therefore no other reality exists or can exist.' And if Schelling, in order to save his system, should throw himself on the pantheistic argument that 'What is infinite must include all, and nothing can exist outside of it,' he would then, *ipso facto*, be declaring for a lost cause, since this argument has been answered times without number in those many treatises which have been written against the Pantheists of all ages.

1402. In meditating on the ideas of Schelling, one can see in them, even as in those of Fichte, an eager desire to reduce everything to systematic unity. Hence an effort to conform, not his philosophy to the nature of things, but the nature of things to his philosophy. He has fallen in love with what he would fain consider as super-eminently the principle of universal knowledge, and in this one principle all things must find their place as if nothing could be hidden from man. One would say that it is an attempt to indefinitely magnify man's intellectual powers, and make him as nearly as possible like unto God; an imitation, a continuation of that miserable scene which was witnessed when the first parent of

our race allowed himself to be deluded into the belief of becoming possessed of the Divine Intelligence. But by what process? By humouring in a similar way his appetite, and tasting of a forbidden fruit! And yet does it not seem as if it should be easy to perceive, and in the most unmistakable manner, that man, his power, his knowledge, is bounded by limits he can never transgress? To those limits his proud pretensions must absolutely be surrendered. It is useless for him to fret or to say nay. Now one of these limits is precisely that which separates the finite from the infinite, the creature from the Creator. Vainly does man torture his brain in trying to mix these two objects together, as the drunkard mixes two liquors in his glass. An abyss which he can neither bridge over, nor imagine, nor understand, keeps them for ever apart.

I feel confident that Schelling would never have dreamt of making the above confusion, or of defining God much as we find him defined in the verse of the Sophist of Nola,

Est animal sanctum, sacrum et venerabile, mundus,¹

if, instead of at once plunging headlong into those most abstruse speculations, he had begun by setting himself to decipher and solve the most elementary problems of human knowledge.² Had he had the patience first of all to analyse this knowledge, to seek out its sources, to distinguish its species, he would doubtless have perceived the limits essentially set to it. He would have seen that whilst the knowledge we have of ourselves and of sensible things is positive, that which we have of God can only be negative, in other words, that the Supreme Being is not known to us except as an *essence* determined by relations (1237 etc.), and consequently that the notion of nature can never be confounded

¹ Giordano Bruno, *De immenso*, l. v. See amongst Schelling's voluminous works, the one entitled 'Von der Weltseele, eine Hypothese der höheren Physik zur Erläuterung des allgemeinen Organismus.' Hamburg, 1798.

² This seems to me the general defect of the German philosophy with

reference to method—*i.e.* rushing at the most abstruse and difficult problems, before having disposed of those which are most obvious, and which alone can prepare the way to understand aright, and to discourse in a fitting manner on, the more difficult ones

or reduced to one with that of God. Furthermore, he would have found that the *positive concept of nature* has characteristics which place it essentially in opposition to the concept of God ; so that it would be absurd to attribute the characteristics of nature to the Divine Essence.

1403. By the first difference between the concept of nature and that of God, namely, that the first is *positive* and the second *negative*, the attempt to reduce God and nature to one sole principle, one sole substance, is convicted of intellectual intemperance and temerity ; since by so doing one simply puts the unknown on a par with the known, and arbitrarily treats the two as if they made an identical thing, thus passing judgment and laying down laws in a matter which, from the absence of the requisite knowledge, cannot be decided by human reason.

By the second difference between the knowledge we have of nature and that which we have of God, namely, that the first has characteristics essentially opposed to those of the second, the attempt to mix up God and nature into one is convicted of absurdity, and of saying that which cannot make sense, because such admixture is not an object of thought any more than nothingness is.

1404. But, not to be endless in this matter, I shall confine myself to the first of these two reasons, and, for the sake of greater clearness, shall present it in the form of a dialogue.

Schelling. An Absolute is necessary, otherwise it would be impossible for anything either to exist or to be known.

Opponent. Agreed ; but do you know this absolute ?

Schelling. From the moment that I become aware of its existence, I do know it. And since it is the means through which I am made to know other things, *à fortiori* it must itself be known to me.

Opponent. Do you not think, that between knowing that an object exists, and knowing the object itself, there is a difference ?

Schelling. What difference can there be ? Surely I cannot know that an object exists unless I know that object.

Opponent. That in order to know that an object exists we

must have some knowledge of that object I fully admit; but that knowledge might be only *negative*.

Schelling. What do you mean by *negative knowledge*?

Opponent. I mean the knowledge which we acquire through a *sign*, natural or artificial, of the object in question, by means of which sign the object is fixed in such a manner that it cannot be mistaken for any other. This sign is called also the *nominal essence*, which is the same as to say an essence consisting of a relation. For instance, if I were told by a person worthy of credit that there exists an object generally called by a certain name, what should I know of the object on hearing that name? Nothing but these two things: (1) its existence; (2) the name by which it is indicated. Now this would be a negative knowledge, for I should not know anything of the *nature* itself of the object. *Existence*, being common to all subsistent things, does not cause me to know the things themselves, because each thing is what it is, not in so far as it has the existence common to all, but in so far as it has an essence distinct from that of the rest.

Schelling. But this your doctrine cannot be applied to the absolute. I do not come to know the absolute through any authority which has revealed to me its name and nothing more. My knowledge of it is the result of a reasoning which induces necessity.

Opponent. To illustrate what I meant by negative knowledge, or knowledge of the *nominal essence*, I have adduced the example of an object designated by an *arbitrary name* or an artificial sign. It is true that this does not, properly speaking, apply to your case, because the absolute is not known through an arbitrary name or sign, but through a *natural* one. But whether the name or sign which determines the unknown object be arbitrary, or whether it be natural, it is all the same; what we know of the object is simply an *essence* consisting of a relation it has with another object known by us. Hence our knowledge always remains negative—that is, it does not embrace the real positive essence of the object. Such, and no other, is the kind of

knowledge which reasoning enables you to obtain concerning your absolute.

Schelling. Explain more clearly, for these things sound new to me.

Opponent. I will ; please then to tell me, by what reasoning do you ascend to the absolute ?

Schelling. By this : that it is impossible to think of anything as existent without admitting an *absolute*. If anything exists, there must be an absolute.

Opponent. But how do you know that things exist ?

Schelling. My own consciousness and my senses inform me of it.

Opponent. But do you, by your very consciousness or by your senses, really perceive the absolute itself? In other words, does your individual consciousness, do your senses, receive in them the perception of an absolute infinite by nature, and therefore without any limitations ?

Schelling. No ; I ascend to the absolute by arguing that the things which I perceive in my consciousness, although finite in themselves, could not exist unless the infinite, the absolute existed ; but this supposes in me the *intuition* of the absolute.

Opponent. Would it not be true, therefore, to say that all of which you have experience is an *indubitable sign* of the existence of an absolute, an infinite ?

Schelling. Yes, it would ; but it is also a manifestation, to which there responds an *intuitive* faculty in man.

Opponent. Perhaps this also may be as you say ; but we must treat one question at a time. The point I now wish to have clearly settled between us is, that whatever we know by our individual experience and consciousness is an *indubitable sign* of the absolute. In the same way, whenever we happen to see a work bearing on it traces of intelligence, for instance, a geometrical figure, a statue, a painting, etc., we at once say to ourselves, this must have been done by some intelligent being ; the traces of intelligence I see before me are an indubitable sign of it.

Schelling. Well, I allow this also.

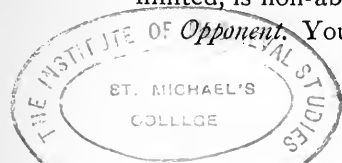
Opponent. Now that *sign*, that stamp of intelligence imprinted on the object perceived by us, is what I call a *natural sign*, or also (if I may so express myself) a *natural name*, because it is an effect produced by the intelligent being in question, and shows forth some property which must exist in him, though the way in which it so exists is not revealed to us. It is by this natural sign or name, then, that you come to know your absolute—*i.e.* by an effect which proceeds from it, and singles it out for you in perfect contradistinction to all other things, so, however, that you receive no information as to what that is which, in the absolute itself, precisely corresponds to that effect. You know for certain that the absolute is *cause* of the effect, but you do not know the mode either of its operation or of its existence. Consequently, all the knowledge you possess of this absolute is confined exclusively to its *nominal essence*, although the sign which gives you such knowledge is not purely conventional, but, as I have said, *natural*, and therefore manifesting to you, as a logical necessity, some real *relation* of the absolute. You have, therefore, no other *intuition*, if you will so call it, than that of this necessity, this relation. Whence I conclude that the nature of the absolute being unknown to you, you have no right to build thereon a system of emanations, and to affirm that all things in the universe are so many forms of the absolute, or parts, or by whatever other name you may wish to express them. Indeed, such a proceeding involves a contradiction in terms; for let me ask you, are not the two ideas of *absolute* and *non-absolute* as contradictory as yes and no?

Schelling. They are different, but not contradictory.

Opponent. Permit me to say that you are mistaken. Can limitation and non-limitation be predicated of one and the same thing, at one and the same time? Clearly not. Now what is the absolute but that which has no limits? And what is the non-absolute but that which has limits? The two ideas are, therefore, not merely different, but contradictory.

Schelling. My meaning is, that the same thing which, as limited, is non-absolute, as unlimited is absolute.

Opponent. You suppose, then, that limited things may be-



come unlimited. In this case what was not absolute at first would at some time or other begin to be absolute, which is the same as to say *non-absolute*, because the absolute cannot have a beginning.¹ Again, if a limited thing, in order to become absolute, must throw off its limitations, who is to move it to so portentous a change? Between its essence in the first state and its essence in the second, there is an essential contrariety, and therefore it is intrinsically impossible for the one essence ever to become the other. Every attempt to prove by reasoning that all things come to one and the same, that they are but one being variously transformed or modified, must necessarily be rash and absurd. For the identical being cannot, without manifest absurdity, be conceived as the subject, first of limitation, and then of its direct contrary.

To this reasoning of the opponent I do not think that Schelling could make any solid reply.

1405. It is not unreasonable, therefore, to assert that the error of Schelling arose from his not having made an accurate analysis of the capabilities of reasoning to precede every other speculation, and, as a consequence, having failed to perceive that there are regions almost wholly unknown to the human understanding, I mean those containing all such beings as do not fall under the perception of our sense or of its modifications. His error, as I have said, was the opposite to that of Kant. For whilst Kant excluded from the range of human knowledge even the *existence* of super-sensible beings, and, generally, of things in themselves (*noumena*), Schelling maintained that their real *essence* itself could be intuitively seen by man.

1406. The course of the ideas of these German thinkers is a subject well worth studying. They began by starting from *material nature*, in order therefrom to ascend to, and concentrate themselves in the human *spirit*. Kant went even so far as to leave the existence of material nature in doubt, that is to say, perfectly hidden from man's understanding. Fichte absorbed it into the spirit itself.

¹ Because 'to have a beginning' is with the nature of the absolute (TRANSLATORS), a limitation, and therefore inconsistent

But this human spirit to which it had been attempted to reduce the material universe, was still too small a thing for man, neither could it suffice to itself. It seemed therefore natural, that as some had from matter soared up to the human spirit, so others should from this spirit soar up to God, to the absolute, the infinite. Such was the tendency ; but, however strong the will, the wings proved unequal to the flight.

Had the infinite really been reached, thought would have found itself in a region unknown, inaccessible, and the philosopher would then have prostrated himself in adoration before that Incomprehensible Nature. But this adoration, this profound humiliation of self before God . . . Ah, this was not the object sought. What stood uppermost in the wish was the creation of systems. Man wanted to make a display of his intellectual powers, and not to collect them together and offer them as a holocaust to the Incomprehensible. Hence all he cared for in his philosophical journey was to radiate forth light from himself over every region he might come to. Thus there were two different aims to be reconciled : (1) to reach the infinite, and (2) to reach it as a thing fully known. But human thought was too vacillating, too weak ever fully to know the infinite. Nothing remained therefore but to fill up the void by means of the imagination, and it was done. The imagination readily invented an infinite, an absolute, a God, composed of all that it was able to picture to itself or to know. And what did man, what did his imagination know ? Why, the material world and himself. The *absolute* of these philosophers, therefore, was simply, and indeed could not be anything else than, a strange compound made up of the external world and of man : behold the God, or to speak more properly, the idol of modern philosophy—the work of men's hands ; *os habet, et non loquetur*.

1407. But what chiefly concerns us here is, to show that the absolute which Schelling made the basis of his system, cannot be the starting-point of human philosophy. I say *human* philosophy, for we must never forget that we are but men. If we were Gods, we should, no doubt, start from another point ; but, being men, we must set out from the in-

vestigation of our mind, from the principle which has been given to it as its light. At the time of Kant it was already well understood that any treatise on Ontology must be preceded by an inquiry into the capabilities of reasoning. It was in accordance with this principle that the philosopher of Königsberg composed his *Critique of Pure Reason*. Fichte began to deviate from this path by setting out from the activity of thought. He thus laid himself open to the question as to what right he had to argue about the *activity* of thought before having demonstrated that his *reasonings* had a conclusive force. This question would have sufficed to make him pause, and wake him up to the fact that all the arguments by which he was trying to convince the world of the truth of his system, were gratuitous, unless *reasoning itself* was presupposed as valid. Subsequent writers forgot still more that the philosophy of real things must not begin till after this question has been duly solved. Instead of commencing from the great problem of the validity of reasoning, instead of arranging the human *cognitions* in their proper order, they applied themselves straightway to a systematic distributing of the *subsistent objects* of these cognitions. Certainly, when this second distribution has to be made, the *Absolute* must be placed at the head of all, because all other subsistent beings are dependent on Him, and do not and cannot exist except by Him. But how do we know that this complete, absolute, first, supreme Being, the source of all the others, subsists? By what are we led up to Him? To say as Schelling did, by *intuition*, is to begin with a gratuitous, an arbitrary assertion—a most serious blunder, for which he was reprovèd by all Germany, but principally by Hegel. We must answer, then, that it is only by reasoning that we ascend to the absolute. Reasoning is our guide. If, as Kant pretended, this guide were essentially incapable, nay fallacious, we should gain nothing by following it, and our belief that we have, by means of it, found the absolute, would be an illusion. It is quite true that, under another aspect, we ourselves, as well as the reasonings we make, depend on the absolute; but this dependence is, not in the *order of our*

cognitions, but in the *order of real beings*. If there was no absolute, we should neither exist, nor be able to reason ; but this is a very different thing from saying that we can know either this truth, or the absolute itself, without making use of the faculty of reason which belongs to our nature. Let us, then, distinguish between the *order of cognitions* and the *order of real objects*. In relation to our mind the real objects do not exist, unless we have knowledge of them. The *order* therefore of *cognitions* and ideas precedes the *order of real objects*. Consequently, the problem of the validity of our cognitions ought to be disposed of before we undertake a scientific disquisition about any real object whatever, the absolute itself not excluded.

ARTICLE VI.

On the starting-point of the philosophy of Bouterweck.

1408. Frederic Bouterweck perceived that Schelling, instead of having discovered a *primum philosophicum* higher than that of any of his predecessors, had in fact adopted a lower one ; since he had fallen down from the order of *cognitions* to that of *feeling*, and at last even to that of external *real beings*, which, relatively to our understanding, are of an order posterior to feeling. He therefore argued against Schelling thus : ‘ You start from a real (*i.e.* subsistent) thing—the absolute. Now how do you prove that any real thing exists ? In order to prove this, you ought to firmly establish, first of all, the fact of the existence in us of a cognitive faculty capable of perceiving the reality of things, and this duty becomes all the more imperative when we bear in mind the allegations that have been urged by Kant in disproof of the possibility of such a faculty.’

This animadversion was quite to the point, for the argument by which Schelling had attempted to represent the absolute as *self-evident*, and as a necessary condition both of the thinkableness and of the existence of real things, had, indeed, no force except on the supposition that the pronouncements of reason were true, and could be validly extended to real things also.

At the same time that Bouterweck was thus challenging the position taken up by Schelling, he also refuted pure Idealists in the following way : 'The opinion that *real being* ultimately resolves itself into mere ideas is simply untenable ; for by analysing our ideas we find, *first*, that real beings are anterior to them, as cause of our cognitions, and *secondly*, that real beings are more than they, since a *real being* is more than its *idea*. We cannot therefore reduce everything to ideas, but must distinguish between ideas and real beings, and account for both of them, as well as for their relation and union.' In substance, this reduction was the same thing as had been attempted by Fichte and by Schelling ; only that they for this end identified beings with thoughts, or, to say better, regarded all beings as so many emanations of thought.¹

1409. Bouterweck observed, moreover, that there can be no *knowledge* without an object, a being ; that *being* does not admit of definition, and that no philosopher worthy of the name will ever ask what *being in general* is. From this he concluded, that being is essential to thought and, though different from it, is given together with it. He contended, therefore, that it was necessary to set out from an *absolute faculty of knowing* as from a primitive, evident and fundamental fact, and this faculty he made to consist precisely in the perception of *absolute existence*. Hence the fundamental principle of his system might be said to be contained in the following proposition : 'Under every feeling as well as under every thought there lies a being as a foundation necessarily true and therefore absolute—a foundation which, in order to be such, does not require anything beyond itself.'

1410. Bouterweck had herein a glimpse of part of the truth ; but he was confounding *absolute existence* with *existence considered in general*, or, which comes to the same thing, with the *ens communissimum*. Had he said that the human understanding is essentially linked with and informed by *being* taken universally, which, when afterwards viewed in its

¹ Schelling did not properly grasp the distinction between *feeling* and *thought*, for he imagined a primitive thought *indifferent* alike to the objective

and the subjective ; which, as I have observed before, is essentially opposed to the nature of thought.

application, is denominated *most common*, he would have found himself in the theory propounded in these pages. But having aimed at the *Absolute Being* in place of the simple *notion of being*, he, without wishing it, fell, like Fichte and Schelling, into Pantheism; since, like them, he mixed up real and subsistent being with mere thought, and formed of these two things one only substance; nor did he in any way seek to conceal the fact. In order, however, that he might, in this singular kind of substance, save the individual, he imagined in the same substance, as constituting it, a certain particular force or act to which he gave the name of *virtuality*. But (he added) of this virtuality which constitutes the individual, and is not known except by conceiving a distinction between the human subject as striving after existence, and the objects as resisting its effort, we have, at the outset, only a *practical knowledge*, namely a knowledge consisting of feeling or of experimental fact, but not as yet the theoretic knowledge or that which shows us the intrinsic necessity of the existence of this subject. The *absolute faculty* of knowing, therefore, by applying itself to the said *virtuality*, changes it into an *absolute reality*. This change, so far as I am able to understand, is explained by Bouterweck as follows: Our absolute faculty of knowing sees *absolute being*; it therefore sees this same being in all things, and raises all things to it, and if all things, therefore also the said individual force or virtuality. Hence arises our concept of an infinite existence, and of an infinite action.

1411. Thus the error of this system, as of those of Fichte and Schelling, consists:—

(1) In its author having started from the *act* of the human spirit, instead of beginning with an accurate analysis of the *object* apprehended by that act, and thus finally setting at rest the question as to what the essential object of thought is. As a consequence of this oversight, his mind was confused, and he mistook *possible being* for *subsistent being*. He did not observe, that the essential object of thought consists in the former kind of being only, and not in the latter, and, least of all, in the latter as it exists in all its completeness. If the

essential object of thought were subsistent being in its absolute completeness, to *think* would be the same as fully to comprehend God. But he who fully comprehends God is God ; and this means Pantheism.

(2) This error of Bouterweck was further promoted by his not having paid sufficient attention to the distinction between *feeling* and *thought*. If, before plunging into the most abstruse questions, he had dwelt on these elementary inquiries, he would have found that, to have *being* for its object and foundation, is indeed necessary to thought, but not to feeling. Hence he would have seen, that if all objects of thought were supposed to be taken away, there would be no thought left, and no faculty of thought ; but at the same time what is now called the human subject would not be entirely annihilated, since the animal part would remain, and man would merely be reduced to the condition of the brute. This observation would have convinced him of the essential limitation of man, whose basis, so to speak, is the animal nature, which, in order to have existence, does not require the vision of subsistent being, much less that of the Absolute Being, and becomes rational simply by being raised to the vision of ideal being.

1412. To conclude: Bouterweck failed in the discovery of the first and true starting-point of human cognitions for two reasons: (1) because by setting out from an absolute faculty of knowing, he was assuming *ideal being* and *subsistent being* as *data* anterior to this faculty, and constitutive of its matter ; whereas all this should have been demonstrated, since it depended on the principle of demonstration, anterior to that faculty ; (2) because the Absolute Subsistent Being is not known to man by a positive knowledge ; and therefore the absolute faculty as conceived by this philosopher included more than man's natural faculty of knowing really contains.

ARTICLE VII.

On the starting-point of the philosophy of Bardili.

1413. Bardili saw, even as Bouterweck had seen, that philosophy could not be made to begin from anything else

than *thought*. He therefore begged as a postulate¹ the *use of thought*, and attempted a fresh analysis of thought with the object of discovering what, in it, was the *primum through its own self*² (the first thing known *per se*.—TR.), which was the same as saying the starting-point of philosophy.

1414. But he, much after the way of Schelling, took that as first which in reality is last, namely the absolute.³ It will not do to say that the absolute is the *condition* on which all certainties and all existences depend. Fully admitting this, it does not follow, that in order to be able to make myself certain of finite and conditioned things, I must first have a positive idea of the absolute. I may be antecedently in possession of a means of acquiring that certainty, in which case my certainty will include the absolute *implicitly*, and then, through reasoning, lead me to discover *explicitly* its necessity. Such is, in fact, the true progression of human reasoning. For making certain of things, it suffices us to know, that what appears to us true is *necessarily* true; and

¹ In my opinion the true basis of philosophy should be, not a mere postulate, but a fact (1071).

² The same investigation was undertaken by that illustrious Italian philosopher, the Barnabite Padre Ermenegildo Pini, in his *Protologia*, a work which, had it appeared north of the Alps, would have been very much applauded and admired.

³ Bardili, by assuming that man can with his natural powers have a *positive* idea of God, fell into the same error as Schelling. The effect of this error is to create a false enthusiasm, by inspiring man with an extravagantly exaggerated notion of his intellectual greatness; and throwing his imagination into a thrilling ferment of self-satisfaction at the contemplation thereof. Moreover, as I have repeatedly pointed out, the supposition that man has in himself the power adequately to perceive God inevitably induces Pantheism. This is a rock upon which strong and over-confident intellects are easily wrecked; and as an instance of this I might cite some recent Italian writers.

Nevertheless it seems to me that Bardili's starting-point was somewhat

less erroneous than Schelling's. For the latter philosopher placed it in an absolute thought, which was indifferent both to the object and to the thinking subject. Now this indifference is essentially irreconcilable with the nature of thought, which must always have an object. What does not terminate in an object is not thought, but feeling only; and this is why I have said that Schelling's starting-point consisted in *feeling*. Bardili, on the contrary, said that *thought as thought*, that is, as superior and indifferent to the *object* as well as to the *thinking subject*, was not known *per se*, but only in its application, and that, therefore, the latter must be taken as the true point of departure. It seems, then, that according to Bardili (*i.e.* if he had been consistent with himself), absolute thought could be nothing but an *abstraction*, whereby we conceive thought as without either object or subject, although it never so exists in fact. By starting, therefore, from the *application* of thought, in order to ascend to thought pure and absolute, Bardili has in some degree the advantage over Schelling.

this necessity, as I have already shown, we conceive through *possible being* without any need of depending on the concept of the *Absolute Subsistent Being*. We arrive at this second concept later, namely, through coming to understand that the Absolute Subsistent Being is the indispensable condition of all certainty and of all the beings of which we are certain. This mode of progression, which our reasoning must follow in its development, arises from the nature of possible being, and is what I have elsewhere called the *integrating faculty of the human understanding* (624 and 650 n).

In further confirmation of this, I will submit another remark. How come we to know that a necessary, primitive, original absolute exists? I have just said it, in no other way than by perceiving that the absolute is the condition on which the existence of all our *certainty*, as well as of every thing we *know* to exist, depends. But if so, can it ever be said that it is only through the knowledge of the absolute that we gain certainty, and give a firm basis to all our previous cognitions? Can it be said that the absolute ought to be the starting-point of philosophy? Assuredly not. How could the certainty of our cognitions be attributed to our knowledge of the absolute, when this knowledge is only an inference drawn from that certainty? If that certainty did not exist, we should know nothing of the necessary existence of the absolute, since without the conditioned there is no condition. So likewise, if the truth of our cognitions about existent things were doubtful, the absolute also would be doubtful. Clearly, then, the certainty and necessary truth of our cognitions is, in relation to our mind, anterior to and presupposed by the certainty and necessity of the Absolute Subsistent Being. Hence philosophy, instead of starting from, must end in the absolute. Antecedently to knowing the absolute, the self-subsistent being, God, we must have a means, a principle which empowers us to acquire cognitions, and these characterised by certainty; and this means, this principle is the idea of indeterminate being or being in general, abidingly present to our mind.

1415. So far was Bardili from seeing the true nature of the stumbling-block which had caused the fall of the

philosophers of his nation, that he even made their error more scientific in form and gave it systematic completion. From what I have expounded thus far, it will be seen that the common mistake of those who came after Kant lay in supposing 'that man could have *positive* ideas of those realities which do not fall under his perception, so that the range of human knowledge was co-extensive with the entire aggregate of subsistent beings.' As a consequence of this supposition, which is manifestly implied in all those systems, and which, though not avowedly so, is their constant guiding principle, it comes to pass, that when there presents itself a being of which man cannot have an adequate and positive concept—as is the case with God—but only one that is negative and as it were void, the imagination steps in to supply what is wanting to make the concept appear positive and real. But in doing this the imagination can only make use of such materials as are already to hand—that is, it cannot render that concept positive except by putting in its place one composed of all the things which, having been really perceived, are known by positive knowledge: and these consist of material nature and of man. If we look carefully into the matter, we shall find that this was exactly the error of all idol-worshippers. Finding a negative concept of God insufficient to satisfy their aspirations, they created to themselves a positive concept by substituting for God, Whose real essence they did not know, those beings of which they had perceptive knowledge; hence the divine honours paid to nature and to humanity. This same intemperate desire to know everything, this unwillingness to assent to the belief of one's ignorance and make a clean avowal of it; in a word, this original pride, which will not suffer man to own himself deficient in knowledge, is also the source of all Pantheism, which in ultimate analysis is nothing but idolatry brought as it were to perfection, and clothed in philosophical forms.

Here a painful reflection suggests itself. Seeing as we do that secular philosophy has, even in times so near our own, cast itself headlong into Pantheism of every conceivable

hue and form, what are we to conclude therefrom? That men abandoned to themselves have a terrible propensity to sink back into the state of Paganism. Alas! In spite of the effulgent light of the Gospel, how many steps have not already been made towards that state; and the world would ultimately fall into it for certain, and be irreparably lost, if Christianity could be annihilated by the insensate efforts of man and the malice of the infernal powers.

1416. It is, therefore, by inviolably maintaining the distinction between God and nature, between the Creator and the creature, that one comes to see how there are in us two series of cognitions, *i.e.* the negative and the positive cognitions. By the first we think what I have called a *nominal essence*,¹ and by the second we think a *real essence*. The first present to us an *x*, whose real and positive essence, specific or generic, is not known to us; and hence they may in some sort be called *void ideas* or *cognitions*. The second present to us the specific or at least generic real essence of the thing, and these we may term *comprehensive ideas* (*i.e.* more or less *full*.—TR.). Now those who forget this distinction, and insist on regarding all cognitions as alike *comprehensive*, must necessarily fall into Pantheism and countless other errors. For as often as they have to deal with beings of which they have only *void* ideas, they will have no choice but to construct imaginary and false phantoms, to create to themselves mere fictions, and consequently a God furnished with the characteristics and properties of the limited human spirit and of matter, composed of elements extraneous to His nature and mixed up together in a thousand strange ways, without any fixed law, because to the never-ending vagaries of a disordered imagination there can be no law. And this accounts for the invention of those systems, at once most grotesque, ingenious, and imposing by their seeming grandeur, which for the moment strike the reader with

¹ In my opinion the nominal essence is always a *generic essence* (see 620 etc.), and contains two elements, namely (1) the *universal essence* (being taken universally, which enters into all

our ideas), and (2) its *relation* to something positively known to us, which determines the *x*, and at the same time determines the *universal essence* and individualises it.

astonishment and enchant him, but whose life is as short as must be that of falsehood and illusion.¹

1417. Bouterweck, by laying down as his *primum philosophicum* the proposition that 'Under every feeling and every idea there lies a being as its foundation' (1409), had already confused the above-mentioned orders of cognition, and discarded the order of void ideas. Schelling and Fichte, however, had done the same, and even worse; for they had made being so much more dependent on thought, that thought became the sole source of being. Hence in their systems there could not be any such thing as *void ideas*, because thought in its very fountain-head contained the whole of being. But although Bouterweck found in being something more than in *void thought*, he nevertheless held that every thought has, essentially, the Absolute Real Being for its

¹ Many species of Platonists in the early ages of Christianity, and amongst them the Valentinian heretics, fell into a kind of idolatry for this very reason that they insisted on making our idea of God positive, and therefore so homogeneous with our other positive ideas (all of which relate to finite creatures), that (granting their supposition) there would be nothing repugnant in imagining creatures as an emanation of the divine substance. The Manicheans adopted the same error. S. Augustine charges Faustus with, and convicts him of idolatry: *Ita convinceris innumera-biles Deos colere (Contra Faustum, XV. vi.)*. Wherefore the errors of the German school can be refuted with the same principles which were applied by the Fathers in combating the various heresies derived from Platonism as well as from the Jewish Cabala. Lastly, I here beg leave to corroborate by facts what I have said above, namely 'That the philosophical system in which man imagines and persuades himself that he can form, and has formed, a positive concept of God, must produce in him a false enthusiasm or a state of extraordinary self-exaltation.' The early Christian writers noticed this effect in all those philosophical schools which credited themselves with having obtained a clear insight into the divine nature and its innermost secrets. Such was the sect

of the Gnostics, or wise men, as they were pleased to style themselves. The haughtiness of tone assumed by the Valentinians was something almost beyond belief. S. Irenæus describes them as 'Men who called themselves perfect, as if no one could ever know so much as they—no, not even Paul or Peter, or any of the other Apostles. They knew more than all men, and the full possession of that portentous knowledge which is of unutterable virtue, was their exclusive privilege.' 'Perfectos semetipsos vocantes, quasi nemo possit exæquare magnitudini agnitionis ipsorum, nec si Paulum aut Petrum dicas, vel alterum quandam Apostolorum; sed plus omnibus se cognovisse, et magnitudinis agnitionis illius quæ est inenarrabilis virtutis, solos ebibisse' (*Contra Hæres. L. I. c. xiii. 6*). But what were the *morals* of these *perfect men*? Alas! no vice, however revolting, could tarnish their sanctity; their unlimited wisdom was enough for them. Should anyone wish to know the hideous and foul practices to which they were addicted, let him read S. Irenæus himself (*ibid.*), and also S. Epiphanius (*Hæres. xxxi.*). He will learn from these witnesses of what kind is the perfection produced by that philosophy which endows man with the open vision of the Divine Nature.

foundation; which was the same as to exclude the existence of *negative ideas*.

1418. Bardili, following on the same lines, abolished the distinction between *void* and *comprehensive* ideas, and pretended that by this means he had discovered the source of the errors of the ancient philosophies. According to him, the fundamental defect of those philosophies was to be sought in their *Logic*, and consisted in a false restriction given to the value of logical principles. He says: 'Logic has been considered simply as the law of the forms of thought, as an inquiry altogether restricted within the limits of the thinking subject, isolated both from Metaphysics and from the theory on beings. It has thus succeeded in producing a regular code, but only at the cost of reducing itself to a state like that of a frame without any painting inside.' Here we can already see where the speculations of Hegel had their beginning.

Bardili's attempt to reduce Metaphysics to Logic is only a development and a clearer expression of the systems of his predecessors. By a similar error and in a similar spirit, some French writers of the present day tell us, that 'the whole of philosophy consists in Method.' Thus, on the one hand, all is reduced to abstract ideas, on which the rules of method depend; and on the other, no *void ideas* are admitted. What is, then, to be done? The imagination must perforce intervene, and change the abstract into the concrete, the void into the full.¹ What confusion and jumbling up of things in the realm of philosophy! There is indeed displayed, in these permutations and counterfeitings of ideas, a great activity, a creative activity, but on this very account a false activity, an activity for evil.²

¹ I have already noticed the error of the Neo-Platonists, who change God into an abstract idea of the mind, or an abstract idea into God. Thus the human mind is divinised, and the idea becomes a real being, the first of beings. In these confusions and perversions one sees a philosophical chaos, the *Great nothing of the Buddhists*.

² The Fathers of the Church recog-

nised a great mental activity in the Valentinians and other subtle-minded heretics. S. Jerome says that 'Their heresies were such as could only have been invented by persons of ardent temperament, and endowed with those gifts of nature which God, the first author of all things, creates.' Then he adds: 'Such was Valentinian, such was Marcion, of both of whom we read that they

1419. Still more strange is it to see that Bardili, after having reduced all thought and all being to one and the same primal source, indicates *being in itself* by the singular formula B—B, which is a sign for expressing *nought*.¹ He thus ends in the very contrary of what he had proposed to himself; for while his object was to persuade his readers that all thought is a thing most real and complete, he now ends by telling them that *all thought* has no other foundation than *nothingness*. Here we can again see the origin of Hegelianism.

1420. But there is yet more. Bardili had set out from the *application of thought*, being well aware that this was the only way in which the nature of *pure thought* could be ascertained. What was, then, the aim of his inquiry? To discover the nature of *pure thought*. Hence he stated the fundamental problem of philosophy thus: 'How can thought as such, in its application as such, be reduced to thought itself as such?' or, to put this more simply, 'How can applied thought be reduced to pure thought anterior to all application?'²

Bardili's *thought as such*, is a thought without thinking subject, without object, without relation between subject and object: it is expressed by the infinitive *to think*, meaning at once a 'determinate' and a 'determinant.' Now a thought like this can be nothing else than an abstraction; no one has

were most learned men.' 'Nullus enim potest hæresim struere, nisi qui ardentis ingenii est, et habet dona naturæ, quæ a Deo artifices sunt creata. Talis fuit Valentinianus, talis Marcion, quos doctissimos legimus' (*In Os. L. II. c. x.*).

¹ In Bardili's language the letter B signifies the *reality*, namely that *characteristic* which results from thought as applied to its matter; and the negative sign —B signifies thought as present in that application. But I ask, how can thought present in its application to its matter be a simple negation of that same matter?

² Considering that Bardili starts from *applied thought*, in order afterwards to reduce everything to *pure thought*, it might seem that in his system this pure and absolute thought is the *terminating*, rather than the *starting* point of philosophy, and that therefore I was not justified in applying to him, at the be-

ginning of the present article, the censure which I had passed on Schelling. But a closer examination of Bardili's system will show, that he also deserves the same animadversion. In fact, why did he, like Schelling, reduce everything to the absolute (*i.e.* thought as such)? That he might thus be able to prove that the absolute is the foundation of every *rational cognition*. According to him, therefore, man knows nothing, is certain of nothing until he has referred his knowledge to the absolute. In this system, then, all knowledge, all certainty, is bound to begin with the absolute. But the reasonings by which Bardili seeks to discover and establish this absolute are all gratuitous and hypothetical. Therefore the system has no firm basis whereon to rest; it starts from a *supposition*, the very thing which Hegel says that philosophy must do.

ever had experience of it, or known it to exist in fact ; whilst, on the other hand, if words have any meaning, thought cannot be anything but an act, and an act must have some agent to do it, and must terminate and rest in something. Bardili concedes that this thought cannot be known in itself, but only in its application ; nevertheless he, like Schelling, and without adducing the shadow of a proof, presents it to us as though it were something subsistent and most active.

1421. How grossly do these philosophers of the German School abuse the operation of abstraction ! It seems a principle of common sense, that 'If you take away from a thing some part of it, that thing becomes less,' and in general, that 'A thing, when deprived of some of its perfection, is less perfect than it was before.' Now it is certain that the object of thought is a perfection thereof. The greater is the number and excellence of the objects embraced by a thought, the vaster also and more perfect is that thought. On the contrary, its cognitiveness, its nobleness, its activity will diminish in the same proportion as its objects are reduced in number and importance. And if we suppose those objects to be entirely withdrawn, the real thought will no longer exist ; there will, at most, remain an abstract concept of thought, that is to say, of the possibility of thought. Does it not seem evident, that when thought has been reduced to this, it has gone down to the very lowest state of imperfection, to a mere potentiality without act ? So would good sense and common sense affirm. A thought so abstract, so completely *void* of objects, is a most attenuated abstraction. Not so for Bardili ; he, in imitation of Schelling, perceives nothing of all this. He even maintains that by the most attenuated abstraction he has reached the highest summit of the thinking activity. He will not have it said that this thought is *void*, but insists on its being denominated *pure thought*. How strange !

But we must see what it was that could have led these philosophers to such a novelty in error.

1422. I will begin by observing, that when thought is stripped of all its *modes*, there remains nothing but *essential thought*, i.e. what constitutes the *essence* of the thinking

activity. Now it is easy to suppose this *essence* as existing by itself, instead of taking it for what it truly is, namely a simple mental *abstraction*. All that one requires for this purpose is to be ignorant of the nature of our conceiving viewed in the abstract, which, indeed, is not the conceiving of any thing, but rather a *beginning* of conceiving. It was owing to this ignorance that our philosophers confounded *essential thought* abstractly and initially considered, and therefore without any real or proper existence, with *essential thought* completed and subsistent. Hence their assumption, that our thought, separated by an act of the mind from its objects, and contemplated in its isolated self, meant an *essential* and consequently an infinite activity.

They did not, therefore, properly know the nature of our conceiving, which (in the natural order) does not see the essences of subsistent things in themselves, but only in so far as the sense presents them to us ; and that, of all that is not supplied by the sense, the only thing we know is indeterminate being, which does not constitute any real essence, *i.e.* the essence of a subsistent thing. Thus they confounded the two meanings of the Latin word *infinitem*, which can equally serve for intimating (1) that the thing spoken of is *unfinished*, is without its proper completion, its determinations, in a word, is most imperfect ; (2) that the thing is possessed of an excellence without limits or restrictions, without any defects or imperfections whatever. What is *indeterminate*, and therefore so imperfect that it cannot even subsist, they took for what is most complete and perfect ; and in this indeterminateness their imagination saw the infinite in a sense diametrically opposed to that in which it ought to have been taken. There is, in fact, a *negative* or potential infinite, which is the proper object of our understanding, and which, not being determined to any one thing in particular, can admit of all forms and all determinations ; but this is a very different thing from the *positive* infinite. Now instead of recognising in the negative infinite a great void to be filled up, they pictured it to themselves as an infinite activity. Nevertheless, as this *negative infinite* was conspicuous by the absence from it of all that is

real and determinate, so by a rebound of the imagination they made it equivalent to *nothing*; and hence in their system the *Great nothing* was the source of all things. 'The *Ego*,' says Schelling (and he means the primitive *Ego*), 'is not a being, a thing, it has no attribute save this, that it is not anything Consequently, the first problem of philosophy is, *How to find out that which can be absolutely known as a non-being.*'¹ Nothingness, then, creates all things! To discover what our activity springs from we must have recourse to nothingness! If this be not a manifest contradiction, I do not know what is. Verily, utterances so flagrantly absurd seem to me nothing short of a judicial chastisement inflicted by God on these philosophers. They said: 'To philosophise on nature is the same as to create nature.'² Very well; God has permitted you to try your hand at creating nature, and, as a result, you have been forced to confess that all the creative activity you are able to muster 'is to be sought and found in *nought!*' Thus did these new-fangled creators pronounce sentence on themselves. Their speculations were great and laborious; but where did they find at last the creative activity? In man, said they. But after removing from man all that was inconsistent with that activity, they solemnly declared that what remained was *nothing*, absolutely *nothing*.

1423. The erroneous belief that the concept of pure thought divested of all objects contained something infinite, an infinite activity, was due also to another cause. These philosophers could not help seeing that the real and positive objects of our thought are limited. They therefore took the limits of these objects for so many limitations of thought itself, and supposed that the removal of all limitations would leave, as a net balance, an infinite thought. But it is a mistake to suppose that by taking away finite objects from thought, we divest it of its limitations. This would be true if human thought had

¹ 'Ist das Ich kein Ding, keine Sache, so kann man auch nach keinem Prädicat des Ichs fragen, es hat keines, als eben dieses dass es kein Ding ist Das erste Problem der Philosophie lässt sich also auch so ausdrücken:

etwas zu finden was schlechterdings nicht als ein Ding gedacht werden kann.' Schelling (Friedr. Wil. Jos.) *System des Transcendentalen Idealismus*, Tübingen, 1800, pp. 48 and 49.

² *Natur-Wissenschaft*. Pag. 3.

by nature an infinite and completed object which comes to be limited by finite ones. But, as I have said, such is not the fact. The essential object of human thought—*being taken universally*—is infinite, not completely, but only *initially*. It should, taken in a positive sense, be called indeterminate rather than infinite; for ‘The being which we see by nature is the act of being in an initial state, and without any of the terms in which it is completed and rests.’ In the second place, when finite and determinate objects come to be perceived by our understanding, its essential object does not undergo any change whatever either in itself or in its shining. Those objects determine, complete and perfect it only in a partial manner. Speaking in general, ‘The limited objects are partial determinations or terms of the being naturally seen by us.’ The conception of this being is, therefore, always in our mind, only that if those determinations or terms were taken away it would remain exactly in that state of extreme imperfection in which it was at first. By the conception of particular objects, the understanding, from a state of mere power, passes into action, and then (as was very well known to the ancients) such objects, thought as essences or ideas, are themselves, not *matter* on which this faculty exercises itself, but so many *forms* which perfect it by drawing it into a more perfect act than before (1005 etc.).

1424. If I take a limited object, and remove from it all its limits, that object becomes, to me, in a certain way, unlimited. This, however, applies to the *objects* of thought, not to *thought* itself, as Bardili and other Germans pretend. They do not distinguish in the objects the positive part from the negative, *i.e.* the limitation, but assume that the objects themselves are the limits of thought and nothing more. Why this? Because, not having submitted thought to an accurate analysis, they do not perceive that the *act* of thought is one thing, and its *object* another. As a consequence, instead of setting out from the object, they start from the act (see 1338 etc.), and attribute to the latter what is true only of the former.

1425. Moreover, abstract as are the speculations which I

am examining, and much as they seem to tend to an exaggerated spiritualism, we can see in them the evident impress of the materialism of the age. For, our philosophers, having always in their thoughts what takes place in the sense, spoke of the understanding in terms that were applicable only to the sense; and as the sense presented to them nothing but *matter*, so, instead of considering that the objects of the understanding are, as I have said, perfective forms of it, they supposed them to be something similar to *matter*, and of a nature to restrict and limit the understanding itself. Hence they imagined that, by detaching this faculty from its objects, they were setting it free from a sort of material encumbrance which hampered the activity essential to it.¹

Nevertheless, in spite of all this, they now and then relapsed into the contradiction I have indicated above, namely, of making that which is supremely positive consist in the negative; for they could not help seeing sometimes that the understanding, when bereft of its objects, dwindles down, becomes attenuated into a very small thing, and at last is reduced to nothing.

1426. Bardili says that thought disengaged from every object as well as every thinking subject, is purified, and remains simply *thought as such*, or *essential thought*. But what, according to him, is this *thought as such*, this *essential thought*? It is the *possibility of things*. Behold here again the equivocal to which I have so often referred, of attributing to the *act* of thought what belongs only to its *object*. *Possibility*, as I have shown, is exclusively a property of the essential object of thought, that is, of being taken universally. Bardili, on the contrary, places it, not in the object of

¹ S. Thomas taught, on the contrary, that thought is perfected by its objects: 'The intelligible species is the formal principle of the intellectual operation, even as the form of every agent is the principle of its operation. The object known is a perfection of the knower: for the understanding is perfected by this, that it understands in act, inasmuch as the understanding is thereby made one with the object un-

derstood.' 'Species enim intelligibilis principium formale est intellectualis operationis, sicut forma cujuslibet agentis principium est propriæ operationis' (*Cont. Gent. I. c. xlvi.*). 'Intellectum est perfectio intelligentis: secundum enim hoc intellectus perfectus est quod actu intelligit: quod quidem est per hoc quod est unum cum eo quod intelligitur' (*ibid. c. xlvi.*).

thought, but in thought as such, thus applying to the second what belongs to the first.

1427. Again : how does Bardili express this *possibility*? As a negative quantity.¹ Is *possibility* then a pure negation of reality? This is saying too little, forsooth; for a negative quantity is less than nothing, nor can the mind conceive it except in relation to a positive one.

And yet the same Bardili who represents *possibility* as a negative quantity, tells us also that it is the foundation of *reality*, is *thought as thought*, the supreme activity, God himself!

That possibility which is less than nothing, is, then, your God: nought, and less than nought, is converted into a Divinity! On the other hand, the same possibility is *thought as thought*, and it is found in man. What a portent must this human thought be, which is at one and the same time made to vanish into less than nothing, and to be God!

1428. *Reality*, says our philosopher, is only a new determination of *possibility*. If so, reality is both a determination of less than nothing, and a determination of God! This determination is effected by *matter*, but matter itself exists only through thought and with thought, which multiplies itself by repeating itself in itself. Meanwhile *possibility* and *reality* are factors which enter into every *object*, and compose nature, which is only a manifestation, a determination of that God who is less than nothing!

These seem indeed, not merely the delirious ravings of sick men, but also the just punishment of rash and reckless ones.²

¹ Bardili expresses possibility by the negative sign — B.

² Besides the above German philosophers, the author has, in several parts

of his works, refuted Hegel also. See, for instance, the preface to the *Logica*, nos. 41-54; *Teosofia*, nos. 642, 647, 665, 819, 827, etc.—TR.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE STARTING-POINT OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF
VICTOR COUSIN.

ARTICLE I.

Exposition of the system.

1429. Victor Cousin, professor of Philosophy in the faculty of Letters at the University of Paris, has derived many of his doctrines from the German School; but the clearness of his language, the charm of his eloquence, and his sounder method of treatment, by giving to those doctrines a peculiar elegance of form, and a new splendour, render them more popular and attract to them the attention of the general public.

1430. The Professor starts from a fact of consciousness.

According to him, this fact reveals three ideas, which constitute, as he says, the *very foundation of human reason*.¹

Let us hear how he expresses himself on the fact in question:—

‘L’étude de la conscience² est l’étude de l’humanité.

¹ *Cours de l’Histoire de la Philosophie*, Leçon V.

² When a discussion is brought down to its simplest terms, an author can never be too exact in the choice of his expressions. In an argument carried to very far limits, the smallest inaccuracy of language is sure to induce the gravest errors in the deductions. This is why I consider it no loss of time to submit to the reader’s attention what seems to me even the least want of accuracy in the language of the Parisian Professor. For example, I would make here a remark on his proposition: ‘The study of consciousness

is the study of humanity.’ That proposition is quite true in one sense, but it also presents a sense which is utterly false. *Consciousness* is an intellectual fact. Now, precisely because intellectual, it takes us to things which are outside of itself, but are nevertheless necessary for a proper study of humanity. Either, therefore, by the word *consciousness* is meant simply a subjective affection of our own, and then it will not be true to say that the study of humanity is restricted to consciousness alone; or the meaning of that word is made to extend to objects outside of ourselves, and having their

L'étude de la conscience dans le dictionnaire philosophique s'appelle Psychologie. . . . Dans la conscience il y a mille et mille phénomènes sans doute comme dans le monde extérieur ; mais tout de même que le monde extérieur peut se résumer dans deux grandes lois et dans leur rapport, de même tous les faits de conscience peuvent se résumer, et se résumant (je crois l'avoir démontré autrefois) dans un fait constant, permanent, universel, qui subsiste dans toutes les circonstances possibles, qui a lieu dans la conscience du pâtre comme dans celle de Leibnitz, qui est dans toute conscience à une seule condition, c'est qu'il y ait un acte de conscience.'¹

The description he gives of this principal fact is as follows :—

'Tant que l'homme ne se connaît pas, ne s'aperçoit pas, n'a pas la conscience de lui-même, il ne connaît, il n'aperçoit rien ;² car nous ne pouvons rien savoir qu'autant que nous sommes pour nous-mêmes ;³ c'est à dire qu'autant que nous savons que nous sommes ; tout savoir quelconque implique le savoir de soi-même,⁴ non sans doute un savoir développé, mais ce savoir qui consiste du moins à savoir que nous sommes.⁵ Tant que l'homme n'est pas pour lui-même, il est comme s'il n'était pas ; mais du moment qu'il se connaît (et

act of existence independently of us ; and in this case it will have to be admitted that the study of humanity is not complete without the study of these objects also, although they themselves do not exist inside our consciousness.

¹ The appellatives of *constant, permanent, universal*, etc. must not be understood in a rigorous sense. Indeed the individual consciousness is a *conditioned* fact. It depends on the supposition that consciousness has had a beginning, has at some time or other commenced to be in act. As therefore our consciousness is itself contingent and temporal, the fact manifested in it cannot be said to have *always* existed.

² *Being in general* is known by us, not only before we have the consciousness, but also before we have the *idea* of ourselves. In that state, we indeed know what *being* is, but of ourselves we have no knowledge, we have purely

and simply a *feeling* (439 etc.). Again, we come to know the external world, or at least our animal part, before we know ourselves as *persons*.

³ The phrase 'to exist for ourselves' is not fully true, except in the system of Fichte, in which the *Ego* posits itself by an activity of its own. But, as I have said (1388), this *novel* activity is a purely gratuitous assertion, in other words, this *Ego* which freely posits, determines, creates itself, is a chimera. It is true, however, that the transition we make from not having consciousness of ourselves to having it, is a marvel ; it adds to us a part of ourselves, and through it we acquire a new mode of existence.

⁴ This I deny ; all knowledge implies the *feeling*, but not the *knowledge*, of ourselves.

⁵ The knowledge or idea of our own existence is preceded in us by the idea of *being in general*.

remarquez bien que je ne parle pas ici d'un savoir développé et scientifique), il ne se connaît qu'à la condition de savoir tout le reste, de la même manière qu'il se sait lui-même.¹ Tout est donné dans tout,² et l'homme en s'apercevant, en s'abordant lui-même, touche déjà à tout ce qu'il peut atteindre plus tard.'

Let us now hear in what way the Professor explains this his opinion, that in each of our cognitions there must necessarily be found all the rest. Although the passage is somewhat lengthy, I hope the reader will not dislike to see it quoted entire.

'Quand je m'aperçois, je me discerne de tout ce qui n'est pas moi ;³ et en me discernant de tout ce qui n'est pas moi, je fais deux choses : 1° je m'affirme moi-même comme étant ; 2° j'affirme comme étant aussi ce dont je me distingue.⁴ Je ne suis *moi*, je ne suis ce *moi* qui ne se confond avec rien d'étranger à lui, qu'à la condition de me distinguer de tout le reste ;⁵ et se distinguer de quelque chose, c'est supposer que ce dont on se distingue existe.⁶ L'homme ne se trouve donc

¹ When we know that we exist, we know also what we are, in other words, we have also the positive idea of our own specific essence, as has been said in another way by S. Augustine (1196 and 1201). Not so with a multitude of other things, of which, without knowing positively their specific essence, we may know the existence by a *relation* which they have with what is known to us positively.

² This is one of those high-sounding phrases which express nothing definite. To me it seems evident that the necessary does not involve the contingent (real), nor one contingent thing another which does not depend on it. Therefore it is not true that 'All is given in all.'

³ This mode of expression is equivocal. Supposing that I had the intellectual perception of myself only, all other things would be entirely unknown to me. If therefore the Professor means that I should not then confound myself with the things which I do not know, he is perfectly right ; but if, as seems evident, he means that I cannot perceive myself except on condition of

distinguishing myself from other things by a positive act, I must unhesitatingly affirm that he is wrong. The perception of myself depends on no such condition.

⁴ I deny this consequence, and the reason is clear from the preceding note. I may perceive myself without at all thinking of other things ; and if I do not think of them, there is no possibility of my confounding myself with them. Now, not to think a thing, is not the same as to affirm that it exists.

⁵ I beg to repeat that, in order that I may see myself distinctly from all other things, it is enough that I distinguish myself *negatively* as I do when I think of myself and nothing else. The reasoning of Mons. Cousin assumes the truth of the very thing which is in question, and thus errs by a *petitio principii*. In fact, granting for the sake of argument that we, in our first intellectual perception, perceived all things, what would be the result ? That we could not perceive ourselves without at the same time affirming the existence of all other things as distinct from our own.

⁶ If there was question of distinguishing oneself from that thing by a positive

qu'en trouvant autre chose qui l'environne et par conséquent le limite.¹ En effet rentrez un moment en vous-même, et vous reconnaîtrez que le *moi* que vous êtes, est un *moi* limité de toutes parts par des objets étrangers.² Ce *moi* est donc fini ; et c'est même en tant que limité et fini, qu'il est *moi*.³ Mais si le monde extérieur borne le *moi* et lui fait obstacle en tous sens, le *moi* aussi agit sur le monde, le modifie, s'oppose à son action et lui imprime la sienne en quelque degré ; et ce degré, si faible fût-il, devient pour le monde une borne, une limite.⁴ Ainsi le monde qui, dans son opposition au *moi*, est la limite du *moi*, ou le *non-moi*, est à son tour contredit, modifié, limité par le *moi*, qui par là, en même temps qu'il est forcé de se reconnaître limité, borné et fini, marque à son tour le monde extérieur, le *non-moi* dont il se distingue, du caractère de borné, de limité et de fini.⁵ Voilà l'opposition mutuelle dans laquelle nous nous saisissons ; cette opposition est permanente dans la conscience, elle dure tant qu'il y a conscience.⁶

act, this would be true ; but no act is necessary for enabling me to avoid confounding a thing which falls under my perception, with another which I do not know. For instance, I perceive the Dome of S. Peter's ; will it be maintained that in order not to confound the Dome of S. Peter's with the tower of Pisa, I must perceive the latter also ? Have I any need to affirm the existence of the Sistine Obelisk, in order to be able to say that I have a distinct perception of the Vatican Apollo ? Each perception is of its own nature distinct from the others, and not in virtue of any positive act, through which we separate one thing from all the rest by affirming its existence.

I do not, however, deny that the more points of difference we happen to discover and note amongst things, especially such as are similar, the more distinct is the notion we form of each of them.

¹ Man is not limited by other things, except in so far as they concur in constituting him what he is ; it is his own nature that is limited, hence he perceives his own limits by perceiving his nature, essentially distinct in itself from all other natures.

² The external things which do not form a constitutive part of man's nature

may place limits to the *exercise* of his faculties, and to the *effects* which these might externally produce ; but this is not man's essential limitation, it is only a consequence, a result thereof. It is not, therefore, the external world that essentially limits man. If there were no external world, man would be limited all the same.

³ Not in so far as the *Ego* is limited by external things, but in so far as it has a limitation of its own and intrinsic to its nature.

⁴ The external world does not receive its limitation from the *Ego*, but has it in itself, in its own nature. We cannot even say with propriety, that the *Ego* limits the *action* of the forces of the external world ; it only modifies their results, the quantity of their action remaining the same. As a matter of fact, the *Ego* and the forces of the external world, when placed in mutual opposition, sometimes impede each other's *movements* and their results, while at other times they rather aid and stimulate one another.

⁵ All this is false, as we have said in the preceding notes ; the external world would be limited, even if man did not exist.

⁶ We feel ourselves by a fundamental *feeling*, and this feeling of our own

Thus far we hear the language of Fichte ; but the French philosopher very soon outstrips him by joining company, as it would seem, with Schelling in the following manner :—

‘ Mais cette opposition, pensez-y bien, messieurs, se résout en une seule et même notion, celle du fini. Ce *moi* que nous sommes est fini ; le *non-moi* qui le limite est fini lui-même, et limité par le *moi* ;¹ ils le sont à différents degrés, mais ils le sont également ; nous sommes donc encore dans la sphère du fini. N’y a-t-il pas autre chose dans la conscience ?

‘ Oui, messieurs ; en même temps que la conscience saisit le *moi* comme fini dans son opposition au *non-moi* fini lui-même, elle rapporte ce *moi* et ce *non-moi* finis, bornés, relatifs, contingents, à une unité supérieure, absolue et nécessaire qui les contient et qui les explique, et qui a tous les caractères opposés à ceux que le *moi* trouve en lui-même et dans le *non-moi* qui lui est analogue.² Cette unité est absolue, comme le *moi* et le *non-moi* sont relatifs. Cette unité est une substance,³

selves accompanies the *sensations* which we receive from the external world. If these sensations limit us in part, they also in part remove our natural limitation. I mean that of our being bereft of external sensible perceptions, and of the ignorance in which we are previously to acquired sensations.

¹ See the preceding notes.

² The analysis of *intellectual perception* does not give all this. What we find in it is, that man in intellectually perceiving any finite thing, himself for instance, or an external reality (external finite realities, are in their concept all independent in such a manner, that one can be perceived without the other), man, I say, refers this finite thing of which he has sensible experience, to the *idea of being in general*, and by means of this relation cognises it. Now in this operation, *being* is an absolute and necessary unit, but only in the *logical order*. It is not apprehended as a *real being*, having *subsistence* in itself, in which respect it would properly be pronounced to be both a real substance and a real cause. Into our first intellectual perception of finite realities, therefore, there enters indeed something of the absolute, namely, *being* as the principle of knowledge, but not *being* as *subsistent*, as the supreme substance and cause.

³ For us the *ideal being*, which enters into the intellectual perception is not as yet a *subsistence* ; consequently we cannot call it a substance or an efficient cause, but only a *formal cause*. It is true, that by means of *reflection* upon it we can understand that there must be a First and Subsistent Being, the completion of ideal being ; but this does not mean, that in the first intellectual act of which I speak, the First and Subsistent Being has fallen under our perception ; it means only, that we have an indication of Him, a similitude, a conditional, a rule whereby to argue that He exists, a commencement of Him. Let me illustrate this by examples. Some one asks : Which is the way to Rome ? The way is pointed out to him. He sees it, he has perceived it. But has he perceived Rome ? No, he has only perceived the way to Rome. Another inquires : What is the height of yonder mountain ? A geometrician comes up, and instructs him in the best method of taking that altitude. Does the inquirer now know the altitude itself ? Not in the least. He might, if so minded, turn upon the geometrician and say : ‘ Sir, you do not answer my question ; it is not the *method* of finding the height of the mountain, but the height itself that I wish to know. Therefore to know the *way* or

comme le *moi* et le *non-moi*, tout en étant substantiels par leur rapport à la substance, sont en eux-mêmes de simples phénomènes, modifiables comme des phénomènes, limités comme des phénomènes, s'évanouissant et reparaissant comme des phénomènes.¹ De plus, cette unité supérieure n'est pas seulement une substance, c'est une cause aussi. En effet, le *moi* ne se saisit que dans ses actes, comme une cause qui agit sur le monde extérieur ;² et le monde extérieur n'arrive à la connaissance du *moi* que par les impressions qu'il fait sur lui, par les sensations que le *moi* éprouve et qu'il ne fait pas, et qu'il ne peut pas détruire, qu'il ne peut donc rapporter à lui-même, et qu'il rapporte alors à quelque chose d'étranger à lui comme cause : cette cause étrangère est le monde ;³ et comme c'est une cause finie, et que le *moi* aussi est une cause finie, l'unité, la substance qui contient le *moi* et le *non-moi*, étant une cause, doit être conséquemment à sa nature une cause infinie.⁴

the *rule* whereby to find a thing or a cognition we are in search of, is very different from becoming actually possessed of that thing or of that cognition. Hence, if in the analysis of perception, or even in the primal act of our understanding, we find a *datum*, a way, a rule, which can through reasoning enable us to know the existence of a first Being, absolute, essentially self-subsistent, and the cause of all things ; it does not by any means follow, that in that first intellection the said Being Himself is seen by us, and still less that He falls under the first of our intellectual perceptions.

¹ The *Ego*, having once made its appearance, does not disappear any more, because, being intelligent, it is immortal. The elements of matter do not vanish, but only its various compounds.

² We feel ourselves also in ourselves, and it is because of this, that we feel the external world. But we do not *advert* to the feeling of ourselves until after we have felt the external world.

³ Cousin here supposes that the human spirit (1) feels itself modified by the

external world ; (2) that, being unable to refer these modifications to itself, it refers them to an external agent, the world ; (3) that, finding the world finite, it has recourse at last to an infinite cause. Are not these three distinct steps ? and necessarily successive ? Can our spirit refer its sensations to the external world without having experienced those sensations ? Can it infer the existence of the first cause ; unless, besides experiencing the said sensations and referring them to the external world, it has observed that the latter is finite, and therefore demands an infinite ? If the three steps are successive, clearly they cannot all be contained together in the first act of consciousness. Sensations must fall into consciousness first, then must come the thought of the external world, or the intellectual perception of bodies, and in the third place there must supervene a reflection through which man ascends to the affirmation of God.

⁴ *Cours de l'Histoire de la Philosophie*, Leçon V. 21 mai 1828.

ARTICLE II.

Cousin's threefold perception cannot be the starting-point of philosophy.

§ I.

Our first intellectual perception does not necessarily involve the perception of the absolute and infinite cause.

1431. We must not confound *the order of real things* with that of *ideas*, which exist only to the mind.

In the order of real things, it is manifest that no contingent and limited being can subsist unless a necessary and absolute Being give it subsistence.

But, given contingent and limited beings already subsisting, are we obliged, in order to have *perception* of them, to perceive the necessary and absolute Being Himself from Whom they proceed? This second question belongs to the order of cognition, to the way in which our intellectual perceptions take place, and must not be confounded with the first.

1432. Now what is the right method to pursue in solving this question? Not, certainly, to examine the relation in which the contingent being stands to the necessary; because this would be having recourse to the *order of real things*, while the question relates to the order and the nature of *ideas* and perceptions. The true and natural method can be no other than that of taking the *intellectual perception* as it is in the fact, *observing it*, and submitting it to analysis. When we have to do with facts, we must not argue *à priori* as to how they *ought* to be, but must be content with accepting them as they *are*. The Parisian Professor, on the contrary; by an evident abuse of *à priori* reasoning, has directed the whole of his argument to establish how the perception *ought* to take place. He says in substance: 'The finite cannot *exist* without the infinite; therefore it cannot be *perceived* without the infinite.' I reply: 'Your premiss is quite true; but your inference is false. The premiss belongs to the *order of real things*; the inference belongs to the *order of ideas*. You confound these two orders; but unless you can prove by satisfactory evidence that what is

true in reference to the first is necessarily true also in reference to the second, no rule of logic binds me to believe it.

Let us not, then, begin by imposing laws on the nature of cognition ; we have not the power to do so. Our only proper course is to begin by experience, to take the fact of cognition, not as we think it ought to be, but as it actually is, to analyse it, see what it contains, and hence what laws it follows.

Now the *intellectual perception* is limited to the objects perceived, and terminates in them (514–517). It does not go one jot further. If the object is one and limited, so will be the perception.—But that object exists only conditionally on the existence of other objects.—Quite so ; but the *perception* of the one is independent of the perceptions of the others. Can I not, for instance, perceive and know the son in his own proper existence, without knowing his father ? Can I not know the stream without knowing its source, the fruit without having ever seen the tree ? And yet the son could never have existed without a father, the stream without a source, the fruit without the tree. So in like manner, I can perceive the limited, without having any positive perception of the unlimited ; although without the unlimited the limited could not exist. And if the intellectual perception of limited beings be carefully analysed, it will be found indeed to include an *incipient* conception of the unlimited (the idea of being), but no *positive* cognition, no *perception* of an unlimited, subsistent being. This distinction between the positive part of our ideas, and their *void* or *incipient* part, suffices to show the hollowness of all the apparent reasons which may have induced the talented Professor to form the opinion which I regret I cannot share with him.

§ 2.

Our intellectual perception of the external world does not necessarily involve the intellectual perception of ourselves.

1433. I shall prove this proposition in the same way as I have proved the preceding one, namely by appealing to an accurate analysis of the act of perception ; and to make the proof more evident, I shall avail myself of a property which

that act has in common with every action of a finite being. For the sake of greater clearness the whole of what I have to say will be arranged in a series of propositions.

First proposition. Experience shows that every action of a finite being has a term, either external to the agent, or at least distinct from the commencement of the action.

In fact, the action of a limited being, which begins, progresses, and reaches completion, is a species of motion whereby the activity of the being passes out of the state of virtuality or power, and produces at last a given effect. Now this effect, which is the term of the activity thus exercised, is invariably different from the beginning and the root of the action. For, if it were in no way different, no change could be conceived as having taken place; since the concept of change essentially involves diversity and distinction. And when the action ends outside the operating being, it does so only through a certain contact or most close *union* with the effect externally produced, a union of the same duration as the act by which the effect is produced. But the external effect, when once produced, sometimes detaches itself or seems detached from the action of its cause; while at other times the cause disappears altogether, and the effect is found perfectly distinct and alone.

It is, then, a law of every being, when operating, to pass from within to outside of itself; so that the root of the activity is found in the innermost nature of the agent, and the term is either in its extreme part, or else entirely detached from it.

Hence the corollary, that 'The first term of the action of a finite being is never its radical entity itself.'

1434. *Second proposition.* If the above is the law of every new action of finite beings, it must apply also to the action which the human spirit performs in intellectually perceiving.

This also is confirmed by experience. The human spirit, therefore, can never have its own self for the first object of its intellectual faculty.

1435. *Third proposition.* The term of a perception is its object, and the object of a perception means what is perceived and known by that perception.

This proposition is evident, and from it flows the corollary, that the object of the perception is *all* that the act of perception causes the perceiver to know. For if by that act something else were perceived besides the object of the perception, this something else would precisely be *object*, by the definition.

1436. *Conclusion.* It follows that man, in his first intellectual perception, cannot perceive himself but only something else, which is presented to his mind as object. This, as I have said, is confirmed by experience: man does not perceive himself except through a *reflex* act, by which he turns his attention on himself. On the other hand, he perceives the external world by a *direct* act, whereby he, as it were, leaves and forgets himself, to go outside and take cognisance of that world, which thus becomes the term of his perception as well as the limit of its contents.

As therefore the external world is not the percipient *ego*, so the perception of the external world and that of the *ego* are two perceptions essentially distinct. It is impossible for these two objects to be perceived (the first time) by one and the same perception, not only because they are essentially distinct one from the other, but also because they are presented to man by two essentially different feelings, *i.e.* the one by an internal feeling (the substantial feeling of *self*, no. 1195, TR.), and the other by external sensations. Hence it comes to pass, that the acts of the two perceptions go in contrary directions. The act of perceiving the external world goes simply from within to without, whilst the act of perceiving oneself moves as it were circularly from within to within.¹ Now since an identical act cannot have two contrary directions, it is absurd to say that by one sole (first) perception, man simultaneously perceives himself and the external world. The erroneous belief that he does may have arisen from confounding *feeling* with *intellectual perception*. For as in perceiving the external world (or any other object), we are always accompanied by the feeling of ourselves, it was easy

¹ Some one might object that this manner of speaking is metaphorical. Well, let it be so; but it does none the less clearly express an essential differ-

ence between the act by which we intellectually perceive the external world, and that by which we intellectually perceive ourselves.

to slip into the conclusion that, together with the external world, we also intellectually perceive ourselves. But the deduction does not hold, because feeling and intellectual perception are two essentially different things.

§ 3.

The primal intellection whence our every reasoning essentially takes its rise is that of being in general.

1437. The threefold perception described by Professor Cousin as the commencement of the operations of the human spirit, has therefore no existence. On the contrary, this spirit, when first moved to perception, cannot perceive anything beyond what is furnished to it by its own feeling.

As, then, our feeling is twofold, namely, of ourselves and of external things, it follows that we can only have two kinds of intellectual perception, each essentially distinct from the other—the perception of ourselves, and the perception of the external world.

Of the *infinite* we cannot, by natural means, have perception in this life, because the infinite does not reveal itself to us as subsistent. Hence we have only a negative or incipient idea of it. This idea is formed through an act of *reflection* which, by reasoning on the perceptions we have of ourselves and of the external world, discovers that these finite beings could not exist except on condition of an infinite giving them existence.

In its first step onwards, therefore, the human spirit is bound to begin by one of the two intellectual perceptions I have named, namely (1) that of the external world; or (2) that of itself; and each of these excludes the other in such a manner, that if the spirit begins with the first, it cannot begin with the second.¹

¹ S. Thomas derives the development of the human understanding from the perception of the sensible world, and he holds that it is only after this perception has been acquired that it turns its attention upon itself. And in truth, how else could our reason be

moved to reflect upon itself (a movement which is almost against nature), and thus see and know itself, unless it were previously drawn out of its natural state of quiescence by the stimuli of external things? It is these that first draw to them the attention of the un-

But whichever of these perceptions the spirit may begin with in the exercise of its activity, the analysis of both of them gives us this result, that it would be impossible for it to begin to operate unless it had previously an interior and essential intuition, not indeed of a subsistent being, but of being taken universally, which becomes common to all things alike, and which I have also termed *initial* being.

It is therefore from this *conception*, antecedent to all acquired knowledge, that Philosophy must set out as from its true principle, even as it is from it alone that every man necessarily starts in his reasonings—the rustic who in his simple way discourses about the herds and the furrows, no less than the scientist who carries on learned investigations on the course of the heavens and the nature of God.

derstanding. Herein the understanding may be likened to the corporeal eye. What is the first thing seen by our eye? Certainly not its own self. Its first regards are towards external bodies; these are the scene which it first perceives. Nay the eye would never see itself without a mirror, in which it beholds, not indeed itself, but its image. I must, however, observe, that in this last respect, the simile does not hold,

for the eye sees its image by that same act by which it sees the mirror, a body external to it, whereas the understanding, unlike the sense, has a *reflective* power by which 'it turns itself to itself' as Dante says (*Se in se rigira*). Nevertheless the understanding, before it begins to reflect, must be set in motion and be drawn to its direct act (See S. Thomas, S. I. lxxxvii. 1).

CHAPTER IV.

THE PURE À PRIORI REASONING DOES NOT LEAD US TO KNOW ANYTHING IN THE ORDER OF SUBSISTENT FINITE BEINGS.

1438. What I have said thus far demonstrates the possibility of pure *à priori* reasoning ; for it shows the existence, in our mind, of a luminous point anterior to all sensible experience, and placed in us as an element, so to speak, of our nature—I mean that *being* which is always most present to us.

Having thus discovered the possibility of this kind of reasoning, we can define the limits of its force by the following principle : ‘Whatever is contained in *ideal being*, or may be deduced from it alone without having to rely on any other datum of experience, belongs to pure *à priori* reasoning ; and, whatever, in order to be known, requires, besides *ideal being*, some other datum of experience, whether external or internal, does not belong to pure *à priori* reasoning.’

1439. Such being the case, the analysis of the idea of *being taken universally* will reveal to us the capabilities of pure *à priori* reasoning by answering the following questions : (1) What does that idea contain in itself? (2) What does it suppose as its condition? (3) What does it not contain in itself? Or (4) What cannot be logically deduced from its contents alone? We will begin with the two last questions, in order that, by the method called *per exclusionem*, we may be able to narrow the field of our inquiries.

(1) What, then, does the idea of *being*, always present to our mind, *not* contain in itself?

We have seen that *being*, as essentially present to our

spirit, is incomplete, and that this incompleteness consists in the absence of its terms, on which account it is called *initial*, and therefore *common*, because, not having any terms, it is naturally capable of being terminated and completed in countless ways.

Now as a consequence of this limitation it follows, that of the *being* in question no other existence is manifested except that which it has in minds, as object ; nothing more.

1440. And here a very keen attention is necessary in order not to confound two things which are wholly distinct ; for it is one thing to say 'A being present to minds,' and quite another to say 'A modification of the mind.' If this being of which we have intuition were nothing but ourselves modified, it would not be an *objective*, but a *subjective* entity.

This distinction is almost entirely unknown at the present day ; but it is none the less true or the less important on this account. I beg to repeat what I have said so many times : a philosopher must not shrink before facts ; it is his duty to admit them, and admit them all, then to analyse them, and loyally to accept the result. He is quite free to say, I do not understand this thing, and to marvel as much as he pleases ; but the facts he must accept, and not presume that a thing is just what he has chosen to picture it to himself, neither more nor less. If he acts otherwise he will never attain to true knowledge, but will take to-day as true what to-morrow he will find to have been a blunder, a silly notion. Returning, then, to our case, it is by accurately analysing the first fact of the mind—*i.e.* the intuition of *being*—that we come distinctly to see these two truths : (1) that it is a being present to the mind, objective, but not subsistent in itself, and (2) that it is not a mere modification of the mind.

1441. I say in the first place, it is a being present to the mind, but not yet subsistent in itself, outside the mind. What does the phrase 'A being present to the mind' signify ? It signifies a being which exists in the mind in such a way, that if we were to suppose that there was *no mind* for it to be present to, it would not be at all ; for its mode of being is

intelligibility itself, distinct from, but in the mind. Through it we know, not the act of existing in itself, but the act of existing in the mind. To anyone who properly understands this definition, it will be self-apparent that the initial and most common being presents to our spirit a simple potentiality, and not any subsistence whatever—a sketch, as it were, of being, but not any being complete and actuated in itself.

To know, therefore, that the being naturally seen by us is simply a logical principle, a rule to direct our spirit, an idea, and not yet a real being, it suffices to examine and analyse it impartially. Thus do we come to perceive, that this being, precisely because common to all subsistent beings, is not, and cannot be, any one of them, but only the foundation and the intelligibility or knowableness of all. Hence the refutation of those philosophers, ancient and modern, who confounded the order of ideas with the order of real things, and who changed *ideal being* into a God,¹ even as they changed the *essences* or *ideas* of things into so many separated intelligences. Evidently, they did not understand the true nature of ideal being, which, though existing to the mind, is not a modification of the limited and finite subject that has the vision of it.

1442. I say, then, in the second place, that being taken in general is not a mere modification of the mind, or of the subject that intuits it.

This also will be evident if we attentively consider the same being. By examining the thought of being we shall discover that being is the *object* of the mind, nay, that it is, as I have so often said, the *objectivity* of all the real beings in which the attention of the mind terminates. It is, therefore, essentially distinct from the thinking subject and from whatever may belong thereto. Its light is superior to the subject. The subject is the receiver, the light is the thing received, and in a way wholly *sui generis*. The subject is

¹ In Père Hardouin's *Athei Detecti* there is, underlying and pervading the whole, a true concept, which is, that to divinise *logical truth* is a species of

Atheism; and if the work be read from this point of view, it will be found not devoid of interest.

necessitated to see, much more than is the case with the bodily eye when struck with the bright rays of the sun. Being is immutable, is as it is; the subject is mutable. Being imposes the law, and gives to the subject that actuation in virtue of which it is intelligent. And since it could not in a proper sense be said, that the subject *suffers* from the object because the presence of this goes no further than to empower and oblige the subject to excite in itself a new activity, it follows, that what is effectuated in the subject must, rather than *passion*, be called an *augmentation of act*. Now all these observations serve to refute the error opposite to that of the philosophers above mentioned, as well as of all those who, because they do not find in ideal being a reality subsistent outside the mind, deny its objectivity, and maintain that it is purely subjective; *i.e.* a pure modification of the thinking subject.¹

The attentive observation, therefore, of this being which naturally shines to our mind leads to the conclusion, that while on the one hand it is an object essentially different from us, the intuiting subjects, on the other, it presents to us no existence save that which it has in minds, so that if *all minds* were removed it would absolutely disappear: hence its name of *ideal being*.

1443. Those who are fond of systematising will immediately begin to say, that 'if the being of which I speak does not subsist in itself, independently of us the intuiting subjects, it must needs be a modification of ourselves, because between these two alternatives there can be no middle term.' To these I would reply: You peremptorily declare that there *cannot*, in this case, be a middle term. But is not this an arbitrary pronouncement? Truth will indeed have but little chance of asserting itself if its discovery is to depend on our imposing laws on nature, or on the assumption that she adapts her ways precisely to what our little minds conceive them to be. For my own part, I do not care to trouble with the inquiry as to whether a middle term is *possible*. It is enough for me to have ascertained that the being which our mind sees is neither

¹ Even Galluppi has not guarded himself against this oversight.

real and subsistent (in so far as it manifests itself to us), nor a *modification of ourselves*. This being the fact, I conclude from it that there *is* a middle term. With *fact*, every reasonable person ought to be satisfied : ' *Ab esse ad posse datur consecutio.*'

Having, then, discovered the nature of the *being* which shines to our mind, we are in a position to affirm with certainty, that it neither contains in itself, nor shows to us any real being subsistent outside the mind. Consequently, it is impossible for us, by the sole intuition of that being, to gain any knowledge of things subsisting in a contingent manner.

1444. II. What is it that cannot be deduced from the contents of *being* taken universally ?

I answer : the *subsistence* of any limited being. And in truth, *being* taken universally does not necessarily demand any limited being whatever ; whence it follows that limited beings generally are not necessary, but contingent only. For, the appellation *necessary* belongs to that Being without which the *being* naturally seen by us would not be at all ; so that the second is related to the first as a conditional is to its condition.

From the solution, therefore, of these two questions, the reader can see the truth of what I stated at the heading of this chapter, namely that ' By *pure à priori* reasoning alone it is impossible for us to know the subsistence of any finite being.'

1445. Hence we may lay it down as a canon of right philosophical method, that, ' To arrive at the knowledge of subsistent finite beings, we must follow the road of experience, and never recede from it, lest we should lose ourselves in vague and abstract reasonings which have no true value in reference to the order of facts.'

CHAPTER V.

PURE À PRIORI REASONING LEADS US TO THE LOGICAL PRINCIPLES BELONGING TO THE ORDER OF IDEAL BEINGS.

ARTICLE I.

Definitions.

1446. I call that knowledge *à priori* which flows from the *idea* of *being*, the constitutive form and supreme rule of human reason.

1447. I call that knowledge *pure à priori*, which not only flows from the idea of being, but does so without requiring any data of experience, internal or external; consequently that knowledge which can be found in *being* itself by analysing it, or else can be deduced from it as the condition from its conditional.

ARTICLE II.

On the limit of the capabilities of 'pure à priori' knowledge.

1448. The analysis of *pure being*, taken without any admixture of experimental *data*, does not reveal to us in that being anything except the characteristic of *unity* or perfect *simplicity*. Thus in our primitive idea we see (1) the *first of all activities*, namely that of being, and (2) *absolute unity*,¹ as the essential characteristic of this *first activity*. To these two conceptions, and a few others which I have indicated elsewhere,

¹ There is no *absolute unity* apart from *ideal being*; nor would a name have been imposed on it different from that given to *being*, *i.e.* the name *unity*, if men had not felt the need of indicating that being excludes multiplicity. In so far, therefore, as unity is considered separately from being, it signi-

fies, properly speaking, only a *negation*, the negation of *multiplicity*. Hence the worthlessness of so many speculations which have been indulged in concerning *unity*, and the radical defect of which consisted in considering unity as something standing by itself, separately from *being*.

is reduced the whole of our *pure à priori* knowledge. Hence we can see how it is that *unity* lies at the fountain-head of human knowledge, that all true unity proceeds from the understanding, and that our cognitions partake of this marvellous unity.

1449. *Multiplicity* is an *à posteriori* cognition, given solely by experience. Not only is it not contained in *ideal being*, but it cannot even be deduced therefrom by means of reasoning; because though the acts by which we reflect on being may be repeated, yet they all terminate in that identical being; nor is there any possibility of our seeing it multiplied except we come down to consider it in relation to those various acts of our spirit whereby experience has already commenced.

Besides submitting *ideal being* to analysis, we can also make on it *pure à priori* reasonings; but of this I shall speak in the next chapter.

ARTICLE III.

On the limit of the capabilities of 'à priori' knowledge.

1450. In the application of the idea of being to the data of experience, the being of which we have the vision is completed and terminated in various limited ways, and thus constitutes our acquired knowledge.

We know three kinds of things: (1) beings subsistent in themselves independently of our mind, such as bodies; (2) feelings; (3) ideal entities, or essences. The two first kinds constitute the *matter* of our cognition, the third constitutes its *form*. Whatever there is of *formal* in cognition, belongs to *à priori* knowledge (304-309, 325-327). Let us see how far the province of this knowledge extends.

1451. As soon as *ideal being* comes to be considered in its various relations, it takes different names expressive of those relations. If considered as the source of our acquired knowledge, it takes the name of *truth*. If considered as the first activity, capable of being completed by subsistence, and that subsistence essentially lovable, it takes the name of *good* or perfection.

The ideas, therefore, of the *true* and the *good* arise from

the very first application of ideal being, and constitute the two most general aspects in which this being presents itself when applied. They correspond to the two modes in which essences exist, viz., in the mind and outside the mind. Ideal being in its application in the mind as the source of acquired knowledge, is *truth*; and in its application outside the mind as the source of lovable subsistence, it is *good* (bene).¹

1452. *Truth*, therefore, is the general relation which our knowledge of *being* has with our other cognitions, all of which are reducible to *being* as to the test and criterion of their value. Let us now see what partial modes ideal being does assume in its partial applications.

We have seen that the *pure à priori* knowledge furnished by the analysis of ideal being contains two elementary ideas, which are the basis of all human knowledge: (1) the idea of the first of all activities, that of ideal being itself; (2) the idea of absolute unity (1448). Hence there arise, in the application of being, two sets of principles, according to the two elements of which being is composed.²

Being, considered positively as *activity*, takes the form of the four principles which I have already explained, namely, of cognition, of contradiction, of substance, and of causation (559-569).

Being, considered as *absolute unity*, is the first element and the foundation of the idea of *quantity*, and transforms itself afterwards into the principles by which quantities are governed, such as, 'The whole is greater than a part,' and other like principles, whereon the mathematical sciences are raised.

1453. Briefly, by becoming applied, ideal being transforms itself into, and terminates in all the *essences of things*. These essences, as the ancients taught,³ are the principles of all the

¹ On the nature of *good*, see the author's *Principles of Moral Science*, Ch. II. art. 1 (Tr.).

² This is not a true composition, because unity does not exist by itself alone, being, as I have said, only the negation of *multiplicity*: hence it does not militate against the simplicity of being; on the contrary, it is in reality nothing but that simplicity itself. Nevertheless, such is the nature of

language, that it leads sometimes to equivocal expressions; because language marks by a word, not only that which is, but also the negation of that which is. Owing to this fact, even nothingness seems to be something.

³ Thus S. Thomas says: 'The principle of all the knowledge which human reason can have about a thing is the concept of the substance (*i.e.* the *essence*)

sciences. Hence the idea of being is at once the origin and the immovable foundation of all human knowledge.

All these principles, however, remain within the order of ideas. Can we not, then, pass from the idea of being to the field of reality? Has this idea no interior force capable of taking us beyond itself? This is what I shall have to examine in the following chapters.

But before doing so, I will prove by a new and, as it seems to me, irrefragable argument, that 'Whatever is deduced from ideal being is an *à priori* deduction,' because ideal being itself is not produced by any abstraction, but given by nature.

thereof; for the principle of all the demonstrations relating to that thing is nothing else than its essence itself' (*C. Gent.* I. iii).

CHAPTER VI.

THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE OF THIS WHOLE WORK IS CONFIRMED BY A NEW ARGUMENT WHICH SHOWS THAT THE IDEA OF BEING IS OF SUCH A NATURE THAT IT CANNOT BE FORMED BY ABSTRACTION.

1454. If the idea of being were the result of abstraction, it would not be in us antecedently to all experience, and, by consequence, there would be no such thing as the *à priori* reasoning of whose force I am treating in this Section. It will not, therefore, be amiss now that the analysis just made of this idea affords me a favourable opportunity, to corroborate still further the truth which I have demonstrated in the second and following Sections, namely, that the idea of being cannot be obtained by means of abstraction.

Let us examine the nature of abstraction, and see how far its powers extend. To *abstract*, means nothing else than mentally to divide one part or element of a thing from another, and consider this part or element by itself alone, as if the other did not exist. When, therefore, I analyse an idea, I simply seek to ascertain its contents. I do not impose any law on it. I do not start by saying: 'Such a thing *must* be found in this idea,' or 'Such other thing *must not* be found.' Pure abstraction knows nothing of any such rules. It recognises what *is*, and there its office ends.

Still the formation of *abstracts* is subject to certain laws which are immutable. For example, I can in virtue of abstraction consider the rectilinear extension separately from the superficial or the solid; but my operation is subject to this law, that 'I cannot in reason believe that the abstract entity called rectilinear extension is a true being subsisting by

itself apart from the other two dimensions.' On the other hand, if I think of the upper half of a column abstractedly from the lower, I am not bound by the same law; for 'I may consider the abstracted half of the column as a thing having its own proper subsistence, though detached from the other half.' Again, I may, if I please, consider a body abstractedly from its *weight*, but only on condition 'that the body on which I make this abstraction cannot at the same time be considered by me as a true body, *i.e.* as having weight.' For in the case of two contrary things, I am free to think either the one or the other, but not the two together. Abstraction, therefore, has certain limits, certain laws which it cannot transgress; and they may be reduced to three, namely, it cannot make, (1) two contradictory things to be non-contradictory; (2) an accident to be conceived as subsisting without a substance; (3) an effect to be conceivable as without a cause. These three primary laws of abstraction are not, therefore, produced by abstraction, but by the force of the three principles of *contradiction*, *substance* and *causation*. Since, then, abstraction is a function subordinate to these three principles, and bound to follow and obey them, it is manifest that their force cannot come from abstraction.

Now these principles which impose limits and laws to abstraction itself, as well as to the other operations of the human understanding,¹ are nothing but the *idea of being* considered in its applications.

Therefore the idea of being, by its intrinsic force, directs

¹ Some writers reduce all the operations of the human understanding to *analysis* and *synthesis*. I shall only observe, that we must very carefully distinguish two widely different kinds of synthesis, in one of which the understanding puts forth its peculiar energy much more than in the other. Synthesis cannot be defined in general, as it is the custom to do, 'A conjunction of ideas.' This is only one species of synthesis; there is another species which calls for greater attention. In it the intelligent spirit does not merely join together several ideas that are al-

ready in its possession, but produces to itself new ideas. And this it does in two ways: (1) by the *primitive synthesis*, wherein it joins a feeling with the idea of being, and so produces the perceptions and ideas of things (118-132); (2) by instantaneously rising (through the use of the *integrating faculty*) from the idea of the effects observed, to the formation of the idea of their cause, or by performing some other similar operation (632 etc.). Through this second way, *negative* ideas are produced; through the first, *positive* ones.

and imposes laws on abstraction, and consequently cannot be produced by or originate in abstraction (243).

1455. Hence, when in the course of this work I give to the idea of being taken universally the appellation of *most abstract*, I mean, not that it is produced by an abstraction, but only that of its own nature it stands entirely apart from all subsistent beings. Indeed, speaking of the abstractions formed by ourselves, it might be said that there are some ideas more abstract than the idea of being. Thus, for example, the ideas of *unity*, of *possibility*, etc., suppose an abstraction exercised upon being itself, although the mind cannot think them unless by keeping its eye on *being*, and referring them to it.

CHAPTER VII.

PURE À PRIORI REASONING LEADS US TO KNOW THE
EXISTENCE OF AN INFINITE—*i.e.* OF GOD.

ARTICLE I.

How a reasoning may be formed without making use of any other datum than the idea of being.

1456. An argumentation which makes use of no other datum than the idea of being would at first sight seem impossible. For we cannot argue without judgments and reasonings, which are intellectual operations requiring several terms. The idea of being, on the contrary, is most simple, and consequently one term only. No judgment, therefore, no reasoning seems possible by means of this idea alone.

But the difficulty vanishes when we consider that one and the same idea becomes many, according to the different ways of using it and the different *reflections* of which it is made the subject. As often as our mind looks at one of its ideas under a new relation, there is a fresh idea formed. Let me apply this to the idea of being.

I have always the idea of being in my mind. But I am also possessed of the power to reflect on the same again and again, and, by this means, observe, analyse and judge of it. Marvellous as this may appear, it is a fact.

For example, when, discoursing about the idea of being I say that it is universal, necessary etc., by what rule am I guided? Of what idea do I make use in forming these judgments? Of the very same idea of being. This idea is, therefore, capable of being applied to, and recognised through itself. It can serve both as predicate and as subject; as the *rule for judging* and as the *thing judged of*. Such is the

wonderful property of our mind, which has the power to turn itself upon itself. Such is the wonderful property of ideal being, which, without losing its simplicity, can multiply itself, and, by what I would almost call a virginal fecundity,¹ generate reasoning within its own bosom.

ARTICLE II.

Hints on a pure à priori demonstration of the existence of God.

1457. It is possible, then, to form a reasoning with no other datum than that of the idea of being ; and this is truly a *pure à priori* reasoning, inasmuch as it requires only a datum evident through itself, and not acquired through experience.

Now I believe also, that with the sole datum of the idea of being, it is possible to work out a rigorous and irrefragable demonstration of the existence of God ; which would therefore be a *pure à priori* demonstration. It is not, however, my intention to enlarge on this argument ; I will only give some hints of it.

1458. *Being taken in general*, which naturally shines to our mind, is, as I have said, of such a nature, that, whilst on the one hand, it reveals to us no subsistence outside the mind and on this account may be called by the name of *logical being* ; on the other hand, it would be absurd to view it as a modification of our spirit. Nay the fact is that it exhibits an authority so overwhelming, that our spirit cannot help being entirely subject thereto. We are conscious of having no power against being, no power to effect the least change

¹ A man who had only the idea of being, no sensation, no stimulus to move his mind, would never make any reasoning whatever. I need not stop to prove this, because it is evident both in itself and from the whole theory expounded in the present work. It does not, however, in any way damage the question I am now treating. I do not ask here whether an individual possessed of the idea of being alone would have therein the material conditions and the impellent *motive* which are necessary to the actual formation of

a reasoning ; but I ask whether, assuming that those conditions and that motive supervened in him, he would find in the idea of being all the essentials requisite for that purpose. In short, my object is, not to stultify myself or the reader by pretending to prove to him that the infant in his mother's womb makes *à priori* reasonings, but it is to show that an adult of fully-developed intellect, or rather a philosopher, can institute that kind of reasoning which is called *pure à priori*.

in it.¹ Moreover, being is absolutely immutable; it is the knowableness of all things, the fount of all cognitions. It has none of that contingent nature which belongs to us. It is a light which we always see, but which has dominion over us, vanquishes us, and, by completely bringing us under subjection to itself, ennobles us. Besides, we can think of ourselves as non-existent; but it would be impossible to think that being in general, namely, possibility, truth, are not. Truth was truth before we came into this world, nor could there ever have been a period when it was not such. Is this nothing? Certainly not; for nothingness does not constrain me, does not necessitate me to pronounce anything. Now the nature of that truth which shines within me, binds me to say, 'This is'; and were I to refuse to say it, I would still know that, even in spite of me, the thing *is*. Truth, therefore, being, possibility, presents itself to me as an eternal and necessary nature, such as no power can undo, since no power can be conceived capable of undoing truth. And yet I do not see *how* this truth subsists in itself; but I feel its unconquerable force, the energy which it displays within me, and by which it irresistibly, yet sweetly, subdues my mind, and all minds. I feel this as a simple fact, against which no opposition could be of any avail.

This fact, therefore, this truth, which I always see and is my intellectual light, informs me (1) that there is in me an effect which cannot be produced either by myself or by any finite cause; (2) that this effect consists in the intuition of an object intrinsically necessary, immutable, independent of my mind, and of every finite mind.

1459. These two elements lead me to know the existence of God in two ways.

If to the first element I apply the *principle of causation*, I must conclude, that 'There exists a cause which manifests an infinite force, and which must therefore itself be infinite.'

¹ 'Intelligere pati est, scire autem facere,' said Aristotle (*De Anima*, L. III. Lect. vii.). By the term *intelligere* (to understand) this philosopher meant that which I express by the phrases, *to intuit*, *to have the intuition of*, essences.

According to him, this intuition did not as yet constitute *knowledge* (*scire*). To *know* was a reflex mode of conceiving, that mode by which our mind lays hold of the *specific difference* of essences.

By considering the second element, I see that if this cause which manifests an infinite force, and which at present does not show to me any but a mental existence, were to openly reveal itself, it would still be the object of my mind. Hence I conclude: 'It is of the nature of this infinite cause to *subsist* in a mind, namely, to be essentially intelligible; and if it must necessarily subsist in a mind, this mind must be eternally intelligent.' Then by comparing with this the definition of *accident*, I find that this eternally intelligent mind cannot be a simple accident, or, to speak in general, a simple appurtenance of a substance, as would be the case if it were a purely mental object. Hence I again conclude: 'There exists an eternal mind which has the property of being *per se* intelligible, and of communicating intelligibility to other things, and, as such, is the *cause* of the infinite force manifested in our minds, as well as of all our cognitions.'

Against this argument, one might allege that I introduce into it the manifestation of ideal being to *us*, and therefore that it is not a *pure à priori* argument. To this I might reply, that as there is only question of a *manifestation*, *We* are not brought into the argument except as the subject which sees that being, and which therefore, viewed in this respect, is in some way undivided from, though not confounded with, what it sees.

1460. But if a more pure *à priori* reasoning is desired, it will not be difficult to have it in the following manner.

Ideal being may be considered under two aspects, *i.e.* in itself and in relation to us. Leaving aside this second aspect, and regarding ideal being purely in itself, we have found that it is *initial* only (1423); whence it comes to pass that it is a similitude, on the one hand, of finite realities, and on the other of the Infinite Real Being,¹ and can therefore (to use a Scholastic phrase) be predicated univocally of God and of creatures;² because, as it conceals from us its terms, it can be

¹ S. Thomas says: 'Since the intellectual virtue itself of the creature is not God's essence, it only remains that it be some participated similitude of Him, Who is the first intellect.' 'Cum ipsa intellectiva virtus creaturæ non sit Dei

essentia, relinquitur quod sit aliqua participata similitudo ipsius, qui est primus intellectus' (S. I. xii. 2). Hence man was created in the image and likeness of God.

² The reader can see this question

actuated and terminated (although certainly not in the same way) in God and in creatures.

It is also true that, without experimentally perceiving the terms of *being*, we have not in ourselves such an energy as suffices to render it terminated to us, and that, consequently, we cannot, by means of ideal being alone, have perception of any subsistent thing.

Nevertheless, by reflecting on the initial being, we can understand that it would be impossible for it to subsist except by having its own proper terms. Not seeing in it, therefore, an absolute subsistence,¹ we by the *principle of absolute subsistence* (which flows from ideal being in the same way as the principle of substance, and says, 'That which exists relatively supposes that which exists absolutely'), infer that it must be ultimately found actuated and terminated in an absolute subsistence, of which subsistence it is a mental appurtenance.

Now, having found this, we can also know that this subsistent being could not possibly be finite; because, if it were finite, it would not be an adequate term of the initial being; indeed it would be outside of initial being, and, far from forming with it one essence, as its proper term and completion, would rather be a thing extraneous to it, one of its contingent effects. Consequently the initial being demands an infinite actuation, and that *substantial*, i.e. an actuation in virtue of which it has, not merely a *logical* or mental existence, but also an absolute, or, as some call it, *metaphysical* existence, existence in its own self, full and essential existence, that existence which is God Himself. In this way the subsistent or metaphysical² *necessary being* identifies itself with the

treated in the philosophical system expounded by Carlo Francesco da San Floriano, according to the mind of Duns Scotus. There the views of this acute genius of the Schools are compared with those of modern philosophers. The work was printed at Milan in 1771 (vol. ii. p. 103).

¹ It is not necessary here to prove that the initial being is not an accident or a modification of our spirit; (1) because in the above argument our spirit is supposed to be unknown, and is therefore entirely excluded; (2) because the initial being is by its nature so distinct

and separate from our spirit, that if both are *directly* considered, a confusion of the first with the second is impossible. The primitive intuition of *being* excludes the perception of *Ourselves*, which, as I have so often said, is a reflex act.

² Here the reader is requested to notice that, for the Author, Metaphysics means the *Science of the ultimate reasons of real being*. In the preface to the first volume of his *Psychology* will be found a full statement of the grounds on which he considered it advisable to define Metaphysics in this way. (TRANSLATORS.)

necessary logical being considered as with its natural term added to it. Hence there are not, properly speaking, two intrinsically different necessities, the one logical and the other metaphysical ; but there is one necessity only, which at one and the same time exists both to the mind and in itself.¹

¹ In truth, when I say *necessity*, I cannot, by this word, express anything else than a relation which the thing I speak of has with the mind, even as we have seen that *similitude* is simply a relation with the mind. For example, when I say, 'This is a necessary being,' what do I mean by it? I mean that the being is such, that its non-existence would involve contradiction. It is, then, because we see that the *principle of contradiction* binds us to affirm that being as existent, that we call it necessary. The *necessity*, therefore, of a being depends on the principle of contradiction ; and this principle, although it is not the mind, is in the mind, is logical necessity. Suppose we consider a certain being in itself only, and without any relation with logical principles, what do we find in it? Subsistence, and nothing more ; not the necessity of subsistence. But, furnished as we are with intelligence, on perceiving the subsistence of that being, we ask ourselves : 'Would it be possible for a being like this not to exist?' Now, if it is a necessary-being, we reply : 'No, it would not be possible ; the non-existence of such a being would be a contradiction in terms.' We have,

therefore, confronted the being (its subsistence) with the possibility of its non-existence, and found the relation of contradiction. The necessity consists in this relation. Hence we may draw the following corollaries :

(1) Logical necessity and metaphysical necessity are but one and the same necessity, which consists in the relation of *incompatibility*, i.e. between a given being and its non-existence. When this relation is considered in the realm of possibilities (in the abstract, Tr.) it is called *logical necessity*, and constitutes the principle of contradiction ; when it is considered in connection with some subsistent real being it is called *metaphysical necessity*. The principle therefore of contradiction, or logical necessity, is the source of metaphysical necessity.

(2) The *necessary being* has a most intimate relation with logical being ; and this relation consists in its having a nature essentially intelligible. If the necessary being were not essentially intelligible, it would not be absolutely necessary, because it would depend for its necessity on some other being, on a primitive mind and a primitive idea essentially different from it.

SECTION VIII.

ON THE FIRST DIVISION OF THE SCIENCES.

CHAPTER I.

WHICH IS THE FIRST DIVISION OF THE SCIENCES ?

1461. Whoever undertakes to draw out a genealogical tree of the sciences must begin by considering the human knowable as one great whole, one sole science, forgetting all the divisions that have been made hitherto.

As regards myself I was led to consider all human cognitions in this grand unity by treating of the origin of ideas, not less than by treating of the criterion of certainty ; for, as the reader has seen, these discussions carried me straight up to that principle, which is at once the origin of all our cognitions, the means of their verification, and the irrefragable proof of their validity.

The first division which occurred to me in applying this principle, was that which divides all knowledge into two great classes, namely, *formal* or pure knowledge and *materiated* knowledge.

1462. Every materiated cognition supposes the *form* ; the form, on the contrary, does not require any material element in order to be conceived by the mind. Now, a rule of correct method in treating of the sciences is manifestly the following : ‘ Arrange the things you have to say in such order that those which precede may not, in order to be understood and proved, stand in need of those which follow ; on the contrary, let that come first which throws light on what comes after.’

1463. Now the *form* of knowledge is the cause and the light of all other cognitions, and these exist only in virtue of

an application of the form to real things. The science, therefore, which treats of the *form* of knowledge must take precedence of all other sciences, and may be called *scientia prima pura* (Ideology), while all the others are simply *applied* sciences. Such is the first division of the sciences.

1464. Since the first and pure science treats solely of *Ideal Being*—the *form* I refer to—it does not yet present this being, this supreme rule of the mind, in its application to subsistent things. Hence, as intermediary between the *scientia prima* and the applied ones, we must place *Logic*,¹ also a *pure* science, which treats of the principles or rules to be followed in the application of the *form* of Reason.

1465. I will only add here an observation concerning the first division of the sciences as made by Lord Bacon. He begins by dividing them into three classes, according to the three principal powers—the *Reason*, the *Memory* and the *Imagination*. In this division we can see how much behind-hand was, in his times, the theory of human knowledge. It was not yet clearly known, or rather it had been forgotten, that it is through the use of *Reason* alone that the sciences are generated; the *Memory* being only the deposit of them, and the *Imagination* serving merely to furnish materials for knowledge, or to clothe it in elegant forms. At all events, if this was known, Bacon did not heed it, nor turn it to account for his division. Hence at his hands, and still less at those of the French *Encyclopedists*, the sciences could not receive that harmonic unity, which renders them at once eminently beautiful, and an excellent means for promoting the well-being of man.²

¹ There is a *general* Logic, containing the *principles* of the application of *ideal being* to the whole knowable, and there are *special* Logics, containing the rules for the application of these principles to each of the applied sciences.

² The Metaphysics which the Schoolmen called the *First Science*, *generative of the others*, was, in substance, an *Ideology*. But those writers introduced into it heterogeneous matter; they confounded together doctrines relating now to ideal beings, now to mental, and now to real ones. Hence theirs was not that *first* and *pure* science of which I

speak. Another defect in Scholastic Metaphysics, considered as the first science and generative of the others, was the following. The Schoolmen knew indeed the *stem* of the genealogical tree of the sciences, and this was undoubtedly a fine and useful acquisition; but at the same time they did not know the way of deducing therefrom the other sciences. Hence their neglect of the observation of nature, which alone enables us to acquire the knowledge of the specific essences of things. Thus, instead of basing their definitions of things on experience, they defined them

CHAPTER II.

ON THE TWO METHODS, OF OBSERVATION AND OF REASONING.

1466. In reflecting on the manner of arranging all human cognitions according to the above principle of method, which bids us to 'give precedence to that which, in order to be understood or proved, does not require any of the doctrines subsequently set forth' (1462), some one might be struck by the following difficulty :—

'You prove the last of your propositions by the last but one ; and this by the one next before it ; and so on in succession till you arrive at the first proposition of all. So far, so good. But now what about this first proposition ? How will you prove its truth ? And if you do not prove it, will not all your previous demonstrations, which depend on it, fall to the ground ?'

I answer : this objection proceeds from an erroneous

by means of mere abstractions and formalities, whereby *being in general* (*ens communissimum*), which by itself alone is not the essence of any one thing, was made to take the place of all essences. I am indebted for this important observation to Malebranche, who declares that the intimate presence of the idea of being in general to our spirit is a principal cause of all the inordinate abstractions of the mind. 'La présence ineffaçable de cette idée [de l'être en général] est une des principales causes de toutes les abstractions dérégées de l'esprit.' And then, applying this his observation, he continues : 'Qu'on lise avec toute l'attention possible toutes les définitions et toutes les explications que l'on donne des formes substantielles ; que l'on cherche avec soin en quoi con-

siste l'essence de toutes ces entités que les philosophes imaginent comme il leur plaît, et en si grand nombre, qu'ils sont obligés d'en faire plusieurs divisions et subdivisions, et je m'assure qu'on ne réveillera jamais dans son esprit d'autre idée de toutes ces choses que celle de l'être et de la cause en général' (*De la Recherche de la Vérité*, L. iii. ch. 8).

What a pity, that so powerful a thinker as Malebranche could not see by these very sentences, that the idea of *being in general* was imperfect, and therefore not the idea of God, *i.e.* of the greatest of all realities, as he maintains it is. Had he perceived this, he would have escaped being enrolled by that scourge of writers, Père Hardouin, in the catalogue of those who might be called *Atheists by inference*.

assumption. It is not true that *all* propositions must be demonstrated by a previous one. There is a first proposition, of such a nature that it includes its own proof, *i.e.* is *per se* true, evident, unassailable, because it is truth itself.

1467. But where shall this proposition be found? How shall it be distinguished from among all the rest?

We have it in ourselves, it is always present to our mind, and the way to find it is, not by making any reasoning, but by *observing* it simply in that state in which it is naturally intuited by us. Even the Sceptic sees it; and if he will only concentrate his attention on himself, he will see that he sees it. By carefully examining the cognitions he possesses, he will perceive in all of them the *idea of being*; and if he goes on rivetting his attention on this idea more and more, contemplating it, analysing it, and noting its essential characteristics, he will not fail to recognise its light, its necessity, its self-evidence, its immutability.

It is by such an observation as this, and not otherwise, that true philosophic learning begins; and that Sceptics are put on the way to recover from their state of mental hallucination.

The *first* science, therefore, is a science of *observation*, and not of *reasoning*. Thus do we avoid that vicious circle into which one may easily fall when making a classification of the sciences. *Logical demonstration* ends in and is linked on to *observation*; while *observation* is simply the intellection of the truth known *per se*, and from which all demonstrations originate.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE STARTING-POINT OF THE SYSTEM OF HUMAN COGNITIONS.

1468. The system of human cognitions must, then, set out from a *reflex observation* upon the knowledge we possess by nature. Through this observation we come to notice the presence in us of the *idea of being*; and this discovery enables us to understand how all other cognitions can be acquired, and their truth certified.

But here an objection suggests itself. Antecedently to this *reflex observation* on the idea of being, there is the *direct intuition*. Would it not, then, be more in conformity with nature to base the system of human cognitions on the intuition of being, rather than on the reflection which recognises that intuition?

We shall see the nullity of this objection, if we distinguish four questions, which, owing to their affinity, are commonly confounded, so that one of them is solved by a reply belonging only to some other, and offering itself casually to the mind. Indeed, I hold this to be the principal reason why the learned have never as yet come to agree upon the method to be followed in scientific disquisitions. The four questions are the following.

1469. *First question*: 'What is the starting-point of the *human being* in his first development?'

I answer: It is *external sensation*. The external sensations are unquestionably the first steps by which man develops his powers. Those writers who observed this truth, but did not distinguish between the beginning of man's real development and the beginning of philosophy, came to the conclusion that philosophy ought to begin with the *Treatise on Sensations*.

They imagined that they could make in philosophical science the same steps which they had previously made in their own gradual development; not perceiving that in order to carry out this principle of method, they would have had to return to babyhood, and, of course, to erase from their minds all thought of philosophy. Clearly, then, rigorously to follow this method in philosophy is impossible.

1470. *Second question*: 'What is the starting-point of the human spirit?'

To this I reply: *the idea of being*; for, every intellectual step of the human spirit presupposes of necessity the intellection of being. But this, again, cannot be the starting-point of philosophy; because the spirit which philosophises is no longer in the state in which it was at the beginning of its intellectual movement. To be able to philosophise, it must be already developed, and so far developed as to conceive the thought and the wish of retracing its steps, and asking itself for an account of its own development. It must therefore *reflect*, that is, it must turn its attention on its own first steps, as well as on that which was supposed by them, seeking at the very fountain-head for their reason and their certainty.

1471. *Third question*: 'What is the starting-point of a man who begins to philosophise?'

As I have just said, when an individual begins to philosophise, he is already in a developed mental state. Now he cannot set out from any other point than that at which he happens to find himself at the time. A different course would be altogether out of the question. Condillac and Bonnet write as men who fancy they have been able to carry themselves back to the period in which their cognitions began, and they represent the proverbial 'statue' as endowed with one sense only. But leaving aside the question as to whether their description be true to nature or not, I am quite certain of one thing, and that is that they make a prodigious leap; for a prodigious leap it is, nay the crossing of a veritable abyss, suddenly to forget the intellectual state in which we actually are, in order to assist, like spectators of another

nature, at what took place in us when we began to have sensations—a time now long passed for us and passed for ever.

1472. *Fourth question*: 'What is the starting-point of philosophy as a science, that is to say, of the system of human cognitions?'

The starting-point of a man who begins to philosophise must not be confounded with the starting-point of philosophy already formed into a system. Philosophy thus considered is not the first step of the individual who applies himself to philosophy, but the last. It is the consummate work of philosophers. The order of philosophy as a science, therefore, can be no other than the absolute order which the various truths have between one another. He who is only beginning to philosophise has not yet discovered this order, but goes as it were tentatively in search of it. If, then, this beginner cannot do otherwise than set out from that intellectual state in which he actually finds himself, that he may review all the steps of his previous development, and submit them to a rigorous judgment, thus rendering their truth and certainty more clear to his mind; philosophy must, on the contrary, begin at that luminous point, which is the source of the truth and certainty of all cognitions, as well as the means for verifying them and proving their validity.

I will illustrate this by the simile of a foot-race. There is a line marked for all competitors to start from at a given signal. But the competitors are not there from the first; they come to it, each from the place where he happens to be at the time.

Now this accidental spot from which each runner comes for the race, represents the starting-point of the individual who begins to philosophise. The line from which all the competitors must start together, represents the starting-point of philosophy as a science.

But by what is a man who begins to philosophise made to carry his mind up to the starting-point of philosophy, in order thence to begin its orderly scientific movement?—By *reflex observation* on himself. This, and this only, can lead him on

from step to step until he sees clearly, and adverts to that luminous point from which the whole system of human cognitions originates and moves onward to perfection; I mean ideal being, the constitutive form of human reason, and the formal cause of all human cognitions.

CHAPTER IV.

OUGHT PHILOSOPHY TO START FROM A PARTICULAR, OR
FROM A UNIVERSAL?

1473. I know very well, that by designating *ideal being* as the principle of all the knowable, I shall provoke the censure of those who believe it to be an infallible canon of method that in describing the genesis of human knowledge one must proceed from particulars to universals.

But in the first place I would observe, that the belief in question is founded on a most grievous, though unfortunately a too common error at the present day, namely, that universals are nothing but aggregates of particulars. Of this error I have already given a refutation (138-155).

Moreover: anyone who investigates the nature of particulars and of universals will find, that a strict adherence to the method which would require us to proceed from particulars to universals is a thing intrinsically impossible and absurd; since we cannot think a single particular without making use of a universal.¹

1474. There is also another point which those who are ready to find fault with me do not consider. It is, that by making philosophy begin with the treatise on *ideal being*, I place myself in a position to defend at one and the same time these two seemingly contradictory statements, namely, that 'I begin by a universal,' and that 'I begin by a particular.'

Indeed, all who have properly understood the nature of

¹ Professor Cousin, in an excellent passage of one of his Lectures (8 May, 1829), proves to evidence that it is impossible for a true history of philosophy

(and we may say the same of the history of the human spirit) to be composed by a writer who strictly adheres to the empirical method.

ideal being must have perceived that it is at once *particular* and *universal*, nay particular before it is universal. They will remember how I demonstrated that the word *universal* expresses simply a relation of similarity between one thing and many. Now, before a thing can be considered in its relation of similarity to many, it must be considered or known in itself, and hence in its particularity. Consequently the oneness of the thing, which, as I have said elsewhere (580), identifies itself with its being, precedes the consideration of its universality ; and thus we can say with truth, that to commence with *ideal being*, is to commence with a *particular*, because *ideal being* is in itself particular, although its light diffuses itself universally over all knowable things.

This observation acquires a special force when applied to *ideal being*, because this being is supremely simple, essentially one, the principle of unity in all things, and therefore not only particular in itself, but also the source of every true unity and particularity (1450 etc.).

CHAPTER V.

OUGHT PHILOSOPHY TO START FROM A FACT? AND PARTICULARLY FROM THE FACT OF CONSCIOUSNESS?

1475. If by fact we mean *that which is*, then the being from which I maintain that philosophy ought to begin—the being we see by nature—is not merely a fact, but the fact in which all the others have their commencement.

It is not, then, from any sort of fact that philosophy ought to start, nor from a contingent fact, but from the *first fact of all*, the *necessary* fact, the fact *intelligible through itself*, and in which originates the possibility, the intelligibility of all other facts.

1476. As to the question 'Whether philosophy ought to start from the fact of consciousness,' I reply, that these words have an equivocal meaning, and hence can be answered in the negative as well as in the affirmative.

If by 'fact of consciousness' we understand the being seen by us, not alone, but taken conjointly with the subjective feeling¹ which accompanies that intuition; then I say that this is a fact of consciousness composed of two elements, the one subjective (*feeling*), and the other objective (*idea*), (543 etc.). Now the intellectual cognition cannot have two starting-points, nor begin except from that which is purely intellectual. But the subjective feeling, taken by itself, is not yet intellectual cognition; it is only *matter* for cognition, and becomes

¹ As the material light, by shining to the corporeal eye, causes in it a corporeal feeling, so in like manner the intellectual light (ideal being), by shining to the intellectual eye, causes in it an intellectual feeling. The feeling caused by the material light is transient, because the shining of that light is only

transient; the feeling caused by the intellectual light is permanent, immutable, because this light shines permanently, immutably; for which reason, the second feeling is much more difficult to be adverted to than the first. See n. 470 (TRANSLATORS).

cognition (*i.e.* is a thing cognised. TR.), when we, fixing our attention on it, perceive ourselves as intelligent (that is to say, as having the knowledge of being. TR.).

But if by 'fact of consciousness' we mean, not both the elements of which the said fact is composed, but the intellectual element only, the pure light of the *being* which is simply the *term* of our interior vision; in such case it may be affirmed that philosophy starts from the primitive fact of consciousness, *i.e.* not from the *act* of consciousness itself, but from what consciousness, by that act, conceives and testifies to itself that it conceives as its *object*.¹

¹ The objections which several writers, and especially the author of *Enesidemus*, urged against Reinhold, who had started from 'the fact of consciousness,' all fall to the ground when

this distinction is borne in mind. Nevertheless it always remains true, that the proposition 'philosophy starts from the fact of consciousness,' is neither clear nor exact.

CHAPTER VI.

ON METHODIC DOUBT AND METHODIC IGNORANCE.

1477. Des Cartes began the philosophical edifice by supposing himself in a state of doubt with regard to all he knew. It was not a real, but, as it came to be technically called, a *methodic* doubt, that is to say, assumed for the purpose of serving the method and order according to which philosophical science was to be treated.

Although Des Cartes was not the first to take this sort of supposition for his starting-point in scientific investigation (for the Schoolmen had already sanctioned the practice),¹ it nevertheless raised a very strong opposition against him, perhaps owing to the abuse made of it by those who misunderstood him.

1478. I would here make two observations. The first is, that, in the commencement of philosophy, the assumed state of man is one rather of *methodic ignorance* than of *methodic doubt*. For, as philosophy begins by assigning the origin of human cognitions, and then proceeds to deduce them in orderly succession from that first origin, these cognitions are, by the nature of the case, supposed not to exist. Now the absence of cognitions in man is called *ignorance*. And herein may be seen the character of the philosophy which I follow, as distinct from that of the Cartesian philosophy. For the

¹ S. Thomas, according to the custom of his time, gives the title of *Questions* to all the subjects of which he treats; and he begins by the objections which can be raised against the truth. The question opens, for example, with 'Videtur quod Deus non sit' ('It would seem that there is no God'); and so with the rest. Why? Because, as the holy Doctor says, 'They who wish to

search after the truth without first taking into account the doubts which stand in the way of it, are like those persons who do not know whither they are going'—'[Quia] illi qui volunt inquirere veritatem, non considerando prius dubitationem, assimilantur illis qui nesciunt quo vadant' (*In Metaphysic.* L. III., c. I.).

Cartesian proceeds throughout by way of *demonstration*, and from its very outset proposes to itself the discovery of *certainty*; whereas mine goes a step further back, and begins, not by *demonstration*, but by *observing* what are the first data which furnish the materials whereof demonstration itself is made, and constitute its possibility. Wherefore the first aim of this philosophy is to find, not the *certainty* of our cognitions, but the *cognitions* themselves, their existence, their origin. When this is found, the principle of certainty follows merely as a corollary.

Nevertheless, between the origin of our cognitions, and their certainty, there is a close affinity, and, by consequence, between the state of methodic ignorance and that of methodic doubt. But in order that what I am now saying be free from all ambiguity, and afford no just ground for objections, I must indicate clearly what is the place respectively held in man by this ignorance and this doubt; which is the second of the observations I intended to make.

1479. I have already distinguished *popular* from *philosophic* knowledge, and have defined the latter as the result of an ulterior reflection which analyses the popular knowledge, demonstrates its truth and arranges it in proper order, thus constructing philosophy into a complete science (1264 etc.). For the ordinary requirements of human life, popular knowledge is, generally speaking, sufficient; although the philosophic also is of great service. Now what I am anxious to notice here is, that popular knowledge, with its certainty, will always be preserved in the human race, and can never be either obliterated or pass universally into a real doubt. On the contrary, when that ulterior reflection begins by which a student enters into the field of philosophical inquiry, then it is necessarily supposed that no part of that philosophy which he aims at producing has as yet existence. Now, herein consists that state of *methodic ignorance* of which I speak; that is, it consists in the absence, not of all knowledge, but of *philosophic* knowledge, produced, as I have said, by an ulterior reflection. And from some passages in Des Cartes¹ there is reason to

¹ In his discourse *On Method*, Des Cartes, after proposing his *doubt* as the starting-point of philosophy, restricts it by means of certain practical maxims.

believe, that he also, more or less, understood his *methodic doubt* in the limited sense I am describing, although his mind was not so clear about it as to enable him to communicate it to others with the evidence of the above distinction.

He says : 'La première [maxime] était d'obéir aux lois et aux coutumes de mon pays, retenant constamment la religion en laquelle Dieu m'a fait la grâce d'être instruit dès mon enfance, et me gouvernant en toute autre chose suivant les opinions les plus modérées et les plus éloignées de l'excès, qui fussent communément reçues en pratique par les

mieux sensés de ceux avec lesquels j'aurais à vivre' (Part III.). Although we can see here, that Des Cartes paid great deference to common sense, nevertheless some of his expressions show clearly that he had not sufficiently noted the importance and the certainty of the *direct* as well as of the *popular* knowledge.

PASSAGES OF HOLY SCRIPTURE QUOTED IN THIS WORK.

<p>Gen. II. 19 and 20 152 <i>n.</i></p> <p>Ps. XI. 2 1119</p> <p>„ XIII. 3 1268</p> <p>„ XVIII. 13 1280 <i>n.</i></p> <p>„ CXV. 11 1268</p> <p>Eccl. III. 19 177 <i>n.</i> 2</p> <p>„ „ 22 1282 <i>n.</i> 2</p>	<p>Prov. I. 20-24 1315</p> <p>„ II. 4 and 5 <i>ib.</i></p> <p>„ VIII. 7 <i>ib.</i></p> <p>„ „ 17 <i>ib.</i></p> <p>Matth. XI. 15 1320</p> <p>Gal. V. 9 1375</p> <p>I Tim. III. 15 1376</p>
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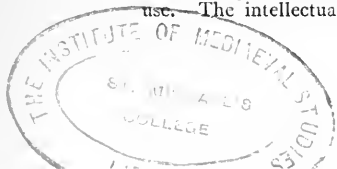
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- SUBSISTENCE, the real and actual *existence* of a thing, 406.—The judgment affirmative of the subsistence of a thing supposes the idea of it, 405 and 407, and *n.*—The subsistence of things is given us by the sense, and is that which marks out the real individual, 479.—Space and time add nothing to the idea of a subsistent thing, 806 *n.*—What is the principle by which the subsistence of a real thing is seen to be bound up with the necessity intrinsic to Ideal being, 1160–1173.—Subsistence is the ultimate term of the *activity of being*, 1181.—The *judgment* on the subsistence of a thing must be distinguished from the representation of that thing, 1234.
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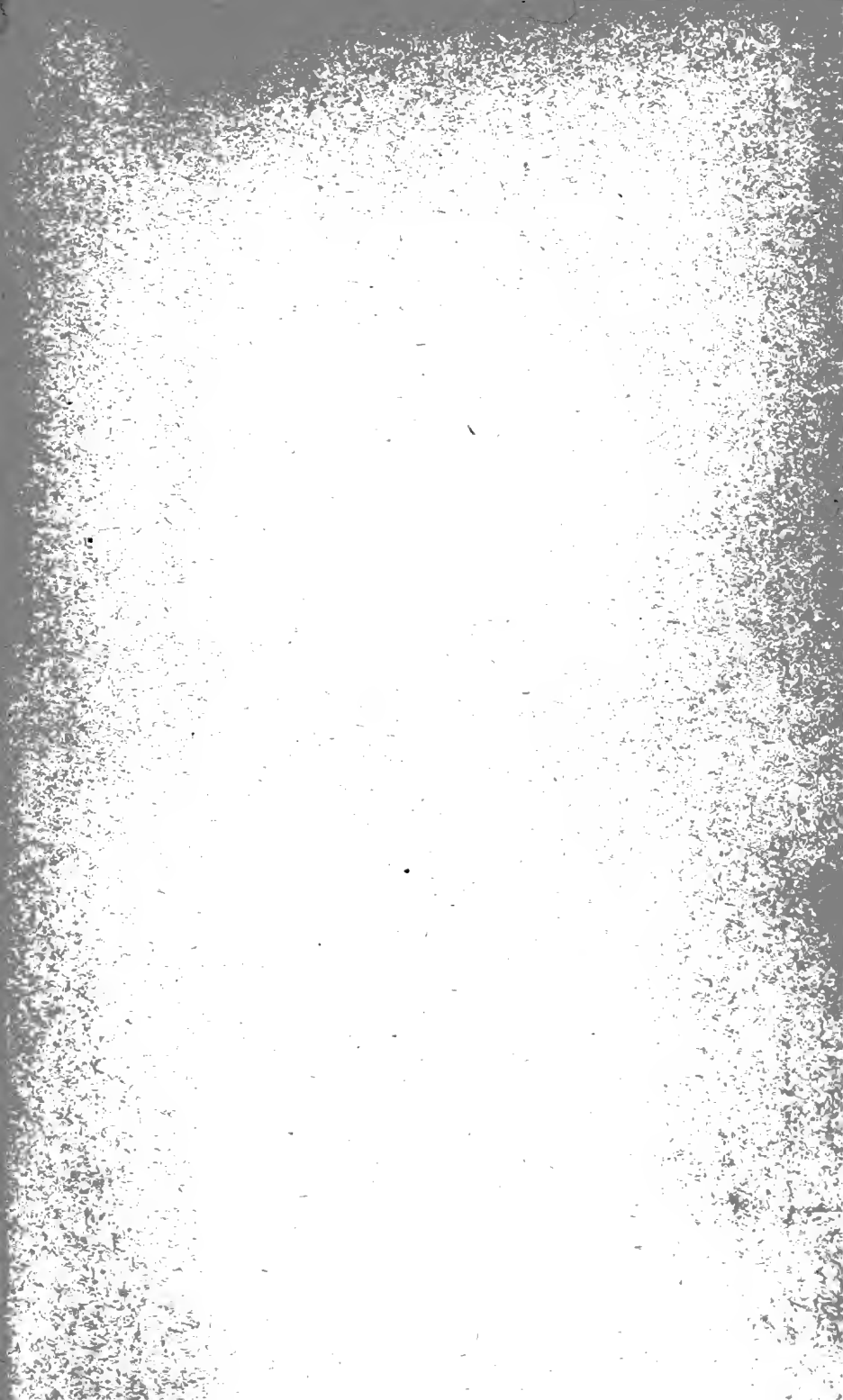
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