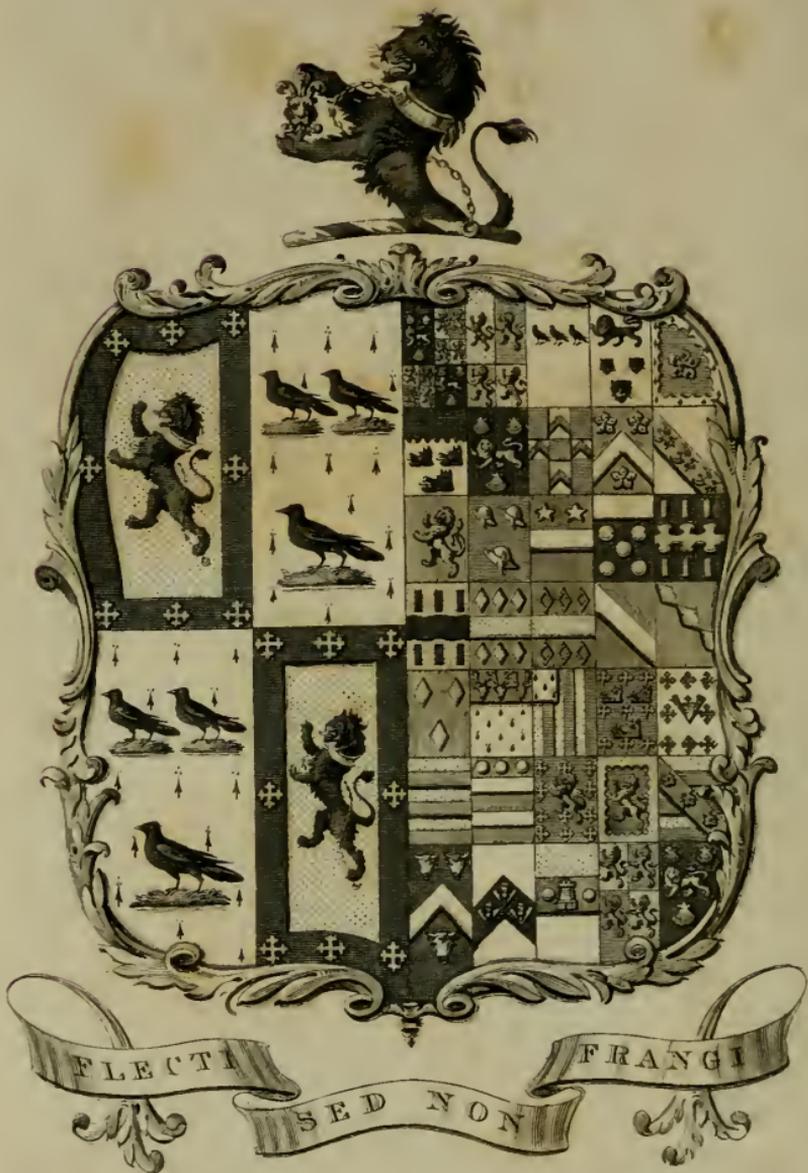




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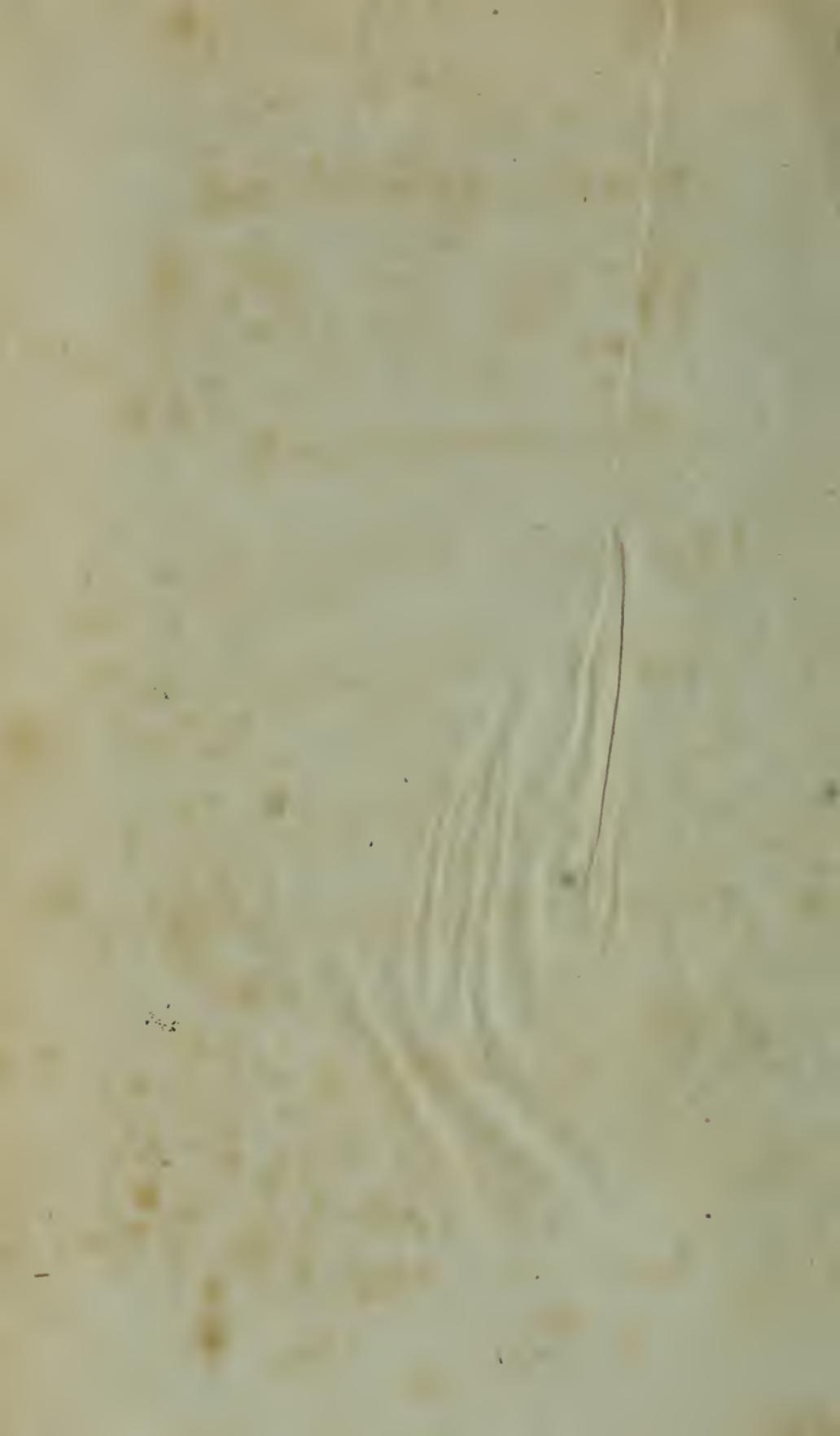
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THE
PHILOSOPHICAL
WORKS

Of the late Right Honorable

HENRY ST. JOHN,

LORD VISCOUNT BOLINGBROKE.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

Published by *DAVID MALLET*, Esq;

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THE

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W O R K S

OF

HENRY ST. JOHN

ESQ. OF BISHOPSTON

IN FIVE VOLUMES

THE SECOND VOLUME

OF

ANTHROPOLOGY

AND

C O N T E N T S. E

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ESSAY II.

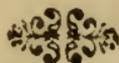
*Containing some reflections on the folly and
presumption of philosophers especially in mat-
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V O L. I.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

RESEARCH REPORT

1954

ESSAY THE FIRST.
CONCERNING THE
NATURE, EXTENT, and REALITY
OF
HUMAN KNOWLEDGE.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

RESEARCH REPORT

PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

E S S A Y

T H E F I R S T.

C O N C E R N I N G

The Nature, Extent, and Reality of
Human Knowledge.

S E C T I O N I.

AMONG the many cavils, that have been devised against the demonstrated existence of a first, intelligent, self-existent cause of all things, this has been one, That things known must be anterior to knowledge; and that we may as well assert that the images of objects we see reflected made those objects, as that knowledge, or intelligence made them. HOBBS is accused of reasoning on this principle in his *Leviathan*, and his book *De cive*, by the author of the *Intellectual system of the universe*; and his argument, in the place where he mentions the notions that reason dictates to us concerning the divine attributes, is thus stated. “ Since know-

“ ledge, and intelligence are nothing more in us,
“ than a tumult of the mind, excited by the pres-
“ sure of external objects on our organs, we must
“ not imagine there is any such thing in God,

“ these being things which depend on natural
 “ causes.” Now I think this charge a little too
 hastily brought, and a little too heavily laid. So
 will any man who reads the context. HOBBS
 having said that, when we ascribe will to God,
 we must not conceive it to be in him what it is in
 us, but must suppose it to be something analo-
 gous, which we cannot conceive; he adds, “ in
 “ like manner, when we attribute sight, and o-
 “ ther sensations, or knowledge, and intelligence,
 “ to God, which are in us nothing more, than a
 “ certain tumult of the mind, excited by the
 “ pressure of external objects on our organs, we
 “ must not imagine that any thing like this hap-
 “ pens to God.” I am far from subscribing to
 many notions which HOBBS has advanced. But
 still the plain and obvious meaning of this pas-
 sage, according to my apprehension, is not to deny
 that the Supreme Being is an intelligent being,
 but to distinguish between the divine and human
 manner of knowing. If HOBBS did not assert
 a distinct kind of knowledge, and attribute the
 same clearly to God almighty upon this occasion,
 the omission will not serve to fix the brand of
 atheism upon him. On the contrary, whatever his
 other opinions were, this opinion may be recon-
 ciled to the most orthodox theism. It is more rea-
 sonable, and carries along with it a more becoming
 reverence, than the learned writer, who makes
 the objection, shews when, like other divines, he
 supposes clearly, by his reflections on this passage,
 and indeed by the whole tenor of his writings,
 that

that intelligence and knowledge in God are the same as intelligence and knowledge in man; that the divine differs from the human in degree, not in kind; and that by consequence; if God has not the latter, he has none at all.

ABSURD and impertinent vanity! We pronounce our fellow animals to be automates, or we allow them instinct, or we bestow graciously upon them, at the utmost stretch of liberality, an irrational soul, something we know not what, but something that can claim no kindred to the human mind. We scorn to admit them into the same class of intelligence with ourselves, tho it be obvious, among other observations easy to be made, and tending to the same purpose, that the first inlets, and the first elements of their knowledge, and of ours; are the same. But of ourselves we think it not too much to boast, that our intelligence is a participation of the divine intelligence; that the mind of man; like that of God, contains in it the ideas of intelligible natures; that it does not rise from particular to general knowledge, but descends from universals to singulars; hovers, as it were, aloft over all the corporeal universe; is independent of the bodies that compose it, or proleptical to them; and in the order of nature before them.

SUCH wild notions as these, or the magic of such unmeaning sounds, and articulated air, which the warm imaginations of Asia and Africa first produced,

produced, have been echoed down to the present age, and have been propagated with so much success even in our northern and cold climates, that the heads of many reverend persons have been turned by a preternatural fermentation of the brain, or a philosophical delirium. None has been so more, I think, since the days of the latter Platonists, and the reign of the schoolmen, who may be called properly the latter Peripatetics, than that of the divine I have just now quoted. He read too much to think enough, he admired too much to think freely, and it is impossible to forbear wishing that he had taken due notice of a passage in TULLY'S Offices, "Ne ut quidam
" *graeca verba inculcantes jure optimo ridea-*
" *mur.*" Greek phraseology was in fashion among the Romans, as well as greek philosophy, in TULLY'S days; and it is reasonable to believe that many things passed then under a greek varnish, that would not have passed so well in mere Latin: just as we may observe that many things have passed by the help of Greek and Latin among us, that would not have passed so well in mere English. TULLY reformed this pedantry indeed, but he did it rather with a view to enrich his language, than to determine his ideas; and he lost little or no advantage by the reformation: that advantage I mean, which men take, who affect to know more than they do know; from which affectation the Academicians, as much as they disclaimed knowledge, were not free. He invented latin to answer greek words; and readers, like
writers,

writers, being apt to imagine that every new word denotes something new, this expedient served well enough to help out a system, or to get rid of troublesome objections. Thus vain phraseology has been always called in to the assistance of vain philosophy, and a learned mist has been raised in order to surprise, and impose, or to escape. These are some part of the arguties verbales, against which MONTAIGNE declaims: and, to speak in his style, they may serve to enrich a man's tongue, but they will leave his understanding as poor as they found it, and much more perplexed.

I RETURN to the subject immediately before me, and I say, that, since there must have been something from eternity, because there is something now, the eternal Being must be an intelligent Being, because there is intelligence now; for no man will venture to assert that non-entity can produce entity, or non-intelligence, intelligence: and such a Being must exist necessarily, whether things have been always as they are, or whether they have been made in time; because it is no more possible to conceive an infinite, than a finite, progression of effects without a cause. Thus the existence of a God is demonstrated; and cavil against demonstration is impertinent. It is so impertinent, that he who refuses to submit to this demonstration, among others of the same kind, has but one short step more to make in order to arrive at the highest pitch of absurdity: for surely there is but
one

one remove between a denial of the existence of God, and a denial of our own existence; because, if we have an intuitive knowledge of the latter, we have the same intuitive knowledge of all those ideas that connect the latter with the former in demonstrating a posteriori.

Now if the existence of such a Being can be demonstrated, the atheist and the divine are both defeated. The atheist, because the intelligence of this first cause of all things must have preceded all existence, except his own, with which it is co-eternal. The divine, because an essential difference is established, in consequence of this demonstration, between God's manner of knowing, and that which he has been pleased to bestow on his creatures. Human knowledge is not only posterior to the human system, but the very first elements of it are ideas which we perceive impressed by outward objects on our minds: and it will avail little to urge that our minds must be still independent of outward objects, since we not only know what is, but can frame ideas of what may be, tho it is not; because every man who pleases may perceive that all the ideas he frames of what is not, are framed by the combinations he makes of his ideas of what is, and in no other manner, nor by any other means whatsoever. Thus then, if we could be supposed to know that there is an ideal world in the divine intellect, according to which this sensible world was made, yet still the difference between the human and divine manner of knowing would admit of no comparison.

But it was too presumptuous in PLATO to assert that the Supreme Being had need of a plan, like some human architect, to conduct the great design, when he raised the fabric of the universe: and it is still more presumptuous to assert, not only that the divine intellect is furnished with ideas, like the human, and that God reasons and acts by the help of them; but that your ideas and mine are God's ideas, and that the modifications, for that is the fashionable term, of our minds are the modifications of God's mind. We talk indeed of the eternal ideas of the divine mind, and allude to our manner of knowing, that we may understand ourselves and be understood by others the better; just as we are forced very often to employ corporeal images when we speak of the operations of our own minds: but these expressions, so much abused by those who are in the delirium of metaphysical theology, have no intention to be understood in a literal sense among men who preserve their reason. If they had, they should never be employed by me, since I should think them profane as well as presumptuous.

I SHOULD think them silly too, and mere cant: for as one difference between God's manner of knowing and ours arises from what we are able to demonstrate concerning God; so there arises another from what we may know, if we shut our ears to the din of hard words, and turn our attention inwards, concerning man, and concerning these very ideas. Our knowledge is so dependent

pendent on our own system, that a great part of it would not be knowledge perhaps, but error, in any other. They who held, as I learn from doctor CUDWORTH that some philosophers did hold, that “sensible ideas, and phantasms” “are impressed on the soul, as on a dead thing,” maintained, no doubt, a great absurdity. ARISTOTLE’S opinion was more conformable to universal experience; for he asserted, according to SEXTUS EMPIRICUS, that sense was like the instrument, and intellect like the artificer; that sense was first in the order of mental operations, but that intellect was first in dignity. Now this comparison is just enough. We have internal as well as external sense, mental as well as corporeal faculties, and active as well as passive powers, if you will allow passivity, as well as activity, to be included in the idea of power. But then, as our senses are few, incapable of giving us much information, and capable of giving it falsely, unless we are on our guard against their deceptions; so the faculties of our minds are weak, and their progress towards knowledge not only slow, but so confined, that they are not able to carry it to the full extent of the ideas, about which they are conversant, and which they have all contributed to frame. We must conceive, as well as we can, the knowledge of the Supreme Being to be immediate, and absolute. Knowledge in us is mediate by the intervention of ideas, not only as far as sensible objects are concerned, and that goes a great way; but in the whole. It is such know-
ledge

ledge as we are fitted by the organization of our bodies, and the constitution of our minds, to acquire. It is such as results from the relation established between them and the system to which they belong. It is knowledge for us. It is, in one word, human ; and, relatively to us, when rightly pursued, real knowledge.

GENERAL ideas, or notions, such as the mind frames by it's innate powers, such as are said to be archetypes, and to refer to nothing besides themselves, may seem to be materials of axiomatical, scientific, and, in a word, of absolute, real knowledge. But even this boasted knowledge is very precarious. These ideas, or notions, are not taken with exactness from the nature of things on many occasions ; and the same affections, and imperfections of the mind, that corrupt the first, corrupt the subsequent operations of it. Ideas or notions are ill abstracted first, and ill compared afterwards. The more complex, the more obscure they are ; and the more important, the more liable they are likewise to be abused by prejudices and habits that infect the mind, and put a wrong bias on it. But further ; our progression in this knowledge, such as it is, stops always very short of our aim. We soon want ideas, or want means of comparing those we have, and it is in vain that we struggle to get forward. It is in vain that we endeavour to force that barrier, which God has opposed to our insatiable curiosity. To what purpose, indeed, should we force
it,

it, if that was in our power, since we have reason to acknowledge, with the utmost gratitude to the author of our nature, that every thing, necessary to our well-being in the state wherein he has placed us, lies on the human side of this barrier; within that extent, I mean, where the operations of our minds are performed with ease and vigor, and are attended with the certainty of knowledge, or the sufficient probability of opinion? Not only unattainable, but difficult, very often, is a term synonymous to unnecessary; as we might prove, I think, by some examples drawn even from mathematical knowledge. In short, the profound meditations of philosophers, which we are so apt to admire before we have thought for ourselves, have as much regard paid to them as they deserve, when they are made the amusements of men of sense and leisure; when they are used as exercise, without any other aim than to invigorate, and strengthen the mind, and prepare it for something more conducive to our happiness, and therefore more properly our business,

The good, the just, the meet, the wholesome rules
Of temperance, and aught that may improve
The moral life." *

This short account of human ideas, and human knowledge, no part of which can be applied, without blasphemy, absurdity, to the Supreme

* JOHN PHILLIPS,

Being,

Being, nor be denied, without folly and effrontery, of the human, is sufficient, I suppose, to constitute another difference between God's manner of knowing and ours; a difference arising from those imperfections and limitations of which every man is conscious.

BUT it is time now to ask, what then is the precise notion we are to entertain of the human mind? Shall we continue to think with some philosophers antient and modern, that the soul, the rational soul, for they have given us more than one, is a spiritual, and divine substance, “furnished with
 “forms, and ideas to conceive all things by, and
 “printed over with the seeds of universal know-
 “ledge, tho the active energies of it are fatally
 “united to some local motions in the body, and
 “concurrently produced with them by reason
 “of the magical union betwixt the soul and the
 “body?” Shall we say too that from this union all the imperfections of the human mind proceed, and that the perfection of our nature is, to be quite abstracted from sensation, like the Janguis, or illuminated faints of the Indostan, whom BERNIER mentions? Shall we endeavour, like these philosophers, by intenseness of thought, by fasting, and other austerities, to rise up to the contemplation of the divinity, whom they assure that they see like a white, lively, ineffable light? Or shall we soften these pretensions a little, and embrace the system of a modern philosopher*, who affirms

* MALBRANCHE.

that

that God is the place of ideas, as space is of body, and that, this all-perfect mind containing the ideas of all created things, it is in God alone that we perceive every thing exterior to the soul? Shall we assume, like another philosopher †, that our ideas are the only real sensible things; that we have no reason to imagine there are any substances, but active thinking substances; and that it is absurd to ascribe power to bodies, or to suppose any power but active power, any agent but spirit, or any actions of spirit without volition?

WHO does not see all this to be as inconceivable, as that which it pretends to explain? Have the authors of such systems, from PLATO down to that fine writer MALEBRANCHE, or to that sublime genius, and good man, the bishop of CLOYNE, contributed to make us better acquainted with ourselves? I think not. They have done all, that human capacity can do, in a wrong method; but all they have done has been to vend us poetry for philosophy, and to multiply systems of imagination. They have reasoned about the human mind a priori, have assumed that they know the nature of it, and have employed much wit, and eloquence to account for all the phaenomena of it upon these assumptions. But the nature of it is as much unknown as ever; and we must despair of having any real knowledge at all about it, unless we will content ourselves with that which is to be acquired a posteriori. The

† BERKELEY.

mind

mind of man is an object of physics as much, as the body of man, or any other body : and the distinction, that is made between physics and metaphysics, is quite arbitrary. His mind is part of his nature, as well as his body : both of them together constitute his whole being : and as the first is the most noble part, I presume, we should determine his species by it principally, which we do not, if his mind was not more liable, than his figure, to be confounded with that of other animals. Let us content ourselves therefore to trace his mind, to observe it's growth, and the progress it makes from it's infancy to it's maturity. Let us be content with particular, and experimental knowledge, upon which we may found a few general propositions, such as are or may be properly called *axiomata media*. But let us aim no longer at a general knowledge, too remote for our search ; nor hope to discover more of intellectual nature by internal sense, than we are able to discover of corporeal nature by external. All that we can know of one and the other is, that we have such and such senses, and such and such faculties, and that divers sensations of the body, and operations of the mind, are produced in them on such and such apparent occasions.

S E C T. II.

TO measure rightly our intellectual strength, and to apply it properly, in order neither to impose, nor be imposed upon, is our point of view. I shall not, therefore, say any thing further about the nature of mind in general, that secret spring of thought, unknown and unknowable; but shall content myself to observe, in Mr. LOCKE'S method and with his assistance, something about the phaenomena of the human mind, by which we may judge surely of the nature, extent, and reality of human knowledge. I say, we may judge surely of them; because our ideas are the foundations, or the materials, call them which you please, of all our knowledge; because, without entering into an inquiry concerning the origin of them, we may know so certainly, as to exclude all doubt, what ideas we have; and because, when we know this, we know with the same certainty what kinds, and degrees of knowledge we have, and are capable of having.

THUS we know that the first ideas, with which the mind is furnished, are received from without, and are caused by such sensations, as the presence of external objects excites in us according to laws of passion and action, which the Creator has established. What these laws are, and how external objects become able to make such impressions on our organs, we know as little, and
it

it is impossible to know any thing less, as those philosophers do, who have pretended, most extravagantly, to explain these laws, and to account for these impressions; or as those philosophers know of another system, who, 'denying, as extravagantly, that any such power can belong to body, and affirming that it is absurd to talk of passive power, confine all activity, and ascribe all such ideas of sensation to spirit alone. We are far from knowing how body acts on body, or spirit on spirit; how body operates on mind, and produces thought; or how mind operates on body, and produces corporeal motion. But this I know, that a leaf of wormwood conveys to my mind, by the sense of sight, and that of touch, for instance, the ideas of color, extension, figure, and solidity, as certainly as I know that it conveys thither, by the sense of taste, the idea of bitter; and as certainly as I know that the act of my mind, called volition, produced the motion of my hand which gathered the leaf. Our ignorance of causes does not hinder our knowledge of effects. This knowledge has been thought sufficient for us, in these cases, by infinite wisdom: and nothing can be more ridiculous than to hear men affirm dogmatically, when they guess at most, and that very wildly, and very precariously.

As these ideas come to us from without, so there are others that arise in the mind, and proceed from the perception of it's own operations, to which a still greater number is to be added,

that arise there from the concurrence of these joint causes, from perceptions of outward and inward operations, from external, and internal sense. Perception is the first faculty the mind exerts; and is common, whatever some of the others may be, to us and to the whole animal kind. The faculties that come in play afterwards seem to be active, but this seems to be passive; for we perceive ideas, however raised in the mind, whether we will or no: their esse is percipi; to have them we must perceive that we have them. Without this passive power, or this faculty, external objects might act upon us, but they would act to little purpose, for they would excite no ideas: as, on the other hand, without this action of external objects, the power or faculty of perception would be useless, or rather null, and by consequence all the other powers or faculties of the mind.

THERE is nothing, philosophically speaking, at least I could never find to my sorrow that there is any thing, which obliges us necessarily to conclude that we are a compound of material and immaterial substance. If we are so, contrary to all appearances (for they denote plainly one single system, all the parts of which are so intimately connected, and dependent one on another, that the whole begins, proceeds, and ends together) this union of a body and a soul must be magical indeed, as doctor CUDWORTH calls it: so magical, that the hypothesis serves to no purpose in philosophy, whatever it may do in theology; and

is still less comprehensible, than the hypothesis which assumes that altho our idea of thought be not included in the idea of matter or body, as the idea of figure is, for instance, in that of limited extension ; yet the faculty of thinking, in all the modes of thought, may have been super-added by omnipotence to certain systems of matter : which it is not less than blasphemy to deny ; tho divines and philosophers, who deny it in terms, may be cited ; and which, whether it be true or no, will never be proved false by a little metaphysical jargon about essences, and attributes, and modes.

BUT however this may be, concerning which it becomes men little to be as dogmatical, as they are on one side of this question at least ; and whatever strength and vigor, independent on the body, may be ascribed to the soul, the soul exerts none till it is roused into activity by sense. A jog, a knock, a thrust from without is not knowledge *. No, but if we did not perceive these jogs, knocks, and thrusts from without, we should remain just as we came into the world, void even of the first elements of knowledge. Not only the inward, active powers of the mind would be unemployed, but we may say that they would be non-existent. The human soul is so far from being furnished with forms and ideas to perceive all things by, or from being impregnated, I would rather say than printed over, with the seeds of

* CUDWORTH.

universal knowledge, that we have no ideas till we receive passively the ideas of sensible qualities from without. Then indeed the activity of the soul, or mind commences, and another source of original ideas is opened: for then we acquire ideas from, and by the operations of our minds. Sensation would be of little use to form the understanding, if we had no other faculty than mere passive perception; but without sensation these other faculties would have nothing to operate upon; reflection would have by consequence nothing to reflect upon, and it is by reflection that we multiply our stock of ideas, and fill that magazine, which is to furnish all the materials of future knowledge. In this manner, and in no other, we may say that “all our ideas arise from our senses;” and that “there is nothing in the mind which was not previously in sense.” But these propositions should not be advanced, perhaps, as generally as they are sometimes by logicians, lest they should lead into error, as maxims are apt to do very often. Sensation is the greater, reflection the smaller source of ideas. But these latter are as clear and distinct, and convey knowledge that may be said to be more real than the former. Sense gave occasion to them, but they never were in sense, properly speaking. They are, if I may say so, of the mind’s own growth, the elements of knowledge, more immediate, less relative, and less dependent, than sensitive knowledge; as any man will be apt to think, who compares his ideas
of

of remembring, recollecting, bare thought, and intenseness of thought, with those of warm and hot, of cool and cold. DES CARTES might have said, “ I see, I hear, I feel, I taste, I smell ; therefore I am.” But surely he might say too, “ I think, I reflect, I will ; therefore I am.” Let us observe, however, that it belongs only to a great philosopher to frame an argument to prove to himself that he exists, which is an object of intuitive knowledge, and concerning which it is impossible he should have any doubt *. In the mouth of any other person, “ I think, therefore I am,” would be very near akin to, “ I am, therefore I am.”

THUS it will appear, when we contemplate our understanding in the first steps towards knowledge, that corporeal, animal sense, which some philosophers hold in great contempt, and which does not deserve much esteem, communicates to us our first ideas, sets the mind first to work, and becomes, in conjunction with internal sense, by which we perceive what passes within, as by the other what passes without us, the foundation of all our knowledge. This is so evidently true, that even those ideas, about which our reason is

* Je ne vois pas que vous ayez eu besoin d'un si grand appareil, puisque d'ailleurs vous étiez déjà certain de votre existence, et que vous pouviez inferer la même chose de quelque autre que ce fût de vos actions, étant manifeste par la lumière naturelle que tout ce qui agit est, ou existe. Objec. of GASSENDI to the second Medit.

employed in the most abstract meditations, may be traced back to this original by a very easy analyse. Since these simple ideas therefore are the foundations of human knowledge, this knowledge can neither be extended wider, nor elevated higher, than in a certain proportion to them. If we consider these ideas like foundations, they are extremely narrow, and shallow, neither reaching to many things, nor laid deep in the nature of any. If we consider them like materials, for so they may be considered likewise, employed to raise the fabric of our intellectual system, they will appear like mud, and straw, and lath, materials fit to erect some frail, and homely cottage; but not of substance, nor value sufficient for the construction of those enormous piles, from whose lofty towers philosophers would persuade us that they discover all nature subject to their inspection, that they pry into the source of all being, and into the inmost recesses of all wisdom. But it fares with them, as it did with the builders in the plains of Senaar, they fall into a confusion of languages, and neither understand one another, nor are understood by the rest of mankind.

HAVING taken this view of our first, and simple ideas, it is necessary, in order to make a true estimate of human knowledge, that we take such a view likewise of those faculties by the exercise of which our minds proceed in acquiring knowledge. I have mentioned perception; and retention, or memory ought to follow: for as we
 should

should have no ideas without perception, so we should lose them as fast, as we get them, without retention. When it was objected to DES CARTES, that, if thought was the essence of the soul, the soul of the child must think in the mother's womb; and when he was asked, how then it came to pass that we remember none of those thoughts? He maintained, according to his usual method, one hypothesis by another; and assumed that memory consists in certain traces made on the brain by the thoughts that pass through it, and that as long as they last we remember; but that the brain of the child in the womb being too moist, and too soft to preserve these traces, it is impossible he should remember out of the womb what he thought in it. Thus memory seems to be made purely corporeal by the same philosopher, who makes it on some occasions purely intellectual. He might distinguish two memories by the same hypothetical power, by which he distinguished two substances, that he might employ one or the other as his system required. If you consult other philosophers on the same subject, you will receive no more satisfaction: and the only reasonable method we can take, is to be content to know intuitively, and by inward observation, not the cause, but the effects of memory, and the use of it in the intellectual system.

By this faculty then, whatever it be, our simple ideas, which have been spoken of already, are preserved with greater, and our complex ideas, which

which remain to be spoken of, with less facility. Both one and the other require to be frequently raised in the mind, and frequently recalled to it. I say, with the rest of the world, to be raised, and to be recalled; but surely these words come very short of expressing the wonderful phaenomena of memory. The images that are lodged in it present themselves often to the mind without any fresh sensation, and so spontaneously, that the mind seems as passive in these secondary perceptions, as it was in receiving the first impressions. Our simple ideas, and even our complex ideas, and notions, return sometimes of themselves, we know not why, nor how, mechanically, as it were, uncalled by the mind, and often to the disturbance of it in the pursuit of other ideas, to which these intruders are foreign. On the other hand, we are able, at our will and with design, to put a sort of force on memory, to seize, as it were, the end of some particular line, and to draw back into the mind a whole set of ideas that seem to be strung to it, or linked one with the other. In general; when images, essences, ideas, notions, that existed in any mind, are gone out of it, and have no longer any existence there, the mind is often able to will them into existence again, by an act, of which we are conscious, but of which we know nothing more, than that the mind performs it. These phaenomena are more surprising, and less to be accounted for, than the action of external objects on the organs of sense in the first production of ideas: which is an observation that deserves

erves the notice of those philosophers, who deny such action because they cannot comprehend it.

BUT still this faculty is proportioned to our imperfect nature, and therefore weak, slow, and uncertain in it's operations. Our simple ideas fade in the mind, or fleet out of it, unless they are frequently renewed: and the most tenacious memory cannot maintain such as are very complex, without the greatest attention, and a constant care, nor always with both. All our ideas in general are recalled slowly by some, and successively by every mind. THEMISTOCLES was famous, among other parts wherein he excelled, for his memory; but when he refused the offer SIMONIDES made him, it was, I suppose, because he did not want the poet's skill to improve his memory, and because he knew by experience that the great defects of this faculty are neither to be cured, nor supplied by art. In what proportion soever it is given, it may be improved to some degree, no doubt: but memory will never present ideas to the human mind, as it does perhaps to superior intelligences, like objects in a mirror, where they may be viewed at every instant, all at once, without effort or toil, in their original freshness, and with their original precision, such as they were when they first came into the mind, or when they were first framed by it. Could memory serve us in this manner, our knowledge would be still very imperfect; but many errors, into which we fall, and into which we are seduced, would be avoid-

ed, and the endless chicane of learned disputation would be stopped in a great measure. It is for this reason I have said so much of this faculty of the mind, as you will have occasion soon to observe.

THE faculties necessary for my purpose to be mentioned next, are those of compounding simple into complex ideas, and of comparing our ideas, which implies the just and nice discernment of them, in order to perceive the innumerable relations which they bear to one another. These are some of the steps by which the mind attempts to rise from particular to general knowledge. They have been called arts of the mind, but improperly, in some respects: for tho' the mind is forced to employ several arts, and to call in sense to the aid of intellect, even after it has full possession of it's ideas, to help out it's imperfect manner of knowing, and to lengthen a little it's short tether; yet the composition, and comparison of ideas is plainly a lesson of nature: this lesson is taught us by the very first sensations we have. As the mind does not act till it is roused into action by external objects; so when it does act, it acts conformably to the suggestions it receives from these impressions, and takes with it's first ideas the hints how to multiply, and improve them. If nature makes us lame, she gives crutches to lean upon. She helps us to walk where we cannot run, and to hobble where we cannot walk. She takes us by the hand, and leads us by experience to art.

NATURE

NATURE then has united in distinct substances, as we commonly speak, various combinations of those qualities, each of which causes in us the sensation it is appropriated to cause, and our organs are fitted to receive ; so that several being thus combined, and making their impression together, may be said to cause a complex sensation. Thus we receive, among other ideas, those of soft and warm at the same instant, from the same piece of wax ; or of hard and cold from the same piece of ice. Thus, again, we receive the more complex ideas, which substances still more composed, that is, substances wherein a greater variety of these qualities co-exists, are fitted to raise in us ; such, for instance, as the idea of a man, or an horse. As soon as we are born, various appearances present themselves to the sight, the din of the world strikes our ears, in short a multitude of impressions made on the tender organs of sense convey a multitude of ideas simple and complex, confusedly, and continually into the mind. The latter indeed, whether nature obtrudes them, or we make them, are composed of the former, and therefore we give very properly the first place to these in all discourses concerning ideas. But they have a priority of order, rather than of existence ; for the complex idea of the nurse comes into the mind as soon as the eyes of the child are opened, and is most probably the first idea received by the sight, tho the simple idea produced by the taste of milk may have got into the mind a little sooner. Nor does the lesson of nature end here : she carries

ries it on to all the different compositions of our simple ideas, and to all the different combinations we frame of our simple, and complex ideas; from substances to modes, the dependencies, and affections of substances; and from them to the relations of things one to another; that is, she carries it on to all the operations of the mind, and to all the objects of our thoughts in the acquisition of knowledge.

IF I meant by modes nothing but manners of being, as some do, I should not ascribe our ideas of them to a further lesson of nature. She taught us this lesson, when she obtruded on us the complex ideas of substances. At least it seems so to me, who cannot comprehend the distinction of substance and of mode or manner of being, as of two ideas that may be perceived separately, the one of a thing that subsists by itself, the other of a manner of being which cannot subsist by itself, but determines this thing to be what it is. I cannot consider a mode without referring it in my mind to something, of which it is or may be the mode: neither can I consider a substance otherwise than relatively to its modes, as something whereof I have no idea, and in which the modes, of which I have ideas, subsist. The complex idea we have of every substance is nothing more, than a combination of several sensible ideas which determine the apparent nature of it to us. I say the apparent nature, and to us; for I cannot agree that these modes, such of them as fall under our observation,

servation, limit the real nature, or determine even the apparent nature to other beings. On the whole it will appear, whenever we consider this matter further, that the far greatest part of what has been said by philosophers about being, and substance, indeed all they have advanced beyond those clear and obvious notions, which every thinking man frames, or may frame without their help, is pure jargon, or else something very trite, disguised under a metaphysical mask, and called by an hard name, ontology, or ontosophy.

BUT to proceed, or rather to return; I understand by mode, in this place, something else, something that carries our knowledge further, than the complex ideas of substances. I understand, in short, what Mr. LOCKE understands by simple and mixed modes, the various combinations that our minds make of the same simple idea, and the various compositions that they make of simple ideas of different kinds. These ideas, added to those of substances, and the whole stock completed by such as the mind acquires of the relations of it's ideas in comparing them as far as it is able to compare them, make up the entire system of human knowledge: and in the process of it from first to last we are assisted directly or indirectly by the lessons of nature that have been, or that are to be mentioned.

IDEAS of things computable, and measurable, are the objects of mathematics. Ideas of moral, and immoral actions are the objects of ethics.

From

From whence has the mathematician his first ideas of number, or his first ideas of solid extension, of lines, surfaces, and figures? From whence has the moralist his first ideas of happiness, and unhappiness, of good and evil? The mind can exercise a power, in some sort arbitrary, over all its simple ideas, that is, it can repeat them at its pleasure, and it can frame them into complex ideas without any regard to actual, tho with a regard to possible existence; which regard will be always preserved, unless the mind be disordered. The mind then has a power of framing all the different compositions, and combinations of ideas, about which these sciences are conversant: but yet these operations are not performed by the native energy of the mind alone, without any help, without any pattern. Nature lends the help, nature sets the pattern, when complex ideas of these modes and relations force themselves on the mind, as the complex ideas of substances do.

THAT every distinct object of external, and internal sense gives us the idea of an unit, or of one, is obvious to reflection: and I think it is no less obvious that these objects suggest to the mind, nay oblige the mind to make, various repetitions of this idea, and to frame all the simple modes of number by adding unit to unit. Thus, for instance, we look up by day and we see one sun, by night, and we see one moon. PLUTARCH'S countryman, indeed, counted two moons; for he could not conceive that the moon he had left behind
him

him in Boeotia, and that he saw at Athens, were the same. But tho we see but one sun, and one moon, we see many stars. We attempt to count them, that is, we assign marks, or sounds to signify how many times we repeat the idea of an unit, which each of them gives us separately; or else we form a confused idea of numberless repetitions of this idea, like the savages who lift up both hands, and extend their fingers to shew that they have been ten suns on their journey, or hold out an handful of their hair when they want to signify a number of suns; which they cannot signify otherwise, because they have neither sounds, nor marks for the greater collections of units.

As arithmetic is one, so is geometry another constituent part of mathematics, and the very name points out to us, not only the object, but the original of this science. I do not believe, on the word of HERODOTUS, nor even of STRABO, that the Egyptians were the inventors of it. I believe this almost as little, as I believe, on the word of JOSEPHUS, that antediluvian astronomers had engraved their observations on two pillars which existed in his time. But this tradition, whereby the invention of geometry is ascribed to a nation more antient than tradition itself, tho it may be fabulous, communicates to us, like many others that are so, a true fact. The true fact, I think, is this; that, as soon as men ceased to range the woods and plains in common, like their fellow animals, if they ever did so; as soon as socie-

ties were formed, and in those societies a division of property was made; nature, that led them to assign, led them to ascertain possessions. They did both, most probably, at first by sight, and guess. They paced out these possessions afterwards in length, and breadth; and ideas of modes of space were framed like ideas of modes of number: an unit twelve times repeated makes a dozen, twenty times repeated it makes a score. The length of one of their feet was, to these first geometricians, like an unit to the first arithmeticians. So many feet, five, I think, according to *PLINY*, made a pace, and one hundred and five and twenty of these made a stated measure of distance that continued long in use; for the stadium consisted of one hundred and twenty-five paces, according to the same author. Thus, measuring, the practical part of geometry, came into use: and when it had been applied to two dimensions, it was soon applied to all three. The use of it was great, not only in the first distribution of property, but in every alteration of it, and especially after such confusions of it, as the inundations of the Nile might cause annually in Egypt, or other devastations in that and in other countries.

NATURE, that urged men, by necessity, to invention, helped them to invent. The natural face of a country taught them to give it an artificial face; and their own first rude essays in laying out lands, and building habitations, led them to contemplate the properties of lines, surfaces,
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and solids; and little by little to form that science, the pride of the human intellect, which has served to so many great and good purposes, and the application of which is grown, or growing perhaps, into some abuse. Nature set the example, example begot imitation, imitation practice, practice introduced speculation, and speculation in it's turn improved practice. I might easily run through other examples of the same kind, to shew how the first principles of arts and sciences are derived from ideas furnished by the productions, and operations of nature, such as our senses represent them to us; nay, how instinct instructs reason, the instinct of other animals the reason of man. But this would be superfluous trouble in writing to you, who have touched this subject so well, where you introduce nature speaking to man, in the third of your ethic epistles.

I WILL only mention, as I proposed to do, the ideas, or notions, about which moral philosophy is conversant. I distinguish here, which I should have done perhaps sooner, and I think with good reason, between ideas, and notions; for it seems to me, that as we compound simple into complex ideas, so the compositions we make of simple and complex ideas may be called, more properly, and with less confusion and ambiguity, notions. Simple ideas, simple modes, complex ideas, mixed modes, and relations of all these, as well as the relations of the relations, are frequently blended together voluntarily, as use invites, or judg-

ment directs; and, thus blended, they may therefore seem to be original, and untaught. But yet certain it is, that such notions as these obtrude themselves on the mind as naturally and as necessarily, tho' not so directly nor immediately, as the complex ideas of substances, or any other complex ideas. Let us observe this in an example. We see one man kill another: and the complex idea, signified by the word kill, is obtruded on our sense as much, as the complex idea of the man killed, or of his killer. The mind retains this image, and joining to it various ideas of circumstances and relations, of causes and effects, of motives and consequences, all which ideas have been raised in our minds by experience and observation, such notions as we intend by the words murder, assassination, parricide, or fratricide are framed.

NATURE teaches us, by experience and observation, not only to extend our notions, but to distinguish them with greater precision; just as we learn to rectify simple ideas of sensation, and to control sense by sense, if I may say so. Mr. LOCKE observes that we learn first the names of these complex ideas and notions from other men, and the signification of them afterwards. Which is true; and it is the most early, and most common method whereby we acquire them. But this makes no alteration in the case. Whether the impressions that excited these complex ideas, and gave the mind occasion and means to form these notions,

notions, were made on our minds, or on the minds of other men; and whether the names that signify them were given by us, or by others, it is plain that nature taught mankind to make them, directly when she obtruded them, and indirectly when we seemed to invent them without any assistance from outward objects. The first is evident of itself, and the second will appear so too, if we consider that in learning their names, and the signification of these names, we learned to decompose them; and that by learning to decompose some the mind was instructed to compound others, even such, perhaps, as existed by these means in idea and notion, before the combinations, whereof they became the archetypes, existed in act. Our ideas of relations, and of the relations of relations, which are comprehended so often in our complex ideas, or notions, are not positive beings that exist by themselves, and can be contemplated by themselves. Modes are the affections and dependencies of substances; relations are the affections and dependencies of substances and modes; and no one of them can exist any longer than both the ideas that produced it, or by the comparison of which it was framed, subsist. It might seem therefore the less likely that outward objects should communicate such ideas to the mind, or even instruct the mind to frame them; and yet so it is. That act of the mind, that sets two objects before our internal sight, and by referring from one to the other includes both in the same consideration, is plainly suggested to us by the operations of out-

ward objects on our senses. We can neither look up, nor down, without perceiving ideas of bigger and less, of more and fewer, of brighter and darker, and a multitude of other relations, the ideas of which arise in the mind as fast as the ideas of things of which they express the relations, and almost prevent reflection. When the mind, thus taught, employs reflection, the number of these relative ideas increases vastly. Thus, for instance, when we observe the alterations that are made by nature, or by art, in our complex ideas of substances, or when we reflect on the continual vicissitude and flux of all the affections, and passions, and the consequences of them, how can we avoid framing the ideas of cause and effect? That which produces, or seems to us to produce the alteration, gives us the idea of cause, and that which receives the alteration gives us the idea of effect. I go no further into the consideration of our ideas of relations physical, and moral. They are numberless, and they must needs be so; since every idea, or notion we have, though it be in itself one single object of thought, becomes the object of a thousand when it is compared with all those with which it may be compared in some respect or other.

S E C T I O N III.

THese, and such as these are all the ideas we have really, and are capable of having, derived originally from sense, external and internal. These too, and such as these, are the faculties, by which

which we improve and increase our stock: and such as all these are, such must our knowledge be; for since human knowledge is nothing else than the perception of the agreement or disagreement, connection or repugnancy of our ideas, those that are simple must determine the nature of those that are complex; those that are complex that of our notions; our notions that of the principles we establish; and that of the principles we establish that of all the consequences we draw from them. Error, in any one step of this gradation, begets error in all that follow: and tho we compare ever so exactly, conclude ever so truly, and in a word reason ever so well, our reasoning must terminate in error whenever this happens. It cannot terminate in knowledge. But before I leave this subject I must go over it again, that I may carry the reflections upon it further.

How inadequate our ideas are to the nature of outward objects, and how imperfect therefore all our knowledge is concerning them, has been observed transiently above, and has been too often and too well explained to be over much insisted on by me. That there are such objects, material objects, neither spirits nor ideas, and that they act on one another and on us in various manners, and according to various laws, no man can doubt any more, than he can doubt of that perception, by which he distinguishes their presence and their absence according to the difference between the ideas they excite in one case, and those he retains

in the other. We can doubt of this, I think, no more than we can doubt whether we are free agents, or whether we are necessarily determined to all we do; no more than we can doubt of many other things of which philosophers have pretended to doubt, or have really doubted: for, either they have meant on many occasions to exercise their wit, and to triumph in the subtilty of their genius; or they have been transported by overheated imaginations into a philosophical delirium. The first have perplexed knowledge more than they have improved it: and if the last have not made many converts whilst they have argued against self-evidence, they have multiplied useles disputes, and mispent much time.

HERE then, at our first setting out in the survey of knowledge, we find an immense field in which we cannot range, no nor so much as enter beyond the out-skirts of it: the rest is impenetrable to us, and affords not a single path to conduct us forward. Could we range in that field, we should be unable to walk in our own. I mean, that if our senses were able to discover to us the inmost constitutions, and the real essences of outward objects, such senses would render us unfit to live and act in the system to which we belong. If the system was not made for us, who pretend on very weak grounds, I think, to be the final cause of it, we at least were made for the system, and for the part we bear among terrestrial animals. Other creatures there may be, and, I believe readily,
there

there are, who have finer senses than men, as well as superior intelligence to apply and improve the ideas they receive by sensation. The inmost constitutions, the real essences of all the bodies that surround them, may lie constantly open to such creatures; or they may be able, which is a greater advantage still, so “to frame, and shape
 “to themselves organs of sensation, as to suit
 “them to their present design, and the circum-
 “stances of the object they would consider,” according to that supposition, which Mr. LOCKE calls an extravagant conjecture of his, but which that great man might very reasonably make; since it assumes no more than this, that some other creatures are able to do by their natural constitution, and so as to obtain full and absolute knowledge, what we are able to do by art very imperfectly, and yet so as to attain a greater degree of partial and relative knowledge, than our senses, unassisted by art, could communicate to us.

BUT be this as it will, concerning which we can only guess; it is, I think, evident that altho outward objects make impressions on the organs of sense, and may be said therefore to cause sensations, yet these sensations are determined in the whole animal kind, that we know, and to which we belong, according to the constitutions of the several species; as these constitutions are framed according to the uses and ends for which each species is designed, and to which it is directed. Innumerable instances might be brought to illustrate,

strate, and confirm this truth. It will be sufficient to do so by making a few short observations on our own species alone. The same outward objects, then, produce the same sensations in all men, as far as self-preservation is immediately concerned : and there is at least an apparent uniformity of sensations in all other cases, sufficient to maintain the commerce of men one with another, to direct their mutual offices without confusion, and to answer all the ends of society. Further than to these purposes, the determination of their sensations does not seem to be in all men the same. The same objects seem to cause different, and opposite sensations in many particular instances, in as much as they give pleasure, and excite desire in one man, whilst they give no pleasure, nor excite any desire, nay whilst they give pain, and provoke aversion in another. All men feel alike the effects of fire that burns, or of steel that divides their flesh : and my butler, who has tasted both, will not bring me a bottle of wormwood-wine when I ask for a bottle of sack. But yet the Greenlander quaffs his bowl of whale's grease with as much pleasure, as you and I drink our bowl of punch : and if his liquor appears nauseous to us, ours appears so to him. Habit, that second nature, may sometimes account, as well as sickness, for this difference that seems to be in human sensations. But still it will remain true that this difference in many, and various instances, proceeds from our first nature, if I may say so ; that is, from a difference in the original constitution of those

those particular bodies in which this apparent difference of sensation is perceivable. The principle of this diversity is as unknown to us, as the more general principle of uniformity: but whether it be laid in the natural constitution, or in the alterations that habit or sickness may produce, our observation will be verified, that human sensations are determined by the actual disposition, whether original or accidental, of human bodies, and cannot therefore help to communicate to us any knowledge of the inward constitutions, or real essences of the bodies which excite them, nor indeed any knowledge but of themselves. To discover in what manner, and by what powers, external action and internal passion co-operate to produce sensation, it is in vain to attempt: and a philosophical mind will be much better employed in admiring and adoring the divine wisdom, that appears equally in the diversity, and in the uniformity of our sensations, as it would not be hard to shew if this was a place for those reflections; than in such vain researches. Vain indeed they will appear to be to any man of sense, who considers with attention, and without prepossession, what has been writ on this subject by men of the greatest genius.

BUT as vain as these researches are, and as impossible as it is to know more of our sensations, than that we have them, and that we receive them from outward objects; yet we are not to think the use of our senses as limited, as MALBRANCHE would

would have us believe it to be. They were given *, he says, for the preservation of our bodies, and not to teach us truth. The first part of this assertion is agreeable to the system of nature. The latter is agreeable, I think, to no system but that of his own imagining, which is so extravagantly hypothetical in many, and the principal parts, that it has made no great fortune in the world, tho' the utmost subtilty of wit, and all the powers of language are employed to support it. Notwithstanding, therefore, such systems as these, for it is not single of it's kind, we may continue to believe, what constant experience dictates to us, that our senses, tho' few, confined, and fallible, are given not only for the preservation of our bodies, but to let into the human mind the first elements of knowledge, and to assist, and direct the mind in all the progress it makes afterwards.

THAT human knowledge is relative, not absolute, has been said already. We neither do, nor can know the real essence of any one substance in the world, not of our own: and when we talk of the powers and qualities, and sometimes of the natures of substances, either we talk ignorantly, or we refer to their effects, by which alone we distinguish them, and in which alone we know any thing of them. They who distinguish between the primary, and secondary qualities of substances, do not so much as pretend that the

* Recherche de la verité, L. i. c. 10.

secondary qualities, such as colors, or tastes, for instance, are any representations of the outward existences that cause them: and the disputes about solidity, extension, and motion, which is mobility in action, as mobility is motion in power, shew how inadequate our ideas are of the primary qualities; tho these are said to be resemblances of patterns really existing in all bodies whether we perceive them or not.

BUT tho the knowledge here spoken of be not complete, nor absolute, because our ideas, concerning which alone human knowledge is conversant, are inadequate to the nature of things; yet it is real knowledge in some degree, and relatively to us. This I mean: Our simple ideas, whose various co-existencies compose all our complex ideas of substances, are certainly adequate in this sense; they are real effects of real powers, and such as the all-wise Author of nature has ordained these powers to produce in us. I say in us, for it is not incongruous to suppose, nor will these ideas be less adequate, nor this knowledge less real, if it be so, that the same powers may be ordained to produce other effects on other creatures of God. This paper gives me the idea that I call white; it may give some other idea to some other creature. These ideas are different, but they are both adequate to our use, and the knowledge real; for they are both real, and natural effects of real, corresponding powers.

As

As low as these principles of any real knowledge, that we can acquire of substances, are laid, it is from them we must take our rise : and there is no wonder therefore if we proceed slowly, and have not been able to proceed far, even since the study of nature has been pursued in a right method. Whilst the symbolical physics of Pythagoreans and Platonists prevailed, and whilst natural philosophy was made to consist in little else than a logical cant, which ARISTOTLE invented, and his disciples propagated, error was cultivated instead of science, ignorance was masked, and men passed for naturalists without any knowledge of nature. The case would be much the same if some modern philosophers could have succeeded in establishing a supposed science, that they call metaphysics, to be like an higher ground, from which we might descend to physics, from generals to particulars, from speculations about what may be, down to affirmations about what is. But there have been men since the resurrection of letters, at the head of whom our VERULAM justly claims his place, who have delivered common sense from the chains of authority ; and, by exposing antient, have put us on our guard against many of those modern whimsies. The generality of philosophers, therefore, have been far from adopting this inverted rule, this unnatural method of studying nature. They have seen not only that laborious industry is the price imposed on all our acquisitions of knowledge, but that natural knowledge, the knowledge, I should say, of
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the system of nature, can never be real, unless it be begun, and carried on by the painful drudgery of experiment. Extunditur usu.

By experiments well made, for they too may be made ill, these men have acquired a knowledge of some particular substances, of those at least which are nearest to them, which they can handle, and even torture at their pleasure, and force, if I may say so, to give them information. The knowledge I mean is that of the sensible qualities and powers co-existing in each particular substance: and this is real knowledge as far as it goes, according to what has been explained above. When a multitude of particular substances are thus known, and thus distinguished, philosophers venture to frame general propositions concerning them, and concerning others too by the help of analogy: and when the propositions, and the conclusions drawn from them are confirmed by uniform experience, they acquire a probability almost equivalent to certainty, and which must be accepted for it. This, however, is not strictly knowledge. The naturalist, who has made a thousand experiments with the utmost care and skill; the chemist, who has, in like manner, decomposed a thousand natural, and composed as many artificial bodies, are still liable to be deceived; because it may happen that the action of one particular body shall not produce sometimes the same effects, which the action of other bodies of the same specific appearance has produced

produced on innumerable trials. Our real knowledge goes no further than particular experiment : and as we attempt to make it general, we make it precarious. The reason is plain. It is a knowledge of particular effects that have no connection, nor dependency one on another, even when they, or more properly the powers that produce them, are united in the same substance : and of these powers considered as causes, and not in their effects, we have no means of attaining any knowledge at all. It may be that bodies act on one another according to their bulk, figure, and texture of their solid parts, by motion and pulsion, or gravity and attraction. It may be that their action proceeds from other causes, so remote from all human conception, that we are unable not only to guess at them, but even to suspect that they are. But whatever they be, since they are neither known nor knowable by us, what have philosophers to do more, than to redouble their industry in multiplying experiments as much, as they have means and opportunities of doing, since there may be a deficiency, but never an excess of them ? Thus they may proceed in obtaining knowledge of particular substances by the help of their senses, and in improving and applying this knowledge to greater advantage by the help of their intellect. Sense and intellect must conspire in the acquisition of physical knowledge ; but the latter must never proceed independently of the former. Experiment is that pillar of fire, which can alone conduct us to the promised land : and they,

they, who lose sight of it, lose themselves in the dark wilds of imagination. This many have done from the infancy of philosophy, which has lasted longer than we are apt to imagine; and which, one might be tempted to think on some occasions, continues still, by a fondness to retain some of the rattles and baubles of early ages. These rattles, and baubles have been laid aside, however, by no philosophers so much, as by those who have applied themselves to cultivate experimental physics: and therefore as imperfect as our knowledge of nature is, and must be always, yet has it been more advanced within less than two centuries, than it had been in twenty that preceded them.

ALL the helps, that human wit and industry can procure, have been employed. Microscopes and telescopes have been invented. Geometry has been applied to natural philosophy, and algebra to geometry. With all these helps, our knowledge of nature has advanced in degree, but not in kind. There are microscopical corpuscles in bodies, as there are telescopical stars in the heavens, neither of which can be discovered without the help of one, or the other, of these glasses. But, with this help, we can no more discover all the corpuscles of any one body, than we can all the stars of the universe: and besides, as to the former, if glasses could magnify enough to expose them all to our sight, we should know indeed more component particles of bodies, but we should remain as ignorant of their mechanical affections,

as we are now : because we should remain ignorant of the mechanical affections of these corpuscles, or of that inward spring which puts these atoms into motion, and directs their several operations.

As to the celestial bodies which are objects of astronomical observation, they must be reckoned objects of natural philosophy likewise ; since they are parts of the same universal system of nature. We take up the telescope, indeed, and not the microscope, to contemplate them, because they are at such immense distances from us : and we are so little concerned to know of what substances they are composed, or what substances they contain, that, if we were not hindered by the utter impossibility, we might be so by the apparent inutility, from attempting to acquire any such knowledge of them, as we labor to acquire of the outward objects that environ us in our own planet. This planet is our home, and it imports us to know as much as we can of the inward structure and furniture of it. We have not the same concern about other habitations. But it is agreeable, and in some respects useful, to know the general face of the country about us. It is probable that mere curiosity begat astronomy : and that the uses, to which this noble science is applicable, were discovered afterwards. I am apt to think that the first men were excited more to physical researches by the shining phaenomena of the heavens, than by those of the earth. Their wants forced them to look down ; but as the most im-

mediate of these were supplied, they began to look up again: and the men who had least to do, egyptian, or chaldean shepherds, perhaps, were the first astronomers. But, as mean and rude as the beginnings of it were, astronomy was soon cultivated by the most learned men, and by the greatest princes, if we believe the traditions of antiquity concerning BELUS, ATLAS, and others, to have had any foundation in the truth of things. Thus much is sure, it has been cultivated many thousands of years; and wherever arts and sciences have flourished this science has flourished at the head of them.

It is lawful, methinks, to conclude from hence, that a science, which it has been the business of learned men in all countries, where learning has flourished, to advance, would have been brought to a great degree of perfection, if there had been any near proportion between the object of it and human means of knowledge. But as some bodies baffle our enquiries, and escape our knowledge by being too minute, these enormous masses do the same by being too remote. Our sense of sight fails us; and when our senses fail us in natural philosophy, whose object is actual not possible existence, our intellect is of little use. It may be said, it will be said, that our knowledge of the heavenly bodies is brought to a great degree of perfection, and is going on daily to a greater, by the incessant labors of many learned men; that we have a much more extensive, a more exact,

and a truer view of the phaenomena than ever, by the vast advances that have been made in every part of mathematics ; that we calculate their magnitudes, measure their distances, determine their figures, describe their orbits, compute the degrees of their velocity, and perform a multitude of other operations concerning them, the result of every one of which is knowledge, with the utmost accuracy. It will be added, that we are not only thus able to account for appearances, but that we penetrate into the physical causes of them, that we discover the forces by which these bodies act on one another, the laws of their motion, and of their direction, by which the order and harmony of the whole system is governed and maintained.

THIS may be said, and more to the same effect, without contradiction on my part ; for it is true in the main, truer than panegyric is generally. But still I apprehend, that when we consider the whole matter, as it must be considered to make a true estimate of the extent of this knowledge, that is, when we compare the objects of this science with the progress that has been made in it by the united labors of mankind, we shall find much more reason to admire the industry, and perseverance of philosophers, than to applaud their success. What do we know beyond our solar system ? We know indeed just enough to give us nobler, and more magnificent ideas of the works of God, than antient philosophy could suggest. We know that this system, to which our
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planet belongs; and beyond which men did not carry their thoughts antiently nor suspect any other, is but a minute part of the immense system of the universe, of the τὸ πᾶν, as you Greeks, I think, call it. But as to any particular knowledge that we have, or even imagine that we have, it is next to nothing. Well may we be thus ignorant of all the solar systems beyond our own, the very phaenomena of which, except the twinkling of some of their suns and our fixed stars, are imperceptible to human sight; when there are so many phaenomena in our own solar system, for which we cannot account, and so many others, probably, that we have not yet discovered; when there are, even in that of the earth we inhabit, so many things that have hitherto escaped the utmost penetration of our senses, and the utmost efforts of our intellect, with all the assistance that art can give to both. We cannot trace the course of comets, for instance, through all their oblique orbits: but can we trace the circulation of water that falls on our earth in rain, or that rises in springs? “Veniet tempus,” says SENECA in the seventh book of his Natural questions, “quo
 “ ista, quae nunc latent, in lucem dies extrahet;
 “ et, longioris aevi diligentia, veniet tempus, quo
 “ posterii nostri tam aperta nos nescisse mirentur.” This time may come, perhaps; but, if we judge of what is to come by what is past, we may be tempted to think that the revolution of the platonian year will be complete as soon.

THE progress of a science, which, like this of
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natural philosophy, is the work of ages, must be liable, as it has been and will be, to various interruptions. The ground that has been gained will be frequently lost. The latest systems or hypotheses may not be always the truest: and when they are so, the advancement of science may not be accelerated by them as much, as it has been retarded by those that were false. In a word, I do not believe that *SENECA* would be so much surprised, if he rose from the dead, as we may imagine, at the progress that has been made since his days. What further progress will be made depends on many contingencies, and it is hard to say: But this is sure, that altho knowledge acquired facilitates the acquisition of more to a certain point, yet the progress we attempt to make beyond that point grows more and more difficult, and becomes a little sooner, or a little later, quite impracticable: for nothing can be truer in physics, as well as in those general reasonings which are called metaphysics, than what *MONTAIGNE* has said, “*les extrémités de notre perquisition tombent toutes en éblouissement.*”

LET US carry these reflections one step further, and we shall have carried them as far, as is necessary to shew how little we are fitted to acquire the knowledge to which we aspire, and which we sometimes pretend that we have, concerning bodies either terrestrial or celestial. To investigate truth with success, in mathematics, in natural philosophy, and indeed on every occasion where it is difficult to be found, the analytic method must be

be employed not only in the first place, but as far as it can be employed, about the objects of our enquiry. It has been much improved, and it has been thus employed, by the moderns. Many of them have been careful to make all the observations and experiments in their power, and from them they have drawn general conclusions by induction. This now is the utmost that our nature, and the nature of things without us, admit to be done : and when it is so well done, that no objection, drawn from experience, can be made to these conclusions, they have a right to be placed in the rank of things known by us. But let us not be mistaken : Tho' this be human, it is not absolute knowledge, because it is not founded in absolute certainty. Further discoveries of the phaenomena may contradict these conclusions : or, supposing no such discoveries to be made, other conclusions may be deducible from the same phaenomena, or other causes of them may be assignable, for aught we know. So far is this method of reasoning from particular observations and experiments to general conclusions, by induction, from amounting to real demonstration, tho' it be the best in our power.

THIS is the case when the minds of men are bent solely to the discovery of truth. But something worse happens when human affections and passions mingle in their enquiries, as they often do ; for philosophers are not free from them. The Stoics themselves, with all their boasted apathy, were as little so as any other men. When this hap-

pens, philosophers hasten too much from the analytic to the synthetic method, that is, they draw general conclusions from too small a number of particular observations, and experiments: or, without giving themselves even this trouble, they assume causes and principles before established, as if they were certain truths, and argue from them. Nothing can be more absurd than these proceedings. It is agreed, I think, out of the schools at least, that ARISTOTLE was eminently guilty of them; for he dealt more in common notions, than experiments, and built a world with categories, that is, by a certain logical arrangement of words: and yet even ARISTOTLE seems to have warned philosophers against this abuse; for he taught, according to the report of SEXTUS EMPIRICUS, that they should not neglect sense and seek for reasons, “*posthabito sensu quaerere rationem;*” that is, that they should not carry speculation further than experiment and observation authorise it first, and confirm it afterwards. The principal reasons of a contrary conduct may be found in laziness, and vanity; in the first sometimes, in the other always. Philosophers have found it more easy, and more compendious to imagine, than to discover; to guess, than to know. They have taken, therefore, this way to fame, which has been their object, at least, as much as truth: and many a wild hypothesis has passed for a real system.

STRATO was a famous philosopher, the scholar of

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THEOPHRASTUS, and the master of PTOLEMY PHILADELPHUS. As little, and as ill as we are informed of the state of natural philosophy among the more antient naturalists of Greece; such as PYTHAGORAS, ANAXAGORAS, DEMOCRITUS, and others, whose names are preserved tho' their works are lost, we know enough of PLATO and ARISTOTLE, whose works have been preserved, perhaps more to the detriment than to the advancement of learning, to determine what the state of it was in the days of STRATO. We know that it was no longer the study of nature by observation, and experiment; but that it consisted in a jargon of words, or at best in some vague hypothetical reasonings: and yet STRATO, who could not have told the egyptian king how the idea of purple, the color of his robe, was produced, pretended to account for all the phaenomena, and, among other doctrines, to establish that of the plenum, for he laughed at the vacuum, as well as at the whole atomical system of DEMOCRITUS.

HYPOTHESES are much in the favor of some philosophers; for there have been many STRATOS even among the moderns. But hypotheses may be employed without being abused. In all our attempts to account for the phaenomena of nature there will be something hypothetical necessarily included. The analytic method itself, our surest road to science, does not conduct us further than extreme probability, as it has been observed; and this probability must stand us in lieu of certainty.

tainty. But when we cannot arrive by this method at such a probability, is it reasonable to make an hypothesis? Is it reasonable, when we cannot draw from observation and experiment such conclusions, as may be safe foundations on which to proceed by the synthetic method in the pursuit of truth, to assume certain principles, as if they were founded in the analytic method, which have been never proved, nor perhaps suggested by the phaenomena, in hopes that they may be so afterwards? In a word, when the only clue we have fails us, which is most reasonable, to stop short, or to push forwards without any clue at all into the labyrinth of nature? I make no scruple of deciding in a case, so plain, that it would be a silly affectation of modesty, not modesty, to hesitate. When the phaenomena do not point out to us any sufficient reason why, and how a thing is as we discover it to be, nor the efficient cause of it, there is a sufficient reason for stopping short, and confessing our ignorance; but none for seeking, out of the phaenomena, this reason, and this cause which we cannot find in them. This is learned ignorance, of which the greatest philosophers have no reason to be ashamed. “*Rationem— harum gravitatis proprietatum ex phaenomenis nondum potui deducere, et hypotheses non fingo,*” said our NEWTON, after having advanced natural knowledge far beyond his cotemporaries, on the sure foundations of experiment, and geometry. How preferable is this learned ignorance to that ignorant learning, of which so many others have foolishly

foolishly boasted? DES CARTES, who mingled so much hypothetical with so much real knowledge, boasted in a letter to his intimate friend the minime MERSENNE, “ that he should think “ he knew nothing in natural philosophy, if he “ was only able to say how things may be, without demonstrating that they cannot be otherwise.” LEIBNITZ, who dealt in little else than hypotheses, speaking, in his reply to BAYLE’s Reflections on his Pre-established harmony, of the ridiculous whimsy of his monades, and the rest of his metaphysical trash, compares himself to ANTAEUS; asserts that “ every objection gives “ him new strength;” and boasts vainly that he might say without vanity,

Omnia praecepi, atque animo mecum ante peregi.

It will be urged, perhaps, as decisive in favor of hypotheses, that they may be of service, and can be of no disservice to us, in our pursuit of knowledge. An hypothesis founded on mere arbitrary assumptions will be a true hypothesis, and therefore of service to philosophy, if it is confirmed by many observations afterwards, and if no one phaenomenon stand in opposition to it. An hypothesis that appears inconsistent with the phaenomena will be soon demonstrated false, and as soon rejected. This reasoning, which is the sum of all that can be said for them, will not hold good, I think, in either case, enough to countenance the abuse of them which is made by the very persons who urge this plea in favor of them.

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That such an hypothesis may be true, is within the bounds of possibility; because it implies no contradiction to suppose that men, who pass their lives in guessing, may guess sometimes right. A man may throw ten sixes with ten dice; but no man in his senses would lay that he did, nor venture his stake on such a chance. In the other case, it is true that an hypothesis inconsistent with the phaenomena may be soon demonstrated false. But it is not true that it will be as soon rejected. If philosophers are fond of making hypotheses, their disciples are as zealous to defend them. The honor of a whole sect is thought to be engaged, and every individual is piqued that another should shew that to be false, which he has all his life taken to be true; so that, notwithstanding all the graces of novelty, a new truth will have much to do to dislodge an old error. Instances of this sort are innumerable. Let us produce one from astronomy itself.

IF any hypothesis was ever assumed with a plausible probability, that which we call the ptolemaic was so. The apparent face of the heavens led men to it. We may say that the phaenomena suggested it, and that the revolution of the sun, planets, and stars, in several spheres round the earth, could scarce be doubted of by men who assumed any general conclusions, instead of drawing them all from a long course of particular observations carefully and learnedly made. The plausibility of this false hypothesis, and the authority

rity of the peripatetic school, established it on the ruins of the true system which PYTHAGORAS had brought long before into Italy from the east, and which was probably that of the egyptian, and chaldean astronomers. False as it was, it maintained it's credit thirteen or fourteen centuries, if we reckon only from the time of the alexandrian astronomer PTOLEMY to that of COPERNICUS. Many difficulties had occurred, but as fast as they did so new assumptions were made to reconcile them, till the whole became one complicated heap of hypothesis upon hypothesis. It was banished at last, and a truer system took it's place. The fautors of hypotheses would have us believe that even the detection of their falshood gives occasion to our improvement in knowledge. But the road to truth does not lie through the precincts of error, and the improvement of astronomy was not owing to the destruction of the ptolemaic hypothesis; but the destruction of this hypothesis was owing to the improvement of astronomy. If this hypothesis had never been made, COPERNICUS would not have had the honor of reviving the pythagorean system, but mankind would have had the benefit of pursuing, without interruption, a system founded on knowledge, instead of pursuing, during an interval of so many centuries, an hypothesis founded on assumption.

To this antient let us join a modern instance, to suggest the same reflections, and confirm the same proofs. The system of DES CARTES dazzled
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and imposed at first. It was soon attacked however, but it has not been so soon defeated. No man, perhaps, was ever so fit, as this philosopher, to make, and maintain an hypothesis; to assume, and to improve and defend his assumptions. The notion he entertained, and propagated, that there is, besides clear ideas, a kind of inward sentiment of evidence, which may be a principle of knowledge, is, I suppose, dangerous in physical enquiries as well as in abstract reasoning. He who departs from the analytic method, to establish general propositions concerning the phaenomena on assumptions, and who reasons from these assumptions, afterwards, on inward sentiments of evidence, as they are called, instead of clear and real ideas, lays aside at once the only sure guides to knowledge. No wonder then if he wanders from it. This DES CARTES did very widely in his construction of a world: and yet by dint of genius he gave a great air of simplicity and plausibility to his hypothesis; and he knew how to make even geometry subservient to error. It proved in other hands, indeed, the instrument of detecting his errors, and of establishing truer principles of natural philosophy. He furnished to others arms against himself, among the rest to our NEWTON; for tho the system of the latter be no more owing to the hypothesis of the former, than that of COPERNICUS to that of PTOLEMY, yet was it the application of geometry to physics, that enabled the british philosopher to make so many admirable discoveries: and the introduction of
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geometry into physics must be acknowledged due to the french philosopher. To conclude, by bringing this example to our purpose. The plenum of DES CARTES is well nigh destroyed; many of his laws of motion are shewn to be false; the mills that served to grind his three elements are demolished: and his fluid matter, in which, as in a torrent, the planets were carried round the sun, whilst a similar motion in the particular vortex of every planet impelled all bodies to the center, is vanished. Notwithstanding all this; how slowly, how unwillingly have many philosophers departed from the cartesian hypothesis? They have had recourse to the most forced suppositions to defend it; and when it has been demonstrated false in one of the principal parts, in that of his fluid matter, whose rapid circulation he supposes to cause the fall of bodies, and the motion of the planets, and which he invented to explain these phaenomena, we shall be told very gravely, that some fluid matter or other may, however, in some manner or other, be the cause of these phaenomena. It is even ridiculous to observe the same men tenacious of an hypothesis neither deduced from the phaenomena, nor consistent with them, and averse to receive, or at best extremely scrupulous about receiving, a system built on observation and experiment, not on assumption, and which all the phaenomena conspire to establish.

If philosophers meant nothing more than the
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discovery of truth, they would confine themselves to those rules, by which alone, and to those bounds of enquiry, within which alone, we are able to discover it. But a predominant principle of vanity makes them break these rules, and pass these bounds. Not content with philosophical liberty, they affect to proceed licentiously : and it is this affectation that makes them so fond of hypotheses, by the means of which, how imperfect soever their knowledge is, their pretended systems are still complete. Thus it has happened that natural philosophers have filled their works with fictions, and, like lying travellers, have given descriptions of countries through which they never passed. They have done even more, they have affected to reveal the secrets of courts they never saw. This I mean ; they have not only supposed existences that never existed, but have presumed themselves able to give a sufficient reason for every thing that does exist. LEIBNITZ, who had much knowledge and some sagacity, but too much pretended subtilty and real presumption, imposed this obligation on philosophers, the obligation of adulterating physics with metaphysics. Thus, for instance, he thought himself obliged to give a sufficient reason how, and why the extension of body, or body according to the Cartesians, becomes possible ; for tho' actuality may, he denied that possibility could proceed from the will of God. He found this reason neither in sensible extension, nor in the insensible atoms that compose body. But he found it happily in his monades, that is,

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in simple, unextended beings, that are the only substances, and that compose all extension, which God could not have created if he had not created them first. Is it worth while to acquire the name of a great philosopher at the expence of amusing mankind with such hypothetical extravagancies? Surely not.

SINCE I have ventured to censure DES CARTES on this head, on which he was very liable to censure, I think myself obliged to justify him on another, on which he has been accused very unjustly. STRATO might be an atheist, for what I know, tho mention is made, in the catalogue of his works preserved by DIOGENES LAERTIUS, of three books that he wrote concerning the gods. But the passage in the Academics of TULLY, where it is said, that he did not employ the gods in making the world, “negat opera deorum se uti ad fabricandum mundum,” will not persuade me that he was so. Nothing can be more consistent than to acknowledge a Supreme Being, the source of all existence, the first efficient cause of all things, and to account for the phaenomena by physical and mechanical causes, by matter and motion. This DES CARTES therefore endeavoured, and might endeavour to do without forfeiting the character of a good theist. Philosophers might very reasonably object to his hypothesis; but divines had the less reason to do so, because, besides proving the existence of the self-existent Being by an argument which he thought good; and which has been urged as decisive by MAL-

BRANCHE and others, the very foundation of his doctrine rests on these principles, that God created matter, and that he impressed two motions on the parts of it. But my lord BACON, a much better apologist than I am, had obviated the objection made to DES CARTES long before this philosopher had writ, in the third book of the Augmentation of science : and the passage is so considerable, that I will dwell, with your leave, a little upon it.

THIS great author, then, was so desirous to keep metaphysicians in countenance, by keeping metaphysics in the rank of sciences, that he resolved at any rate to give them an object. As such he assigned the doctrine of formal causes : and indeed if he had admitted the forms of PLATO, forms entirely abstracted from matter, these would have been imaginary objects, in his scheme, of some science more sublime than physics. But these he rejects deservedly, as theological speculations that infected and corrupted the whole of PLATO's natural philosophy : so that he left himself no forms to establish as objects of metaphysics, but such as must be discovered, if they are to be discovered, by physics ; which he himself admits in effect when he says that we may discover them if we turn our eyes to action and use ; that is, to the action and use of substances, whose forms are the species of things ; and which he confirms, I think, by the examples he brings to explain this inexplicable doctrine, or rather unattainable science. In default of this, that the
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learned chancellor might provide some object for metaphysics, he established the inquisition, or research of final causes, as a second. He should not be much concerned, he says, if the order of this research, that he would place among metaphysics, and that has been placed usually among physics, were alone concerned. Now here I venture with fear and trembling, but I must venture, for the love of truth pushes me on, to differ from this great man. The order, according to which the doctrine of final causes is confined to the known physical province, instead of being translated to a metaphysical region, appears to me not only useful, but necessary to be preserved, as well to advance real knowledge, as to prevent error, both philosophical and theological. The more we proceed in the study of nature, under the conduct of experimental philosophy, the more discoveries we make and shall make of the infinite wisdom, as well as power, of it's author. The structure of the parts, the design and harmony of the whole, will be matter of perpetual astonishment, and ought to be a motive to the most devout adoration of that supreme, and incomprehensible Being, of God the maker and the preserver of the universe. I said the harmony and design, as well as the structure; for, besides the admirable contrivance which appears in the bare structure of all the bodies, animal bodies especially, that surround us, as well as of our own, when we contemplate them without any regard to their destination, wants, or uses; there ap-

pears something still more admirable when we contemplate them in these respects. Sometimes we can discover neither efficient, nor final cause; sometimes, but more rarely, both. Sometimes we discover the former, and the latter escapes our enquiry. Sometimes again the final cause is more obvious than the efficient, as in one of the instances brought by my lord BACON; for surely this final cause, that eye-lashes were given to shadow and defend the eye, is much more evident than the efficient cause he assigns, or any other, perhaps, that can be assigned. But in all cases where such discoveries are made really, they are made by physical researches. When we proceed in the investigation of them by the help of experimental philosophy, we put ourselves under the conduct of God, who leads us by the knowledge of his works to the knowledge of himself. But when we abandon this method, and pretend by the strength of our intellect to arrive at superior science, we put ourselves under the conduct of imagination, the worst guide a philosopher can chuse, and never so seducing, nor so dangerous as in the brightest genius. This remark is abundantly confirmed in general by the experience of all ages*.

* It comes into my thoughts to mention, upon this occasion, another opinion, which casts a ridicule on all religion. If we are able to collect any truth from our observations on the mundane system, besides that of a self-existent and intelligent first cause of all things, it is that of final causes. The certainty we have of these makes part of the demonstration of

FOR these reasons, which might be greatly extended and enforced, I cannot subscribe to the

the other, and is the sublimest and most important speculation in which natural philosophy can terminate. I say terminate, because the absurdity of those philosophers, who, in the course of their enquiries, assigned final instead of physical causes, has been already exposed. The abuse, which those who profess theology in all religions, make of final causes, is of another kind, and may serve as a further example of the fantastical and profane notions, which men assume hypothetically when they carry their reasonings about spirit and spiritual things, without regard to what experience might teach them, up to the divine nature and oeconomy.

MANKIND, in general, esteem their species to be the final cause of the whole creation; and each society or sect of men is instructed to esteem itself a principal, if not the sole, object of providence. On this foundation even they, who never observed, perhaps, any of the numberless and astonishing instances of order, contrivance, and design, which are obvious in the constitution of things, ascribe, and instruct others to ascribe, every event, that is produced in the ordinary course of nature, to extraordinary interpositions of God's immediate and particular providence, just as they may be strained to suit prejudice, interest, vanity, and passion. I need not bring examples in proof. They will occur to you fast enough, to shew how a doctrine, that should increase our admiration of God's infinite wisdom and power, and enliven all the acts of adoration that we direct to this incomprehensible Being, plunges men, by the abuse they make, and a wrong application of it, into error and superstition. It is error proportioned to the comprehension of every mind, and to the vanity of every heart. It prevails, therefore, easily, and spreads from the highest down to the lowest ranks of men. If the ridiculous question, which SENECA puts in his book concerning providence, "nunquid hoc quoque a Deo aliquis exigit, ut bonorum virorum etiam facinas, servat?" had been put to your parish clerk, he would have answered, I doubt not, with much holy assurance, in the affirmative, and would have inserted, among his anecdotes,

partition of science which our famous chancellor makes on this occasion. They, who have no pretensions to be esteemed natural philosophers, profit in their several professions of the discoveries which these philosophers make about efficient causes. Just so divines, or they who call themselves metaphysicians, may profit of those which the same philosophers make about final causes: and when they do so in such a manner, as to create and maintain in the minds of men a due awe and reverence of the Supreme Being, these discoveries will be productive of the best, and noblest effects; far from being barren, like virgins consecrated to

some special examples of wallets, and bundles providentially saved, or recovered. The Stoics are ridiculed, in TULLY'S Academical questions, for having low notions of the divinity, and such as supposed among the gods a worker like MYRMECIDES, who was famous in his time, as well as one CALLICRATES, for making bees, and flies, and ants, and other small insects in ivory. The joke was unjustly applied, as far as it was applied to this general position, that nothing could be without God, "*cujus quidem vos majestatem deducitis,*" says the academician, "*usque ad apium, formicarumque perfectio-*" "*nem: ut etiam inter deos MYRMECIDES aliquis minorum*" "*opusculorum fabricator fuisse videatur.*" This joke on the Stoics was unphilosophical and silly. But what advantage would this academician have taken over them, if he could have laid to their charge, not only that they made God the immediate author of the least, as well as of the greatest productions in nature, but that they made him the efficient cause of every immoral sentiment and action? He would have had then a large field, indeed, wherein to exult, "*in quo possit exultare*" "*cratio.*" But the Stoics, as absurd and as superstitious as many of their opinions were, gave him no such advantage. He must have waited till our age, to have had such a monstrous opinion as this to combat among the professors of theism.

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God, as the chancellor expresses himself, rather prettily than truly. “Causarum finalium inquisitione sterilis est, et, tanquam virgo Deo consecrata, nil parit.” But still there will be as little reason to advance that the investigation of final causes is a part of metaphysics, or of theology, as there is to say that the investigation of efficient causes is the object of every profession wherein some knowledge concerning them is employed.

Now, tho I cannot subscribe to this partition of science, nor think the order, in which the research of final causes is placed, at all indifferent, yet I subscribe most readily to all that is said, in the same place, against those who substitute final in lieu of efficient causes. Both are objects, but distinct objects of physics; and nothing can tempt men to confound them but a sort of laziness and vanity. By one they are led to decline some trouble, and by the other to hope to conceal their ignorance. We shall not be at all uncharitable in assigning such motives to the two philosophers, who have distinguished themselves by this proceeding; in which they have been followed, as in other absurdities, by numbers. PLATO had a luxuriant imagination, and a great flow of words. It cost him, therefore, much less to invent final causes, and to expatiate theologically upon them, than it would have done to pursue the discovery of efficient causes by the slow and painful course of experiments. ARISTOTLE had great subtilty of genius, and the same ambition that

made him think, like an ottoman prince, to use my lord BACON's simile, that he could not reign securely, unless he put all his brethren to death, made him think too, that he ought at any rate to maintain his pretensions to universal knowledge. For this purpose he perplexed what he could not explain, and in the instance before us he discoursed logically about final causes, to conceal his ignorance of the efficient. I should be unwilling to warrant any fact on the authority of JUSTIN MARTYR, on whom the idlest tales were able to impose; but the bare report that ran in Greece concerning the death of this philosopher, who was said to have drowned himself in the negropontic current, for shame that he had not discovered the cause of it, may serve to shew, that the character he has at this day, is that which he had in his own age and country. Upon the whole, it may very well be, that DEMOCRITUS and others, whether atheists, or theists, who gave, or seemed to give no place to God, nor intelligence, in the production of the phaenomena, nor made any mention, by consequence, of final causes, but applied themselves wholly to the discovery of material efficient causes, might penetrate, for that very reason, deeper into natural philosophy, than they could have done if they had recurred often to the wisdom and power of God, like PLATO; to those of nature, like ARISTOTLE; and to final causes, like both. This might be, and my lord BACON, who thinks so, and who approved this method of pursuing the study of physics, prepared, therefore, an

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apology for DES CARTES long before this philosopher wanted it.

THERE is a passage in PLATO, which I shall have occasion to quote in another place, and to another purpose, where SOCRATES, after reading a treatise of natural philosophy which ANAXAGORAS had writ, sneers at him, and complains that he, who ascribed the structure of the universe to a supreme mind, labored so much in the explanation of material, instead of discoursing about final causes. This passage would prove beyond dispute, if any proof was wanting, that PLATO introduced, or supported at least by the authority of SOCRATES, the absurd custom of substituting final intentional causes in the place of mechanical and material; and that philosophers, who were as good theists as himself, tho they did not affect so much theology, pursued the study of nature in the same method as the materialists, tho they asserted an intelligent first cause, which the others denied.

THE truth is, that neither these philosophers, nor even the others, could proceed in the investigation of material causes, without discovering sometimes the intentional, final causes of things; because the latter are often, tho not always, so plainly pointed out by the former, that he who does not see them must shut his eyes on purpose. When they are not thus plainly pointed out, it is vain presumption to pretend to account for them: and SOCRATES would have had no
reason

reason to complain, if a naturalist, a stranger to Athens, looking at him in his prison, and seeing him fettered and chained, had shewn how it came to pass that he could not walk, and that he could sit, without presuming to determine why he was there.

To conclude, and wind up this section ; there is no study, after that of morality, which deserves the application of the human mind so much, as that of natural philosophy, and of the arts and sciences which serve to promote it. The will of God, in the constitution of our moral system, is the object of one. His infinite wisdom and power, that are manifested in the natural system of the universe, are the object of the other. One is the immediate concern of every man, and lies therefore within the reach of every man. The other does so too, as far as our immediate wants require, and far enough to excite awe and veneration of a Supreme Being in every attentive mind. But farther than this, a knowledge of physical nature is not the immediate and necessary concern of every man ; and therefore a further enquiry into it becomes the labor of a few, tho the fruits of this enquiry be to the advantage of many. Discoveries of use in human life have been sometimes made ; but these fruits in general consist chiefly in the gratification of curiosity. Their acquisition, therefore, is painful : and when all that can be gathered are gathered, the crop will be small. Should the human species exist a thousand

sand generations more, and the study of nature be carried on through all of them with the same application, a little more particular knowledge of the apparent properties of matter, and of the sensible principles and laws of motion might be acquired: more phaenomena might be discovered, and a few more of those links, perhaps, which compose the great immeasurable chain of causes and effects that descends from the throne of God. But human sense, which can alone furnish the materials of this knowledge, continuing the same, the want of ideas, the want of adequate ideas would make it to the last impracticable to penetrate into the great secrets of nature, the real essences of substances, and the primary causes of their action, their passion, and all their operations; so that mankind would cease to be, without having acquired a complete and real knowledge of the world they inhabited, and of the bodies they wore in it.

S E C T. IV.

HAVING now said all, that occurs to me at present, concerning our complex ideas of substances, whose archetypes are without us; I proceed to take some further notice, than has been yet taken by me, of our other complex ideas and notions, which are said to have their archetypes within us, and which may be said, I think, more properly, in the same sense, to be archetypes themselves. Nor is this the sole difference, by which
they

they are distinguished from the former. Those of substances are received by the mind in it's passive, these are framed by the mind in it's active state. They are framed by the mind as the mind has need of them, and therefore on no subjects so much as on those that regard the thoughts, the opinions, the affections, the passions, and the actions of mankind. The archetypes of our ideas of substances exist whether our minds perceive them or not. These being archetypes themselves, and having no existence out of the mind, have no permanent existence any where, not even in the mind; for there they exist no longer than whilst they are the immediate objects of thought. They cease to exist, when they cease to be perceived. But the mind, having once made them, can recall them into being and employ them to facilitate the acquisition and communication of knowledge. It is true indeed, and it has been observed already, that nature seems to obtrude, or obtrudes even the complex ideas of modes and relations upon us, as well as those of substances. But still there is a plain difference between the two cases, which must be a little more and more precisely developed, than it has been in the second section. Both are lessons, but different lessons of nature. Sense alone is immediately concerned in one, whether we receive by it the first impressions of outward objects, or whether we correct, and determine the ideas these impressions have given us. But intellect is immediately and principally concerned in the other. Intellect serves in the use and application of ideas

acquired

acquired by sense, but has no share in framing them. Intellect on the other hand has always an immediate, and principal share, and is sometimes alone employed, in framing our complex ideas and notions of modes and relations. Thus for instance, to mention a simple as well as a mixed mode; when we observe certain terminations of finite extension, or certain proceedings of men to men, the lesson of nature does not consist in this, that these are patterns by which, and according to which, the ideas or notions we speak of are framed, without any share taken by the mind except that of perception; but it consists rather in giving hints, if I may say so, which are vague, and neither determined, nor classed, like our ideas of substances; and the mind, taking these hints, frames by the exercise of it's discerning, compounding, and comparing faculties, these ideas or notions. The terminations of extension, that are seen by us, produce ideas no doubt; but I chuse on this occasion to design them as hints, because they do not so much give, as suggest the ideas which the mind frames by considering these terminations of the extreme parts of extension, both distinctly and relatively. Confused appearances of this sort strike the senses, but the ideas of particular figures, as well as the general notion of figure, may be framed independently of these sensations by the mind. In like manner, an action which we see performed, as in the case of killing mentioned above, gives an idea no doubt; but this idea, in the respect in which it is considered

here, is nothing more than an hint to the mind, that passes from a bare perception of the action to contemplate all the circumstances of it, and all the relations both of the action, and of the actors, and so frames by reflection, without the concurrence of sensation, ideas and notions of another kind, both particular and general. This is the great intellectual province, wherein our minds range with much freedom, and often with exorbitant licence, in the pursuit of real, or imaginary science. We add ideas to ideas, and notions to notions, and by considering the habitudes and relations of all these we acquire at length such a multitude, as astonishes the mind itself, and is both for number and variety inconceivable.

WHEN we take such a general view of human knowledge, and represent to ourselves all the objects that our minds pursue, and in the pursuit whereof we pretend not only to reason on less or greater grounds of probability, but most commonly to demonstrate, we are apt to entertain an high opinion, and to make extravagant encomiums of our intellect. But when we enter into a serious and impartial detail concerning this knowledge, and analyse carefully what the great pretenders to it have given and give us daily for knowledge, we shall be obliged to confess that the human intellect is rather a rank, than a fertile, soil, barren without due culture, and apt to shoot up tares and weeds with too much. By such combinations of ideas, as I have been mentioning,

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we shorten and facilitate the operations of our minds, as well as the communication of our thoughts. Our knowledge becomes general, and our intellect seems to be less dependent on sense. From which observations philosophers have entertained false notions of what they call pure intellect, and have flattered themselves that they could extend their knowledge, by the power the mind exercises in framing complex ideas and notions, very far beyond the narrow bounds to which it is limited by simple ideas, over which the mind has not the least original power, and which must therefore, let the mind compose, combine, and abstract them as it pleases (for it cannot make any) determine the extent of our complex ideas and notions.

BUT, besides the limitations imposed on the mind by the human constitution, there is another which we ourselves must impose on it, if we desire to combine our ideas and our notions so, as to obtain by their means real and useful knowledge. It is the more necessary to insist on this limitation because philosophers have not only neglected it too much in practice, but endeavoured to establish opinions inconsistent with it. Observe the chain of these opinions. The human mind is a participation of the divine mind, or an emanation from it, or something very analogous to it. The essences of things do not depend on God; for, if they did, things might be possible and impossible at the same time according to his will; which implies

plies contradiction. The divine intelligence is the scene of all things possible : but, tho the divine will be the source of actuality, it is not so of possibility. Possibility and impossibility are fixed natures, independent on God. The knowledge of things possible, independently of their existence, is absolute knowledge. The knowledge of things actual, in consequence of their existence, is relative knowledge. The human mind is capable of both. Philosophers may, therefore, contemplate the intelligible natures, the fixed and unalterable essences of things, whether the will of God determines them to actual existence or not. Philosophers may reason therefore not only from their own system, that of actuality ; but from God's, that of possibility. These opinions, some of which are nearly true, others of which are absolutely false, and all of which are liable to much abuse, have been advanced : and these, and others of the same kind, are the necessary foundations of the most sublime metaphysics. Let us descend from such imaginary heights ; place ourselves on the human level, and consider from thence what this part of human knowledge is, concerning which we are now to speak, and from whence, and how it arises.

IT has been observed, in speaking of that part of natural philosophy which contemplates substances, that we must never lose sight of experience, if we aim at acquiring real knowledge.

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But we may go further on as good grounds, and affirm that the same rule must be followed in that other part of natural philosophy, for such it is if it be any thing, which contemplates mind; and in all our general, or abstract reasonings about moral, or other matters. I am far from saying that we should not reason about things possible, as well as things actual, or that we should exclude every thing hypothetical out of our reasonings. I know too well that probability is our lot oftener than certainty. But this I say, that we should never reason about the first, except under the direction of the last, and much less in contradiction to the last. God's knowledge precedes all existence. All existence proceeds from his knowledge and his will. He made things actual because he knew them, and why should I not say because he made them, possible? But we poor creatures should not be able to guess at things possible, if we did not take our rise from things actual. Human knowledge is so entirely and solely derived from actual Being, that without actual Being we should not have even one of those simple ideas, whereof all the complex ideas and abstract notions that turn our heads are composed. These complex ideas and abstract notions, to be materials of general and real knowledge, must have a conformity with existence. They must be true, not in an idle metaphysical sense, that they are really what they are; but in this sense, that they are true representations of actual, or of such possible

existence, as experience leaves us no room to doubt may become actual.

THAT this is agreeable to the common sense of mankind undebauched with philosophy or superstition, the universal practice of mankind may serve to convince us. The human mind is able to frame many complex ideas and abstract notions, to which no names have been assigned in any language, because they have not been brought into use among any people. Many other complex ideas and abstract notions have names assigned to them in one language, and are in use among one people, and have no such names, nor are in any such use among another. What shall we say is the reason of such obvious matters of fact? The reason appears to me to be plainly this. Men are determined to frame these complex ideas, and abstract notions, by the want they have of them: and the want they have of them arises from hence, that they observe certain combinations of beings, of actions, of modes, and relations to exist, relatively to which they could neither think, discourse, nor act, all which it is often either their inclination, their interest, or their duty to do, unless they applied their minds to the framing of such ideas and notions. Men form, therefore, no where, complex ideas and notions of combinations of this kind, which they have observed to exist no where, as in the first case. Nor do they form them always where such combinations do exist; tho they are not enough observed to have

have the want of these ideas and notions perceived, as in the second case. These ideas and notions are so necessary to the improvement of knowledge, that as we proceed in acquiring, and communicating it by the employment of some, so the knowledge we acquire makes it necessary in every step we advance to frame, and to employ more, that we may proceed further.

IT is reasonable to believe that the first of men had framed no ideas, or notions of jealousy, envy, anger, malice, treachery, and murder, in paradise, nor perhaps out of it, before CAIN slew ABEL. Then, no doubt, he framed all these, and those of assassination and fratricide besides, and invented words to signify them, as he had invented names for all the beasts of the field, and fowls of the air, when they passed in review before him. Since the days of ADAM, and his unhappy fall, as the number, and the iniquity of his posterity increased, so has their experience: and therefore legislators, and the founders of commonwealths, and all those who have civilized and instructed mankind, have been careful to observe the behaviour, and the dealings of men with one another in the same, and in different societies. They have remarked the circumstances, and the consequences of every action relatively to the happiness and unhappiness of mankind. Those of one sort have been termed virtues, those of the other vices: and as these virtues and vices have arisen, and have offered themselves to observation, the same

persons, political and moral philosophers, have proceeded in determining complex ideas or notions of them, and in marking the several combinations by distinct names, in order to promote the practice of virtue, and to restrain vice by improving the natural sanctions of rewards and punishments.

THUS then the principles of the law of nature, and of civil jurisprudence have been collected à posteriori, by experience and observation : and the same method should be taken in every part of philosophy, tho I have insisted particularly on this alone. We should not suffer, much less encourage, imagination to rove in the search of truth. To know things as they are, is to know truth. To know them as they may be, is to guess at truth. Judgment and observation guide to one, imagination and speculation to the other. To know them as they are, the mind must be constantly intent to frame it's ideas and notions after that great original, nature ; for tho these ideas and notions are properly and usefully framed by the mind, that they may serve as archetypes by which we reason, and according to which we judge, yet must all the parts of them be taken from nature, and no otherwise put together than nature warrants. As well may the painter copy the features of a face on which he never looks, by pure guess, as the philosopher frame his ideas and notions of nature, physical and moral, by pure intellect. One may draw a metaphysical

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man, and the other invent a metaphysical hypothesis. But the features of the picture, and the ideas and notions of the system being taken from imaginary not real existence, the picture will be the picture of no body, and the system the system of nothing. Nay, there is still a worse consequence that follows often, because it is almost unavoidable. Imagination submitted to judgment will never go beyond knowledge founded on experience, or high probability immediately deducible from it. But when imaginations naturally warm, and excited by a strong desire of being distinguished, break loose from this control, tho the possible man, and the possible system may be so composed as to contain nothing absolutely impossible, yet they may contain something monstrous, like those productions wherein nature deviates from her regular course. Whenever this happens, and it has often happened in philosophy, it must not be deemed a jot less absurd to take these ideas and notions for real archetypes, or the system they compose for a system of real knowledge, than it would be to take such monstrous productions for the archetypes of any species.

THIS proceeding is the more dangerous, because we may accustom our minds to contemplate chimeras till they grow familiar to us, and pass for realities. After which we shall not fail to reason from them, and to control even what is, by what imagination has told us may be. The

very reverse should be our practice. All that we imagine may be, should be compared over and over with the things that are: and till such a comparison and analyse has been well and sufficiently made, all argumentation is impertinent. We can frame ideas of a centaur, or an hippogryph. No contradiction is implied by ranking them among possible beings. We can shew wherein these complex ideas agree and disagree. We can reason, frame propositions, affirm, and deny concerning them; but yet every man who is not out of his senses will confess, I suppose, that these ideas are fantastical, and that it is, therefore, absurd to reason about them. They are phantastical, because their supposed archetypes do not exist. The reasoning about them is absurd, because it is absurd to reason about substances that are not actual, tho they may be possible.

BUT I ask, is it a jot less absurd to frame ideas, and notions, of mixed modes and relations any otherwise, than experience shews us that nature warrants to do. Mr. LOCKE has observed truly, that “mixed modes are made for the most part out of the simple ideas of thinking, and motion, wherein all action is comprehended; and out of that of power, from whence we conceive all action to proceed.” Now if this be so, is it not evident that mixed modes, how much so ever mixed, are resolvable, and should be analysed into ideas less complex, and these ultimately into simple ideas? Is it not evident that

that whether we consider intellectual, or corporeal agency, whether we frame mixed modes of powers as modifications of thought and motion, or whether we consider them only, for want of being able to do more, in the actions they produce; is it not evident that we must have recourse on all these occasions to existence, existence of powers, and actions, or of actions at least?

THE example of power and action, which I employ in speaking of mixed modes, is equally applicable to the case of relations, among which that of cause and effect is one of the most considerable, as it is the relation, concerning which the mind of man is the most curious to acquire knowledge. All our ideas of relation are framed by the comparison the mind makes of one idea with another: as these ideas therefore are phantastical, or real, so our ideas of their relations, how justly soever the mind makes the comparison, are in effect phantastical, or real too. The comparison therefore must be not only that of ideas with ideas, but that of ideas with the objects of them, with things. This recourse to existence is so truly the only sure rule, by which we can frame our ideas in such a manner as to make them proper materials of real human knowledge at least, that it is, I suppose, a mistake most commonly when we are thought to frame phantastical ideas of relations by a wrong comparison of real ideas. I suppose we shall find on such occasions, if we observe closely, that the phan-

tastical idea of relation does not arise so much from a wrong comparison of real ideas which the mind contemplates, as from a voluntary or involuntary corruption of the reality of these supposed real ideas.

I SAY voluntary, or involuntary, because philosophers are apt to make complex ideas and notions of all kinds, not only wantonly but unfairly. These ideas and notions should be composed in order to assist the mind in forming opinions, or acquiring knowledge. But it is obvious to observation, that men begin very often by forming strange opinions, or by taking them on trust; and afterwards put together inconsistent, and inadequate ideas, which they suppose to be both consistent, and adequate, in order to frame such ideas of mixed modes and relations, as may help them to impose, or defend their opinions with some appearance of plausibility. The mind wanders easily; and is easily, more easily led into error about modes and relations, than about substances; and error about the former may be concealed better, and defended more plausibly, by metaphysical chicanery, than about the latter. Let us keep our minds, therefore, constantly intent on those criterions which our physical and moral systems hold out to us: and if by surprise, inadvertency, or prepossession we have been led too far from them, let us return to them as to the oracles of truth. For want of doing one or the other, into what extravagant opinions,
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under the specious names of metaphysical, or theological science, have not men been carried? You give us philosophy in a poetical dress. You adorn, but do not disguise, and much less corrupt the truth. There are who have given us mere poetry in a philosophical dress: and, I think, you must admit that PLATO, MALBRANCHE, and a good friend of ours, to instance in none of inferior note, are as truly poets, as HOMER and you. In a word, the boasted power of framing complex ideas, and abstract notions, will be found, as it is exercised, to be so far from shewing the great force and extent of human intellect, and from raising man up to divinity, that it will shew, on the contrary, how weak and how confined this intellect is, and sink him down, if you will allow me such an expression, into that animality above which he affects so vainly to rise.

THIS now, whereof we have taken some view in several of it's branches, is that noble fund of ideas from whence all our intellectual riches are derived. The mind of man does often what princes and states have done. It gives a currency to brass and copper coined in the several philosophical and theological mints, and raises the value of gold and silver above that of their true standard. But the success of this expedient is much alike in both cases. In different sects, as in different states, the imposition passes; but none are the richer for it.

ONE great advantage that has been reaped since the resurrection of letters, and since the improvements of modern philosophy in the study of nature intellectual and corporeal, has been this, that men have discerned their ignorance better, than they did in the days of ignorance, and that they have discovered more and more of it, as they have advanced in knowledge. A great part of this discovery is that of the limitation, as well as imperfection of our simple and complex ideas and notions. Limited and imperfect they are, no doubt ; and yet it would be well for us if they had no other defect. Another, and, on many occasions, a greater belongs to them ; for, even in the narrow compass to which they extend, they are apt to fluctuate and vary : so that besides, the difficulty of determining them well, there is that of preserving the determination of them steadily in our minds. He, who is attentive to do so, must acknowledge the difficulty he finds of this sort, even in his private meditations. But the difficulty increases vastly when he is to communicate these ideas and notions in discourse or writing, and above all if he is obliged to enter the lists of disputation.

OUR complex ideas being assemblages of simple ideas, that have often no other connection except that which the mind gives them, we might be easily led to conceive the difficulty of this task by a bare reflection on the weakness of memory, and, if I may say so, on the seeming caprice of this faculty,

culty, before we were made sensible of it by repeated experiences. The ideas that are lodged there begin to fade almost as soon as they are framed. They are continually slipping from us, or shifting their forms; and if the objects that excited some did not often renew them, and if we had not a power to recal others before they are gone too far out of the mind, we should lose our simple, and much more our complex ideas, and all our notions would become confused and obscure. The mind would be little more than a channel, through which ideas, and notions glided from entity into non-entity. But our case is not so bad. They are often renewed, and we can recal them as often as we please. There is, however, a difference between the renewing of them, and the recalling of them. When ideas are renewed by the same objects that excited them first in the mind, they are renewed such as they were. The light and heat of the sun will cause the same sensations, and stronger perhaps of the same kind, in the man who has not seen one nor felt the other in many years, that they caused in him formerly. Just so any operation, or affection of the mind, which has been long unperceived, will appear the same it used to appear to our inward sense, when it is perceived anew by reflection. But when we are forced to recal our complex ideas, the case is not the same, at least when they are such as are not in common use. Those of mixed modes and relations, for instance, that philosophers sometimes employ, and to which the mind scarce ever ad-

verts on other occasions, may well receive some alteration even when they are recalled readily, tho' this alteration is the less perceptible, perhaps, on account of that very readiness with which they are recalled. But when they are recalled with difficulty, and dragged back slowly, as it were, and by pieces and parcels into the mind, it is no wonder if they receive much greater alteration. They are then in some sort recompounded: and tho' this may be for the better, as well as for the worse, yet still they vary; and every variation of them begets some uncertainty and confusion in our reasoning. Thus it must be when, besides our simple ideas, such numberless collections of simple and complex ideas, and such numberless combinations of all these into notions, are to be held together, and to be preserved in their order by so weak a mental faculty as that of retention.

NAMES indeed are given to signify all our ideas and all our notions to ourselves and to others, and to help the memory in meditation as well as in discourse. When they are assigned to complex ideas, they are meant as knots, according to the very proper image Mr. LOCKE gives of them, to tie each specific bundle of ideas together: and in these respects they are not only useful, but necessary. It happens, however, that names, far from having these effects, have such very often as are quite contrary to these. Whilst we retain the names of complex ideas and notions, we imagine that we retain the ideas and notions; but the ideas
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and notions shift and vary, whilst the names remain the same. The scene of the mind, like a moving picture, must be governed with attention, that it may bring into our view the images we want, and as we want them. Otherwise ideas that are foreign to our actual train of thinking will frequently rush into our thoughts, and become objects of them whether we will or no. But there is another and a greater mischief, which will flow from this constitution of the mind unless the utmost attention be employed, and often when it is. The former is a sort of violence, which cannot be offered unperceived, and may be therefore resisted. This that I am going to mention steals so silently upon us, that we do not perceive it very often even when it has worked its effect. When we recal our ideas and notions, whether this be done with ease or difficulty, we review them in some sort: and if they are more liable to have been altered, we have a better chance for perceiving any alteration that may have been made in the determination of them. But when the ideas and notions we want, present themselves, as it were of themselves, to the mind, under their usual names and appearances, we are apt to employ them without examination, and perhaps we advert very often to nothing more than the word by which we are used to signify them. In this manner our ideas and notions become unsteady imperceptibly: and I would not answer that something may not happen to me of this kind, even in writing this essay, tho' I am on my guard against it. How much

much more must it happen to those who are not thus on their guard?

EVERY man imagines that his ideas and notions are his own in every sense, but every man almost deceives himself in this case. When we learn the names of complex ideas and notions, we should accustom the mind to decompose them, as I believe it has been observed already, that we may verify these, and so make them our own, as well as learn to compound others. But very few are at this trouble, and the general turn of education is contrived to keep men from taking it. Bred to think as well as speak by rote, they furnish their minds, as they furnish their houses or clothe their bodies, with the fancies of other men, and according to the mode of the age and country. They pick up their ideas and notions in common conversation, or in their schools. The first are always superficial, and both are commonly false. These are defects in the first determination of our ideas and notions: and if we join to these the obstinacy and negligence that become habitual in most men, we shall find no reason to be surpris'd that absurd opinions are tenaciously embraced, and wildly and inconsistently defended. Uniformity of ideas in error would have, at least, this advantage: error would be more easily detected and more effectually exploded.

BUT supposing the contrary of all this, supposing our ideas and notions to have been deter-

mined truly, and preserved steadily, we must not flatter ourselves, that we are quite secure against the evil consequence that is observed in this place to flow from the imperfect constitution of the human mind. The very temper of the mind, a little too much remissness, or a little too much agitation, affections that are grown up, or passions that are inflamed, may occasion some alteration in our ideas and notions, in the very moment that we employ them. If it be small, it will be unperceived by us. If it be great, the affection or passion that caused it will excuse it, perhaps justify it to us. But however small and almost imperceptible, even to a cool mind that is on it's guard against it's own weakness, such alterations may be, each in itself; yet, besides that each of them may produce others, each of them, tho' small in the idea or notion, may become of great consequence in the course of that reasoning, wherein this idea or notion is frequently employed, or which turns perhaps upon it. A few ideas, or parts of ideas, that slip out of the bundle of covetousness, make it the bundle of frugality: and a few, added to that of frugality, make it the bundle of covetousness.

THUS it happens when we discourse with ourselves. But when we discourse with others, the difficulty doubles; for besides that of maintaining a steady determination of our own ideas and notions, we have the additional difficulty very often of communicating, and always of maintaining the same

same steady determination in those of another. This is our case ; that of every one in his turn, not only when mixed modes and relations, but in some degree even when substances are our objects : and I persuade myself that you have been more than once ready to laugh or cry, in the midst of several rational creatures, who talked of things quite different, called them by the same names, and imagined that they talked of the same things. The choirs of birds who whistle and sing, or scream at one another, or the herds of beasts who bleat and lowe, or chatter and roar at one another, have just as much meaning, and communicate it just as well. At least I presume so, for I can affirm of no species but my own. All of them seem to have ideas, and these seem often to be better determined in the birds and beasts, than in men. All of them seem to have, in these loud conversations, some general meaning. But none of them seem to have that precision, order, and connection of ideas and notions, which can alone make up rational discourse.

SUCH is the common conversation, such the ordinary correspondence of men with one another. Such too, for the most part, are all the public discourses that are held, and the solemn harangues of the pulpit. But the matter grows still worse when any controversy is concerned. Tho' truth be one, and every necessary truth be obvious enough, yet that there must be various opinions about it among creatures constituted as we are,

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is as certain as that there are such opinions. Truth however is seldom the object, as reason is seldom the guide; but every man's pride, and every man's interest requires that both should be thought to be on his side. From hence all those disputes, both public and private, which render the state of society a state of warfare, the warfare of tongues, pens, and swords. In that of the two first, with which alone we have to do here, disputes become contests for superiority between man and man, and party and party; instead of being what they should be, comparisons of opinions, of facts and reasons: by which means each side goes off with triumph, and every dispute is a drawn battle. This is the ordinary course of controversy, not among the vulgar alone, but among sage philosophers and pious divines, whose conduct is not more edifying than that of the vulgar. Will it be pretended that the schools of religion and learning have, in this respect, any advantage over other public assemblies, over coffee-houses and taverns? If it is, we may safely deny it; because we can easily prove the contrary. In vain will it be urged, that men who have much learning, and who are accustomed to investigate, and to fix the most abstruse and momentous truths, must of course, and even without superior parts, be better able nicely to discern, to determine, and to compare and to connect ideas and notions, than those who neither possess the same learning and the same habits, nor have the same art of reasoning. This may be in some respects true, but upon the

whole it is not so : and a plain man would overwhelm the scholar who should hold this language, by shewing, in numerous instances, the weakness of the human mind, that of this very scholar perhaps in some ; the narrow confines, and in them the instability, of our ideas and notions, the impertinence of logic, the futility of metaphysics, the blasphemy of divinity, and the fraud of disputation.

THE best, and even such as pass for the fairest controversial writers, improve by artifice the natural infirmity of the human mind, and do on purpose what is here lamented as an evil not always to be avoided. They confound ideas, and perplex the significations of their signs so as may serve best the intention, not of discovering truth, but of having the last word in the dispute. This practice is so common, and especially where favorite interests, and on their account favorite tenets, are concerned, that I think no writings of this sort can be produced, wherein it is not employed, more or less, on both sides. How indeed should it be otherwise, when skill in disputation is esteemed a great part of learning, and the most scandalous frauds are applauded under the name of subtilty? Whatever excites men to it, whether pride, or self-interest, or habitual and inveterate prepossession and bigotry, by which they are induced to think that the worst means may be employed to serve the best cause, which is always the cause they have embraced, it is fraud still. It is pious fraud,

fraud,

fraud, if you please: I would rather call it theological; but the doctor who shifts the idea, and keeps the word appropriated to it, that he may serve any purpose, is as arrant a cheat as the saint who interpreted the same passage of scripture in different senses, according to the different opinions his orthodoxy required him to oppose. We may lament the imperfections of the human mind, we may blame those who do not give their attention to frame, and to preserve their ideas and notions, with all the exactness necessary to make them materials of knowledge, not of error. But we have a right to abominate those who do their utmost to render the discovery of truth impracticable, to perpetuate controversy, and to pervert the use and design of language. I prefer ignorance to such learning, SWIFT's bagatelle to such philosophy, and the disputes of a club where it does not prevail, to those of an academy or university where it does.

It is, in truth, in those places, and wherever metaphysics and theology have been made sciences, that the arts of controversial legerdemain are practised with most licence, dexterity, and success. Ideas of corporeal substance are not so liable to vary, nor so exposed to perplexity and confusion by the abuse of words, as the ideas that we have, or rather that we suppose we have, of thinking substance. Every complex idea of any corporeal substance is not the same precise collection of simple ideas in every mind. But the

most sensible of it's qualities, those that are the most obvious to us according to the business we have with it, such as mark most, and distinguish enough, are put together in every mind. The peasant has not the same idea of gold as the miner, nor the miner as the chemist. This will be said, and it will be so far true, that the chemist will have more ideas of qualities co-existing in this metal than the miner, and the miner more than the peasant. But the collection of simple ideas in the mind of him who has fewest will be ample, and distinct enough to fix the sort there, and to answer all his purposes: and, as long as nature maintains these collections of sensible qualities, the ideas of them can be neither confounded, nor lost. As long as gold, and iron, and men, and horses are in the world, their complex ideas will exist in human minds invariably: and tho they may be more complex in some than in others, yet the additional ideas that increase, will not alter the collection enough to beget any material ambiguity.

THE case is widely different when thinking substance becomes the object of our contemplation, when philosophers pretend, by a supposed science, not only to spiritualise matter in some sort, if you will allow me to express myself so, and to consider forms abstracted from all matter, incorporeal essences, and intelligible natures; but to reason and dogmatise about immaterial spirits, and to make souls, for instance, as many as they want,

souls

fouls for the world, for men, for all other animals, and for vegetables ; fouls rational and irrational, fouls immaterial, and fouls of fo fine a texture, that they approach immateriality, tho they are material. All fuch ideas and notions, and all fuch as are framed concerning them, are ill determined, and confequently ill preferved. Uncertain in their origin, they muft needs be unsteady in their progress, and in the ufe that philofophers and divines make of them. Our ideas of corporeal fubftances are, no doubt, inadequate and superficial, and fuch as cannot reach the effence of any one particular fubftance ; but they reach far enough for our ufe : and as far as this ufe is concerned, nay even a little further, the fystem of corporeal fubftances lies open to us. They are criterions in our power ; and according to them we verify, correct, and maintain by obfervation and experience, as we acquire, the precise determinations of our ideas of them. But when we proceed from physics to that which is called metaphysics, and pretend to knowledge of general natures and immaterial beings, what do we lefs than pretend to general knowledge, where we are not capable of having even particular knowledge, properly fo called ? and to particular knowledge, where we have no criterion fufficient to verify, correct, and maintain all the ideas and notions that we put together in order to compofe something that paffes for it ? The fole criterion we have of immaterial fpirit is our own fpirit. The idea we have of thought by reflection, is as clear as that we have of extension by fenfation.

The ideas we have of some few modes of thinking are as clear as those we have of numberless modes of extension. So far then we have a criterion, by which to judge of the immaterial spirits we are pleased to create. I call them the creatures of metaphysics and theology; because in truth, considered as distinct substances, they are such. All spirits are hypothetical, except the infinite spirit, the father of spirits, the Supreme Being. But how confined is this criterion, that extends no wider, nor rises any higher, than the narrow confines, wherein we have perceptions of the operations of our own minds? They afford much room for imagination, and few means of knowledge. Our ideas of knowledge and power for instance, that arise from the perceptions we have of our own spirits, are applicable to them, and triable by them. But as soon as metaphysicians and divines presume to apply them improperly, to reason concerning the knowledge of the Supreme Being on those of the first sort, which have in this application no criterion; and to reason concerning the liberty of man on those of the second sort, without a due regard to what we experience in ourselves, which is their true criterion; how vague, and how unsteady do all these ideas, and these notions we frame by them, become? Of how much incoherent discourse, of how many repugnant opinions has not this absurd manner of philosophising been productive? In a word, and to conclude this subject, here at least, all our metaphysical and theological ideas and notions are vague and unsteady, as well

as phantastical, for the most part, for want of criterions by which it is in our power to try them in the subjects about which we employ them, or for want of trying them by the criterions by which it is in our power to try them.

THESE inconveniences the lovers of truth may easily avoid. We are under no obligation to be metaphysicians or divines. But there is another inconveniency not so easy to be avoided on subjects more important, because more real than those commonly called metaphysical and theological. The inconveniency I mean to speak of here, and have referred to already, consists in the difficulty of preserving steadily some of our ideas and notions when they are well determined, rightly taken from the nature of things, and tried and approved by their proper criterions. Mathematical, as well as moral ideas and notions, are made by the mind: and tho' suggested to it by sensible objects, yet both are properly creatures of the mind, and there they remain to be employed as archetypes. Thus far both are in the same case. But the difference that follows is great in itself, and in it's consequences. The mathematician can call his senses in at every instant to aid his intellect; and by making his ideas become objects of his sight, as he does when he draws diagrams that are copies of them on paper, he not only pursues steadily, but is able to communicate to others, demonstrations which he could neither pursue, nor retain by the strength of his mental faculties alone, nor

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explain to others by the help of words. Words
are signs, not copies of ideas. An idea, a moral
idea, for instance, may be essentially changed, and
the sign that stood for it before may stand for it
afterwards, without causing always an immediate
perception in the mind of this change. But
whenever the least change is made in any idea of
which we have before our eyes an outward visible
copy, that change is perceived instantly; and the
determination of ideas, which the mind is unable
to maintain, is thus maintained by one of our
senses. Moral ideas and notions, therefore, of
which no such copies can be made, which are
held together in the mind with the names assigned
to them by nothing but the retentive power of the
mind, and which can be signified by nothing but
sounds that bear no resemblance to them, must
fluctuate and vary, beget all the confusion, spread
all the obscurity, and give occasion to all the fraud
I have mentioned.

DEFINITIONS, it has been said, will prevent,
or remedy this evil; and morality may be placed,
by the help of them, "among the sciences capable
"of demonstration." That the first and great
principles of natural religion may be demon-
strated, and that ingenuous minds may be train-
ed to make a just application of them in some
particular cases, I acknowledge. But that the
precise meaning of moral words can be so fixed
and maintained, that the congruity or incongruity
of the ideas and notions they stand for shall be
always

always discerned, clearly and uniformly, I do not believe. Definitions, therefore, consisting of words, they cannot answer Mr. LOCKE's purpose, as it would not be hard to shew in the very instances he brings. Intellect, the artificer, works lamely without his proper instrument, sense; which is the case when he works on moral ideas. Whenever he can employ this instrument, and as far as it can serve him, which is the case when he works on mathematical ideas, he works securely. I apprehend, therefore, that to expect a new method should be ever found, of preserving as steadily and invariably our moral ideas and notions, as we preserve those that are mathematical, is not very different from expecting that a method should be found, some time or other, of rendering things, that are not objects of sight by nature, visible by art. Ideas and notions of virtue and vice, very clearly defined, have been often confounded by schoolmen and casuists, in the most flagrant cases. They are so still by them and others in most discourses, and in all disputes about political or moral affairs. But no mathematician ever confounded the idea of any triangle with that of a square, nor that of a square with that of a circle.

S E C T. V.

I HAVE dwelled the longer on complex ideas and notions, because tho' simple ideas are truly the first principles of all our knowledge, yet the complex

plex ideas into which they are compounded by nature, and the complex ideas and notions into which we compound them by the operations of our minds, are the more ready and immediate principles on which we endeavour to establish general knowledge. We could not attain it even in such degrees as are proportionable to our wants, and to the design of infinite wisdom in making us what we are, in placing us where we are, and in giving us the faculties we have, without their assistance. If then these ideas and notions are so limited, as I have described them, by nature, and if we must often limit them still more by judgment that they may be still more surely productive of real knowledge; if within this extent too they are so liable to be inaccurately framed, unsteadily maintained, and uncertainly communicated, there will result from these considerations sufficient reasons to confound the pride of philosophers, and to expose the vanity of much pretended science. But these reasons acquire still greater force when we add some further considerations to the former. The lesson of nature, as I have called it, that is the information and instruction we gain by observing the constitution of our physical and moral systems, and the state and course of things that exist constantly, or transiently in them, ends with our complex ideas and notions. When nature leaves us, we are forced to put ourselves, in our ulterior progress towards general knowledge, under the conduct of her mimic, art: so that if our feet are apt to slip, if we

totter

totter in the way, and are subject to ramble out of it, whilst nature is our guide, all this must needs happen much more when we have no other guide but art, and when we are reduced to supply natural imperfection by expedients. The truth is, the further we proceed under the conduct of art, the further we attempt to carry our thoughts beyond those originals whereby nature, obtruding on sense complex ideas of what does exist, and suggesting ideas and notions of what may exist, informs and instructs the mind; the more liable we are to fall into error by framing our ideas and notions wrong, by preserving unsteadily even those that we frame right, by presuming that we have ideas when we have really none, or that we know what we mean when we have no meaning at all. Metaphysicians and divines have raised their reputations on little else: and it will be worth our while to examine the truth of this assertion in some few instances, among many that might be produced. I say, it will be worth our while, because the errors in opinion, like the faults in conduct, of the greatest men are of the worst consequence, and deserve the most to be detected; because these philosophers, above all other men, have rendered the human mind the flatterer, the deceiver, and the debaucher of itself, “*blanda adulatrix, et quasi lena sui;*” in short, because they have substituted mental artifice in the place of mental art, and have thereby encouraged mankind to continue ridiculously an imaginary progress in search
of

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of science, when nature and art are both at a
stand.

How difficult, nay how impracticable the enlargement of knowledge, and the communication of our thoughts to one another would be, if we remained absolutely confined to particulars, and unless means were found of supplying this defect, is obvious to reflection. The mind, therefore, makes it's utmost efforts to generalise it's ideas, begins early with such as are most familiar, comes in time to those that are less so, and is never at rest till it has found means of conceiving as well as it can it's ideas collectively, and of signifying them in that manner to others. Complex ideas are made by uniting several simple ideas, that have often no connexion nor relation to each other except what the mind gives them, in one idea. General ideas, or notions are attempted by endeavouring to assemble in one a variety of ideas, or notions, that have a relation or likeness to each other. Nature helps in the first of these operations, as we have observed above; and we perform it, or we may perform it, with success. But she affords us little or no help in the last; and we fail in the attempt. She shews us men, but not man in general: and the same may be said of all other substances. She shews us, or we frame, ideas of particular figures; but neither does she shew us, nor can we frame, any idea of figure in general, nor general ideas of particular kinds of figure, any more than we can frame a general idea of
substance,

substance, or of any particular kinds of substances. Once more, she shews us particular actions, and instances of behaviour of men towards men, or we frame ideas in our minds of such particular actions, or instances of behaviour, and we term them just, or unjust; but neither does she shew us, nor can we frame, any idea of moral or immoral in general, no nor any general idea of these particular kinds, just and unjust. The mind would make all these creatures if it could; but not having this natural power, an art is properly, and usefully employed to make particular ideas serve the purposes of general, by giving them the rank of archetypes in the mind, and to make particular notions become general, by comprising them in definitions that we refer to as to archetypes of particular kinds. Thus knowledge, particular by nature, becomes in some degree general by art,

It would be absurd to imagine, as some philosophers have imagined, that nature casts her productions in certain specific moulds. But we may say, when we speak of things as they appear to us, that they are classed in different sorts, which we distinguish by our sensations. Our simple ideas are many, as many as the sensible qualities of outward objects that excite them in us. But the various combinations of these simple into complex ideas of substances are innumerable; and yet each of these combinations is as distinctly and uniformly perceived by us, as the simple ideas contained in it. By this it is, and without

this it could not be, that both of them answer God's design, and man's use. If mankind in general did not receive the same impressions, and by these impressions the same sensations from outward objects, much confusion and disorder would arise in human life. Without troubling ourselves to enquire, like * MALBRANCHE, whether the same motions of the fibres are constantly produced by the same objects, or whether the same sensations are constantly produced, and the same ideas excited in the soul by the same motions of the fibres, of all which he knew no more than such ignorant men as you and I are; let us content ourselves to understand this uniformity as it has been explained in the third section, and conformably to experience.

THIS being established, we may observe further, that the mind proceeds to generalise, in the utmost extent, the simple ideas it has got, tho' not the complex ideas of substances; as if, the component ideas being generalised, men had perceived there was no need of generalising the complex ideas compounded of them and of something whereof they had only an obscure idea suggested to the mind by all their sensations, an idea of substance wherein the sensible qualities producing simple ideas inhered. In the case, therefore, of simple ideas we employ, to speak the language of philosophy, not only concrete but abstract terms; and we say, for instance, not only that

* Recherche de la verité, lib. i. c. 13.

milk or snow is white, but we talk of whites in general, and signify them by the abstract term whiteness. The adjective white, joined to a substantive, is the sign of a particular idea, and necessary therefore, as well as proper, to be used in speaking of particular substances, by every one of which it is determined. But the substantive whiteness is authorised by custom alone, and is determined by nothing. It is a term invented by the art of the mind. When it is used, I perceive no determinate, specific, general idea, wherein all the various tints of white which I have perceived, and many there may be which no human eye has ever perceived, are comprehended. I have no perception of a general idea of white abstracted from every particular idea of this sort. The idea I have, when this word is used, is always that of some particular white extension, or of several such whose ideas rush confusedly into the mind together.

In the case of substances, the art of the mind is not carried quite so far, tho it makes as we grow up, by observation and experience, some attempts of this kind towards general knowledge. The child who prattled of papa and mama, of Crop and Tray, advances in years, and talks of man and woman, of horse and dog, and soon after of animal. He learns certain common names, by which he signifies beings that appear to him alike, and give him nearly the same complex ideas. He learns another common name
still

still more comprehensive, by which he signifies things that do not give him, even nearly, the same complex ideas, but that are confined however to the same class by some peculiar, simple ideas, and contradistinguished by them from every other class more or less. The words man, or animal, raise in his mind no general idea; but in this case, as in the former, some particular idea of man, which the mind can frame without thinking of ALEXANDER, or HENRY, rises there, and becomes representative of all men in general: or else several ideas of men, and other animals, rush confusedly into the mind together; that is, so rapidly, that tho they are truly successive, yet this succession is imperceptible. Thus far the art of the mind is carried towards a general knowledge of substances; and custom has authorised it no further. The schools indeed invented, among many other words to which they had no clear nor determinate ideas annexed, those of humanity and animality. Now if nothing more had been intended by those words than to signify, by one sound, all that we understand when we speak of the apparent natures of men and animals, such as they appear to our senses, I cannot see that they deserved to be rejected; and I shall make no scruple to use them if the occasion of doing so presents itself. But if they are employed by any profound ontosophist, as they were by the schoolmen, who pretended to have such general ideas abstracted from all particulars,

ideas

ideas of general natures and real essences of substances; they deserve to be rejected as much as the gobleity and tableity of PLATO, with which the cynic made himself so merry. Even the general names of simple ideas of sensation can be received, according to my apprehension, in no sense but the former: and whiteness, if we assumed that we had such a general idea, abstracted from all particulars, and adequate to the real essence of white, would deserve to be exploded as much as humanity and animality. All these words must be confined to their proper use, and not applied to any other signification. In the first case they will be subservient to an art, in the latter to an artifice, of the mind.

THE same caution, that is to be had when the mind generalises it's simple and complex ideas of substances, is to be had, and the same distinction is to be made between general and abstract ideas, in the sense in which the latter are supposed by some philosophers to be framed by the mind, when we employ words to signify our ideas of modes and relations. We say, for instance, not only that certain figures are triangular, but we discourse of triangularity. We say not only that such an action is just, but we discourse of justice. We say not only that such things are similar or like, but we discourse of similitude or likeness. We have not however any ideas of such general natures abstracted from all the particular ideas that we suppose to be comprehended in them.

These words triangularity, justice, likeness, recal to the mind some particular idea or notion of each sort, or else a confusion of particular ideas or notions, as was said in the case of substances. They excite no other idea nor notion. But yet the difference between the two cases is vast. Our ideas and notions of modes and relations being creatures of the mind, tho we are unable to frame any that are not particular in their several kinds, and have by consequence in our minds no idea nor notion, abstracted and distinct from all the particular ideas and notions that the mind has framed of every kind; yet the real essence of each particular being, the particular idea or notion that the mind has framed, we are able to ascertain by definitions, and to reduce into propositions a general nature of which every particular idea or notion does, and must partake, to be of that kind, that is, to be what it is. I do not know, and therefore I cannot define, nor advance propositions concerning substance in general, nor the real essence of any particular substance, nor by consequence the manner in which, and qualities by which, they produce the simple and complex ideas I receive from them; nor finally the conformity, if any such there is, between all these ideas and their architypes. But I know, and can define the real essence of all triangles; which I name triangularity. Tho I have no idea of triangularity “abstracted with pains and skill from
 “ the several species of triangles, and present to
 “ the mind independently of them;” yet I know
 that

that this definition, “ a space included by three
 “ lines, that meet at three angles,” contains in it
 the real essence of every particular triangle where-
 of I have the idea. A philosopher may take as
 much pains as he pleases to abstract from those
 particulars wherein the species differ, and to retain
 those only wherein they agree, which CUDWORTH
 calls the cutting off chips, as I remember: tho
 he frames, by this method, the definition I have
 mentioned; yet neither he who framed it, nor his
 scholar who learned it, will be able, I presume,
 to consider a “ space included by three lines that
 “ meet at three angles,” without having some
 particular triangle in his mind. If we had an
 abstract idea of triangularity, properly so called,
 it might be said to be the idea of all triangles;
 but it could not be said, as it has been said, to be
 the idea of none. In short, we define the general
 nature of triangles on the consideration of parti-
 cular triangles: and this definition is a true pro-
 position in abstract consideration, tho it be not an
 abstract idea. But to make it of any use, we must
 descend to particular knowledge again; that is,
 to particular, real ideas, which might have been
 pursued, tho the terms of this definition had never
 been invented.

Thus, again, I know the general nature, the
 real essence, of justice, and am able to define it in
 very clear propositions, tho I am not able to frame
 any general idea or notion of it abstracted from
 all particulars, and containing them all. It is

not, most certainly, to do as we would be done by; for that is more properly a definition of benevolence, than of justice, as every one, who considers the constant force and the occasional injustice of self-love, must admit. But it consists in a disposition to give to every one what is his own, where there is property; to deal by others according to the natural fitness or unfitness of things where there is no property; and in other distinct notions, which will altogether amount to a definition, if we may be said to define when we only enumerate particular notions: and we can do nothing more when we set about to explain the general nature of justice; for which I may appeal to every man who has meditated well on this subject. To conclude; I know the general nature, and the real essence of likeness, and am able to explain it by a very short definition; for it consists in that relation which arises from an uniformity of appearance in things that are distinct in existence. But still I have no general idea nor notion of this relation, abstracted from all my particular ideas of things so related*.

* THESE disputes about abstraction may be deemed after all, perhaps, to be purely verbal. A loose determination of the word idea may have given occasion to them. A proper distinction between ideas, and notions, may help to reconcile them. These two words are commonly used by inadvertency and habit, or authority, as if they were synonymous. Mr. LOCKE, and even his antagonist in this dispute, the bishop of CLOYNE, have used them so. I have done the same in all I have writ to you. But I think that the example before us shews how necessary it is to distinguish them, in order to maintain a philosophical precision of terms.

WHAT advances now do we make in general knowledge by this expedient which the art of the

THE word idea should, I presume, be held to signify one single perception of the mind, whether simple or complex, whether produced by the impressions of outward objects, or by the operations of our own minds, by sensation or reflection. These ideas are preserved in the memory by frequent repetitions of the same impressions, and the same operations. But those of them which can be painted, as it were, on the canvass of the mind, like single objects of internal sight, and like pictures of the original impressions which were made on it, or of the original forms which were raised in it, are best preserved and most steadily determined. They are all particular and have no generality but that of application. They represent to the mind that which does, or may exist. Of that which neither does, nor can exist, we can have no idea. The ideal man, or the ideal horse, which the mind perceives, is a particular idea that represents all the men, and all the horses that exist, or ever did exist; and the ideal triangle is as truly a particular idea that represents all the triangles that exist, or can exist in the mind, or out of it. The mind indeed has a power of varying, without destroying the idea: for instance, it adds wings to the man, and to the horse, one becomes an angel, the other an hippogriff: and as it can represent the ideal man to be white or black, crooked or strait, so it can represent the triangle to be rectangle, oblique, equilateral, equicrural, or scalenon. Thus far the mind can generalise it's ideas: and I think myself sure that mine can generalise them no further. But when we have been accustomed to call every thing an idea, that is an object of the mind in thinking, we fall easily into that confusion of language, whereby men are led very often, as I apprehend that they are in the present case, to dispute, and to mean the same thing. We might avoid it, I presume, if we distinguished between ideas and notions, if we conceived the former to be particular in their nature, and general only by their application, and the latter to be general in their nature, and particular only by their application; in short, if we considered how notions succeed ideas, and how they become the immediate instruments of general knowledge, when these can be such no longer. Particular ideas of actual, or possible existence, are made ge-

mind has invented? Nor such as philosophers would have believed, but some however. Tho we

neral in some sort, that is, in their effect, as it has been said, and as it is allowed on all hands. But the power of generalising ideas is so insufficient, that it goes no further. We make one phantasm of a man stand for all men, and one of an horse for all horses; but here our progress by ideas, that is, by single perceptions of the mind, stops. We have none of humanity, nor of horseity, and much less have we any of animality. Just so the phantasm of a particular triangle stands for every triangle of that species, but we have no idea of triangularity, and much less of figure. We make a particular stand for a general idea in this case, as in the two former; but in no case can we make ideas that are particular, and that can represent only what does, or may exist, become ideas of general natures that cannot exist. There is however a great difference between cases of the former, and cases of the latter kind. The essences of substances are absolutely unknown to us, but the essences of complex modes are perfectly known, so that we have clear and distinct notions, tho we cannot have clear and distinct ideas, nor indeed any ideas at all of them. From the contemplation of particular triangles we collect a notion of their general nature. We do more; by contemplating the various terminations of finite extension, we collect a notion of the general nature of figure. We have ideas of these no more than we have ideas of humanity or animality, but we know what we mean, and are able to explain our meaning when we speak of these, which we are not when we speak of the others.

MUCH more might be said to shew the difference between complex ideas and notions, and between general and abstract ideas, and the advantage that those (in the conception of which, internal sense, and in the communication of which, external sense help intellect) have over such as are merely objects of intellect. I might expose, even to ridicule, the stir that is made about the pains and skill our masters pretend that they take to form the supposed idea of triangularity, for instance, that they may teach their scholars to know a triangle when they see it; tho the meanest of their scholars, who have

cannot

cannot by any power of the mind frame ideas of general natures and essences, which neither do nor can exist separately from particulars, yet is it some advance to be able to comprehend, under one consideration, a great number of particulars, by appropriating general names to the several lots, if the term may be allowed me, into which the mind has sorted it's ideas and notions. The expedient facilitates extremely, as every man who thinks must observe, not only the communication of our thoughts to others, but the progress of them in their several trains, and all the operations of the mind about it's ideas; for tho' these general names have no abstract ideas annexed to them, nor, strictly speaking, any ideas or notions, yet are they not unaccompanied by ideas and notions. That would be to have no meaning at all, whereas they have a meaning, a plain and useful meaning or intention. What they have not, they borrow. They create no ideas in the mind, but they give occasion to the mind to collect and apply such ideas and notions as are there already. They call them forth, they marshal them, as it were; and by the manner in which, and by the occasions on which, they do so, these names produce all the effect they are designed to produce, and

been used to contemplate particular triangles, will have made this notable discovery, "that every triangle is a space comprehended by three lines, and containing three angles," without any help of theirs, or skill or pains of his own. All the merit of our masters seems to be this, they begin to learn at the right, they begin to teach at the wrong, end; which is an observation that may be enforced by what Mr. LOCKE himself says about maxims.

carry us towards general knowledge as far, as our feeble intellect can crawl with their assistance, and much further than we could advance without it.

I THINK I have said nothing here which is not obvious and plain; and yet I have opposed, in almost all I have said, men of the greatest name in philosophy. But when we must oppose them, or bely intuitive knowledge, there is no reason to hesitate. I know that, tho I can make some abstractions of my ideas, I am utterly unable to make such abstractions as Mr. LOCKE and other great masters of reason have taken it for granted that they could and did make. This I know as intuitively, and as certainly, as I know that I exist. If the difference lay in the degree alone, I should readily acknowledge that other men might abstract better, and further, than myself. But I am conscious that there is no such power in my mind in any degree, and therefore I conclude, since we are all made of the same clay, a little coarser or a little finer, that there is no such power in their minds. I conclude, after my lord BACON, that, “ since abstract ideas have been introduced, and “ their dignity exalted with so much confidence “ and authority, the dreaming part of mankind “ has in a manner prevailed over the waking.” If Mr. LOCKE could dream he had such a power as he describes this of abstracting to be (a power to form, with “ some pains and skill, the general “ idea of a triangle,” for instance, “ neither ob- “ lique, nor rectangle, neither equilateral, equi- “ crural,

“ crural, nor scalenon, but all, and none of these
 “ at once *”) let writers learn to be less dogma-
 tical, and readers to be less implicit. It is unde-
 niable that there is such a thing as philosophical
 delirium. Men of the coolest tempers, we see,
 are liable to be seized by it; and when they are
 so, even their minds are apt to flatter, to deceive,
 and to debauch themselves. I quote this as an
 instance of the mind’s being debauched, as well
 as flattered, and deceived; for surely it is a sort
 of debauchery to turn art into artifice: and he
 does no less, whether he means it or not, who,
 instead of employing general words for the pur-
 poses we have mentioned, vends them for signs of
 ideas abstracted as no mortal could ever abstract.

SINCE knowledge has increased, their own
 knowledge and that of other men, philosophers
 and divines have been forced to moderate their
 pretensions. They have fallen a little in the va-
 lue they had set on human intellect: and I sus-
 pect, or rather I would hope, that they must fall
 a good deal more, how unwilling soever they
 may be to part with that tinsel which has passed
 so long for gold and silver. But there is still
 a remainder of the old leaven in philosophy.
 Many opinions, that were assumed without any
 proof, or on the slightest, are still entertained as
 opinions, or established as doctrines. Among
 these gross errors there is scarce any more gross,
 or of more extensive influence, than this that sup-

* Essay, l. iv. c. 7.

poses a power in the mind, which the mind has not, and the reality of ideas of general natures, tho' these cannot exist abstractedly from particulars. This error is the great principle on which many fine-spun logical and metaphysical speculations proceed, and from most of which we might be delivered, to the honor of common sense, the improvement of real knowledge, and the advantage of mankind, if it was sufficiently exploded. Till it is so, and as long as the leaven of this error among others continues to ferment, men will be apt to mispend their time in search of fantastic knowledge, by the means of imaginary powers. The field of knowledge, which BACON, and DES CARTES, and LOCKE have purged of so many weeds, may be therefore over-run again by a new crop springing from old roots that they neglected to grub, or helped to preserve. Metaphysics may not only maintain, but confirm and enlarge their empire. The lofty madness of PLATO, and the pompous jargon of ARISTOTLE, may be propagated again, with as great success as ever, from those colleges and schools that deserved once the name of venerable bedlams. The learned of another generation may see, perhaps universally, immaterial essences and eternal ideas in the divine mind; they may contemplate substantial forms, and comprehend even the entelechia, whilst they neither see visible, nor feel solid, extension. All this may happen, and if Dulness should re-establish her empire in poetry, whilst that of Madness is restored in philosophy,

how glorious an age may the next become, when all the defects, and all the follies of this are complete? Once more, all this may happen. Our learned queen interests herself in nice and subtil disputations about space: from metaphysics she rises to theology. She attends frequently to the controversy, almost fourteen hundred years old, and still carried on with as much warmth, and as little success, as ever, about that profound mystery the Trinity. She studies with much application the “analogy of revealed religion to the constitution and course of nature.” She understands the whole argument perfectly, and concludes, with the right reverend author, that it is not “so clear a case that there is nothing in revealed religion.” Such royal, such lucrative encouragement must needs keep both metaphysics and the sublimest theology in credit; and in short,

“Signs following signs, lead on the mighty year.”

In the mean time, let what has been here said stand for one example of the arts employed by the mind to enlarge it's knowledge; and let it serve to shew how these arts degenerate into artifice, deceive even the mind that invented them, and, instead of enlarging knowledge, enlarge and multiply error.

ANOTHER example of the same kind it may be proper to consider. HOBBS says somewhere, that words are the counters of wise men, and the money

ney of fools. The observation is just, and the expression happy. Ideas and notions are the money of wise men, and they pay with these; whilst they mark and compute with words, the money of fools. But yet so difficult is the intellectual commerce, so narrow the intellectual fund, that the wisest men are frequently obliged to employ their money like counters, and their counters like money; in one case, however, without loss, in the other without fraud. We may be said to do the first, that is, to employ our money like counters, when we employ ideas of one kind to mark and to suggest ideas of another. We employ, as it were, in this case, good and current money of one species, to compute and fix the sum payable in another: and thus guineas may stand in the place of shillings, or shillings serve to represent guineas. This happens whenever we make use of figures: and figures are so interwoven into language, that they make up a great part of our discourse, and a greater than is commonly apprehended.

THE figurative style is peculiarly that of poets, or of the tribe nearest allied to theirs, I mean orators. In this style the frightened wave returns: or CÆCERO, in his *Philippics*, thunders against ANTONY. To employ this style with true propriety is hard no doubt. It must needs be hard to keep up an exact precision and propriety of ideas and words when two sets of each are concerned, since it is extremely so to keep them up when one set of each is alone the business of the mind.

mind. It is hard for another reason; because imagination, whose talents are neither precision nor propriety, not the former at least, is employed in the application of one of these sets of ideas and words to the other, and because it rarely happens that great heat of imagination, and great coolness of judgment, that happy association which forms a genius, and appears eminently in all your writings, go together, and keep pace with one another. When they do so, the figurative style, that some of our neighbours have almost rejected even out of poetry, and that we have abused most licentiously in it, serves to enforce, as well as to explain and adorn, but never to deceive. Somebody has said of the boldest figure in rhetoric, the hyperbole, that it lies without deceiving: and, if I may venture to make a little alteration, in a definition given by my lord BACON, I will say of rhetoric in general, the practice of which I esteem much, the theory little, that it applies images, framed or borrowed by imagination, to ideas and notions which are framed by judgment, so as to warm the affections, to move the passions, and to determine the will; so as to assist nature, not to oppress her.

BUT besides the use which poets make with some profusion, as they have a right to do, and orators make, or should make more sparingly, of this art of the mind, which, transferring ideas from one subject to another, makes that become
graceful

graceful and reasonable, and thereby useful, when the application is judicious, which would be monstrous and absurd, and thereby hurtful, without it; there is another use, which the severest philosophical writers may and do make of it in their meditations, as well as in their discourses; an use, that, if it does not serve to increase, serves most certainly to facilitate and propagate knowledge. They who meditate (for every man, and probably every animal thinks) must have observed that the mind employs all it's forces, and memory and imagination among the rest, not only to form opinions or to arrive at knowledge, but to set the objects of opinion, or knowledge, in the fullest and clearest light for its own satisfaction, and for the ease of communicating these thoughts to other minds in the same order, and with the same energy as they are contemplated by it. Not only judgment compares, in a steady train, ideas and notions that are present to it and those that are intermediate, those that sagacity discovers to help the process of comparing; but memory and the faculty of imagining are employed to bring in adventitious helps. Such they may be called: for tho' foreign ideas divert the attention of the mind when they break in unsought and by violence, they help it often when they have been sought and are admitted by choice. They lead the mind, indirectly, and round about as it were, in many cases, to such truths, or to such evidence of truth as could not have been attained so easily, nor so fully without them.

MR. LOCKE, in the preface to his famous Essay, as he entitled it with great modesty, since it is surely the most complete work of this kind that any language can boast, excuses himself for “ dwelling long on the same argument some-
 “ times, and for expressing it different ways, by
 “ alledging that some objects had need to be
 “ turned on every side ; and that when a notion
 “ is new, it is not one simple view of it that will
 “ gain it admittance into every understanding,
 “ or fix it there with a clear and lasting impres-
 “ sion——that our understandings are no less
 “ different than our palates ;” and more to the same purpose. Now if it be necessary to present our notions to the view of others in several lights, and under variety of expressions, I cannot see why they should not be sometimes viewed through the medium of figure ; nor why the palates of those who relish this style should not be gratified. Mr. LOCKE gratifies them in this very place, and in most pages of his work. What is the juxta-position of ideas ? what is that chain which connects, by intermediate ideas that are the links of it, ideas that are remote, but figurative style ? what else are those dormant, that is, sleeping pictures, which are awakened as it were, and brought into appearance by an act of the mind ? what else are the pictures drawn there, but laid in fading colors, or the images calcined to dust by the flames of a fever ? His invective, therefore, against figurative speech, in his chapter of
 the

the abuse of words, must be understood not of the use, but of the abuse of this style, tho it seems to go further ; or it will not be agreeable to his own practice, nor to the truth, as I imagine. False eloquence there is, no doubt, and fraudulent eloquence too. Figurative style often causes one, and is often employed by the other ; but there is false and fraudulent reasoning too without eloquence : and we may find as much trifling and fallacy in some of the most dry didactic writings, as can be shewn in those of poets and orators.

RHETORIC may be a powerful instrument of deceit and error, and so may logic too. Both of them are impertinent when they are reduced into arts, and are cultivated and followed as such. But if rhetoric were banished out of the world, and logic with it, eloquence and reason would still remain. Mr. LOCKE says very figuratively, and very eloquently, speaking against figure and eloquence, that they have, “ like the fair-sex, too “ prevailing beauties, to be spoken against.” He could not speak against them out of their language. How should he ? We may disaffect eloquence as much as we please, or nature may have saved us this trouble by refusing us the talent, but we must cease to speak if we lay figurative speech wholly aside. Figures are so necessary in the communication, at least, of our thoughts, that they are wove into the very constitution of language, as we have observed already.

ready. If we did not chuse, we should be forced to employ them often in common conversation about common objects, and the ordinary affairs of life; and they are still more necessary when subjects more abstruse and more abstracted from sensible objects are concerned.

God alone knows how nearly external and internal sense, of which we have one common perception, tho the objects be different, and tho the latter be occasioned and limited by the former, are allied. All that will ever be said to explain it, will explain no more than all that has been said already. But, however, to assert that there is no other source of ideas, but sensation, is to assert something most evidently false: for to explain what has been touched already, or hinted at least, we have as determinate, and as clear ideas of thought, as of extension or solidity; of our inward faculties, of their operations, and of the modes of thinking, as of the powers, the actions, and the modifications of mere body. Were it otherwise, we should have no intellectual ideas at all; for ideas, if they cannot be represented in thought without corporeal images, are not such most certainly. But now, tho corporeal images have nothing to do in framing, they have much to do, and bear a principal part in communicating intellectual ideas. I say a principal part only, for some of these are signified without their help. We say, that we perceive, discern, abstract, compound, or compare our ideas; but we say

too, that we think, and that we know. The former expressions, and a multitude of others, are taken from outward and applied figuratively to inward sensations. The latter, and some few others perhaps, signify immediately, and without any figure, the intellectual idea they are designed to signify.

IF we ask how all this comes to pass, the true answer seems obvious enough: By an art, which experience has suggested to the mind. The ideas of outward objects have their criterions in these objects. Body is the architype of corporeal ideas, and this criterion therefore is common to all mankind. But intellectual ideas having no sensible, have no such common criterion. He who had first ideas of extension and solidity, and who invented the words, could explain his meaning by appealing to the senses of other men. But he could not communicate his ideas of reflection by the same short and easy method, the passion of his mind in receiving these ideas by sensation, nor the operations of his mind about them afterwards. He borrowed therefore corporeal images to express them, and talked of perceiving, discerning, and so on, in the figurative stile. Thus we may conceive how men came to employ corporeal ideas, for the most part, to explain the intellectual phaenomena, and sometimes to assist even their own reflections on them. The art was reasonably invented, and usefully employed. But it soon became artifice, as soon as philosophers

losophers took into their heads to affect such science as they are incapable of attaining. Then it was that they employed, among many other expedients, the absurd use of figures that figured no real ideas, nor any thing more than philosophical dreams, and whimsies of overheated brains. The same practice has continued from that time to this, from PLATO down to MALBRANCHE, from ARISTOTLE down to LEIBNITZ, from PLOTINUS and JAMBLICUS down to AGRIPPA and FLUDD. It begins to grow out of date. Men require now something more real than figure, more precise than allusion, and more particular than metaphysical abstractions. Philosophers may write as sublimely as they please about pneumatics, or the doctrine of spirits, and as profoundly as they please about ontology, or the doctrine of Being abstracted from all being. They will be taken up for amusement, like other writers of romance, and be laid aside like them, when any thing more worthy of attention presents itself to the mind.

IT is time, indeed, that they should be treated in this manner, and that men who betray themselves should impose no longer on others. When I say that they betray themselves, I mean it particularly with regard to the inconsistency of their pretensions and their practice. St. AUSTIN says, somewhere or other, for I quote the passage from the logic of PORT-ROYAL, that “ men are so ac-

“ things alone, the images of which come into
 “ the brain by the senses, that most of them
 “ believe they cannot conceive a thing when
 “ they cannot represent it to themselves under
 “ a corporeal image.” Such an one, I suppose,
 was the logician, who for want of enlarging his
 definition of idea, to whatever is an object of
 the mind in thinking, or for want of supplying
 this defect by a true definition of notion, which
 would have been better perhaps, was so absurd,
 and so profane, as to advance that we conceive
 God under the image of a venerable old man,
 because we have no other sensible idea of him.
 But since the mistaken belief spoken of by St.
 AUSTIN is owing to custom, and is that of most
 men only, I would ask why so great a philoso-
 pher, and saint, as he was, followed this evil
 custom, and filled his works with more, and
 more forced applications of corporeal images to
 intellectual and divine subjects than any writer,
 perhaps, of that metaphorsing and allegorising
 age? Shall we say with one of his disciples, who
 in every other respect, and even in this, was his
 equal at least, that “ the soul is become, since
 “ the fall, as if it were corporeal by inclination ;
 “ and that the love it has for things sensible di-
 “ minishes constantly the union, or the relation
 “ it has to things intelligible * ? ” But besides
 that one of these fathers ascribes to a fatal ne-
 cessity, what the other ascribes only to an ill ha-
 bit, how can this happen to those extraordinary

* Recherche de la verité, l. i. c. 13.

men, who abstract their souls from every thing material, and wrap themselves up in pure intellect so frequently, altho they confess that “ the
 “ mind depends in some sort on a portion of
 “ matter ? ” How can it happen to souls that are “ united with the Supreme mind imme-
 “ diately, and in a most intimate manner, tho
 “ the distance between them be infinite † ? ”

ORDINARY men may be content to make the most of the commerce they find established in their nature between sense and intellect, to push their enquiries about mind as far, and no further than a few general notions which intuitive observation will justify ; and in this process, and in the communication of their intellectual ideas, to avail themselves of corporeal ideas, and to make the little they know of body subservient to the less that they can know of mind. This is enough, no doubt, for vulgar souls confined to material habitations, wherein they feel the weight of an heavy atmosphere, and the malignity of an easterly blast. But it is not enough for those who are raised above the vulgar, metaphysicians by nature, divines by grace, “ all whose ideas are to be
 “ found in the efficacious substance of the divi-
 “ nity ††.” and into whom “ an human soul,
 “ and a rational mind, were insinuated not to be
 “ quickened, not to be blessed, not to be illu-
 “ minated, except by the very substance of

† Recherche de la ver. pref.

†† Ib. l. iii. p. 2. c. 6.

“ God §.” These men are more conversant with intelligible than sensible beings, with the intellectual world over which they range, than with the material world whose existence they deny sometimes; and therefore it should seem that it would have been more easy to them to have invented a metaphysical language, than to have continued the use of words already appropriated to ideas as distant as those of real beings from the entia rationis, or as those of body from those of spirit. It would have been likewise of extreme benefit to mankind, whom these philosophers take so much generous pains to instruct, if they had been able, by the help of such a language, to set their sublime conceptions in a direct and full light, instead of that indirect and half light which comes reflected from images foreign to them.

I AM ready, therefore, on this account to lament that the attempt of bishop WILKINS, to form such a language, miscarried, and that LEIBNITZ neither finished his alphabet of human thoughts, nor his metaphysical algebra. It may be said perhaps, that these helps, great as they would be, would be such only for the greatest genii, and that we have, therefore, a vast obligation to these philosophers, who make no longer

§ *Insinuavit nobis Christus animam humanam, et mentem rationalem non vegetari, non beatificari, non illuminari nisi ab ipsa substantia Dei.* Ib. cited from St. AUSTIN. in JOAN. trac. 23.

the distinction that their predecessors made of initiated and profane, but deliver the mysteries of their science in vulgar language, with condescension to our gross conceptions, that would never comprehend them if they were kept in their native abstraction, instead of being cloathed with ideas that fall under the view of imagination. Just so, it is said, that the sacred authors writ agreeably to all the vulgar notions of the ages and countries in which they lived, out of regard to their ignorance, and to the gross conceptions of the people: as if these authors had not writ for all ages and all countries, or as if truth and error were to be followed, like fashions, where they prevailed. This condescension, then, is very ill placed, and it would have become much better the great men we speak of, to have raised their fellow creatures up, than to have let themselves down; to have cured us of all our errors, than to have left us in any; and to have abstracted us, or to have taught us plainly the great secret of abstracting ourselves in our meditations from all things sensible, than to have left us immersed in them.

BUT to speak more seriously and more plainly; the truth is, that if these admired masters of reason did not hold the vulgar language, and make up their intellectual schemes of corporeal ideas, they would have nothing to say more than every man, who contemplates his own mind with attention, may know without their help. They are

so far from being confined and clogged by the use of the ideas they take from body and apply to mind, that it is by their means alone they extend their range and seem to rise. Observe how father MALBRANCHE sets out in the very first section of his Research of truth. He begins by considering perception and will. One of these is a passive, the other an active power of the mind. We know them intuitively, or the ideas we have of them by reflection are perfectly clear and distinct; so clear and distinct, that definitions and explanations of these, as of all our simple ideas, can only serve to perplex the mind, and to render them obscure. To what purpose then did this philosopher descend into a long detail of comparisons between these two faculties of the mind, and two of the properties that belong to matter, that of receiving figures, and that of being determined to various motions? It was not necessary to explain what needed no explanation; but it was necessary to lay, as he did lay with much ingenuity tho very precariously, some of the foundations of this system.

THIS is the common practice of metaphysical writers, and what MALBRANCHE and our BERKELEY have done so plausibly, and so agreeably, that they, who are far from admitting the systems of either, read the writings of both with the utmost pleasure the most heavy philosopher, whose name ever ended in us, pretends to feel. Nor shall we be much surpris'd at their success, if we consider

consider how the vast extravagant poets, such as ARIOSTO for example, who wander continually beyond the bounds of nature, and wherever a lawless fancy leads them, soften sometimes the grossest absurdities under the mask of figures. Struck by these, the mind grows attentive to them, stops it's attention there, and rather supposes an application than examines it.

WHEN amusement alone is concerned, and not instruction, this may be pardonable on both sides, in the author and in the reader. But in more serious studies, where one writes to instruct, and the other reads to be instructed, it is pardonable in neither. One rule, therefore, ought to be observed inviolably, the rule I mean of admitting, or rejecting figures as they are justified, or not justified, by their application. Their application is their criterion. Metaphysicians and divines, therefore, who have made figures and comparisons of so great consequence by their use of them, should consider that the principal and most proper use of them, is like that of varnish on a picture. As a painter would be thought mad who should varnish an unpainted canvass, so must they be exposed to this censure, or to one more severe, if it appears at any time that they had no clear and determinate ideas in their minds, concerning intellectual subjects, and spiritual natures and operations, when they employed, under pretence of explaining them, so many others borrowed from the objects of sense. When they have
 really

really such ideas in their minds, they must remember too that figures and comparisons are varnish still. It must not be used to alter the intellectual picture, it must only serve to give a greater lustre, and to make it better seen. Intellectual ideas and notions, in the mind of the philosopher or divine, should lead them to the invention of figures, and these figures should lead the scholar to these intellectual ideas and notions. When the latter is not so led, easily and almost unavoidably, the figures are improper, or he has a right to conclude that the philosopher or divine had no such ideas nor notions in his mind. Now the first of these proceedings is impertinent, and the second is an arrant fraud. Figures in general, these of speech, and all others that do not typify determinately, are unworthy of rational creatures, how much more of God? and figures that typify nothing, are nothing, or they are worse than nothing; they are so many lies, since they pretend to denote something real, when nothing real exists. How the sight of that brazen serpent, which MOSES erected in the desert, cured the ISRAELITES of the venomous bites of real serpents, I know not. Miraculously, say our divines. Just as other images work cures at this day, say your divines. Be this as it will, the figure typified very determinately what God intended it should typify, when he said, “*pone eum pro signo.*” But when your divines and ours agree to make it a sign of the Christ lifted up on the cross, and crucified, he must be very cabalistical indeed who can discover the

the same determination. Real serpents had caused a real plague. A brazen serpent was the figure that signified this event to be over. It signified, therefore, at the same time, that the son of God himself was to come into the world near two thousand years afterwards, to deliver mankind from the allegorical plague of sin, which he did not most certainly cause. How reasonable is one, how absurd the other application of this figure? How necessary is it therefore to examine scrupulously the application of every figure, that we may not be imposed on by false appearances? But I will conclude these reflections by an example taken from figurative speech. It will be thus more close to my purpose; and that it may be the stronger to shew the abuse of figures, it shall be taken from one that has a real, and be contrasted with one that has an imaginary application.

THE WORD DISCOURSE is derived from a Latin verb, which signifies to run about, and by the motion of our legs, and the agitation of our whole body (for when the word was invented all men believed they had bodies) to traverse many different grounds, or the same ground many different ways. Now the application of this corporeal image to what passes in the mind, or to the action of the mind when we meditate on various subjects, or on many distinct parts of the same subject, and when we communicate these thoughts to one another, sometimes with greater, and sometimes with less agitation and rapidity, is obvious. It

answers as nearly as such applications can answer, and there is no danger that this figure should communicate a false idea, or fail to produce that which it is designed to produce. There can be neither equivocation, perplexity, nor disappointment in the use of it.

THE word INSPIRATION is derived, like the other, from a Latin verb which signifies to blow in; and it has been said, that “the image might be borrowed to denote an action of God in an extraordinary manner influencing, exciting, and enlightening the mind of a prophet, or apostle.” How many assumptions are here in one short sentence? and how impossible must it be to come at any thing on which a reasonable mind can rest, whilst figures are explained by other figures that want explanation as much? Influencing is a vague term, and may be applied several ways with equal propriety. But exciting and enlightening denote different kinds of action, and neither of them has any relation to inspiration, or blowing in. Here then is metaphor heaped on metaphor, without any true application to an intellectual idea, and we know as little what is meant by inspiration as we did before. I conceive inspiration even less than abstraction. The latter, such as it is represented by most philosophers, appears to me impossible; but I conceive what the supposed operation of the mind signified by this figurative term is, and by conceiving what is meant, or the application of the term, I conceive the apparent im-

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possibility

possibility of the thing. But I have no more conception of this supposed action of the divine on the human mind, than I have of the spiration by which the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son, according to the decision of the council of FLORENCE that met to reconcile the Greek and Latin churches in the fifteenth century. The doctors of abstraction, therefore, require that we should believe against knowledge, and those of inspiration, that we should be implicit without it. Now this would be a great deal too much, even if we did not know the use that has been made of the supposed natural power of abstraction, and of the supposed supernatural gift of inspiration. But both are sufficiently known, and it is a little too late, and but a little, to impose either on us in the character of philosophers. If we submit to be implicit in another character, and in one of the cases, as far as it is necessary to keep us even now within the pale of the Christian church, we shall do very prudently. But it will be true, however, that the term of inspiration is a figure that gives us no intellectual idea, because it is not really the image of any.

THERE was a time, and it lasted long, when this term was employed in a literal sense. I refer to the time when Heathenish, Jewish, and Christian superstition prevailed separately first, and then unitedly. Ignorance, and fear produced superstition, and superstition in it's turn maintained ignorance and fear in the minds of men. Thus superstition broached the notion of inspiration,
and

and when the notion was once established, and the fact believed, supposed inspiration served to confirm and authorize superstition. That which has happened in so many other instances, happened in this, a groundless and absurd opinion, which grew into vogue in dark ages, and was consecrated by a rude and ignorant people, prevailed in ages more enlightened. Men adopted what they would not have invented, and knowledge seemed to increase for no other reason, or to no other purpose, than to defend, to cultivate, and to improve error.

INSPIRATION, which has been since ascribed to a metaphysical cause that metaphysicians cannot explain, was esteemed at first a physical operation that was obvious to the senses. The goats of CORETAS approached a cavern on the hill of PARNASSUS. They fell into strange agitations, and made an unusual noise. The shepherd followed them, and as soon as he came near enough to receive the influence of the subterranean inspiring blast, he began to be agitated like his goats, and to prophecy like them; for we may believe, as reasonably as any part of the story, that the only difference consisted in this, his language was understood, that of his goats was not. On this experience was the Temple built, and the famous oracle established at DELPHI, “*com-
mune humani generis oraculum,*” as LIVY calls it. The PYTHIAN priestess sat on a tripod, lest she should fall into the cavern when her head began

began to turn, and from thence she uttered with prophetic fury the inspirations she received, not from above, but from below. Many other examples might be brought of such physical inspirations, but this one is sufficient for my present purpose; at least it will be fully so when I have added, that they maintained their credit so well, and so long, even among philosophers, that TULLY introduces his brother, who was a zealous Stoician, as a person entirely convinced of their reality. So convinced he appears, that when an objection, taken from the disrepute into which this oracle began to fall, is opposed to the argument he had drawn from its universal reputation, QUINTUS thinks it sufficient to answer on this physical principle, that the inspiring virtue of the earth which used to excite and enlighten the mind of the Pythoness, might be worn out by age, as rivers have been seen to dry up, or to change their course*.

BUT this was not the sole, tho it might be the first notion of a divine inspiration. HESIOD, and your HOMER, and others more ancient than either, had filled the world with daemons and genii: and as poets were the philosophers of those ages among the Greeks, the machinery of poetry came soon to be that of philosophy. PLATO, as great a poet as any of them in the garb of a philosopher, multiplied vastly these imaginary beings, and as-

* —Potest vis illa terrae quae mentem PYTHIAE divino afflatu concitabat evanuisse vetustate, ut quosdam evanuisse amnes aut in alium cursum contortos & deflexos videmus. De Divin. l. 1.

signed them different ranks and different employments. He made the system of an intellectual world, and, in the respect I am going to mention, as absurdly as many others, but more reverentially toward the supreme Being. He supposed a chain of intermediate beings from man up to God; and it is evident that these beings were in his system the agents of the supreme being, both in the creation and government of the world. He did not raise up man to an immediate communication with God. The distance and the disproportion seemed to him too great. He supposed him influenced, that is excited and restrained, enlightened and inspired, as well as made, by other created beings, by whom this distance was nearly at least filled up, and this disproportion gradually lessened. In his system, therefore, a greater reverence was shewn to the supreme Being than in those of some other theologians, in which God confers familiarly with men, and acts a part, not only in the most important, but in the most trifling scenes of our human farce. But still the absurdity remained of such a gradation of beings. That there is a gradation, I doubt not, upwards, as our senses inform us that there is one downwards. But such a gradation, by which finite approaches nearer and nearer to infinite, is inconceivable. The distance and disproportion will be still infinite.

BUT to return, and to conclude what I shall say about the notions that obtained among the
heathens

heathens on this subject; for you know that I have reserved to myself a right of following the matter as it rises before me; without observing in these essays, any more than I used to do in our conversation, a just proportion in the members of my discourse. The causes of inspiration then were principally these: an intoxicating wind or vapor that blew into the inspired persons; or the action of demons, or genii, on their bodies, or in them. Such beings were believed universally to exist; for even DEMOCRITUS, if I mistake not, is said to have admitted them. But they were believed to be material, tho' spiritual and invisible; and whether PLATO thought them all good and beneficent, or no, the general opinion, and that even of the latter Platonicians, held that some were good, and some bad, that there were pure and impure spirits. Their cotemporaries, the christian fathers, affirmed that these spirits were all of the latter sort. They attributed the whole secret of oracles rather to the malice of the devil, than to the knavery of the priests. I have read in BASNAGE*, I think, that ORIGEN and CHRYSOSTOM represented the priestess sitting on a tripod over the sacred vent, with her legs wide open to receive the spirit; and that some pretended the oracles were delivered through this honorable channel. Nay, that judicious person, the martyr JUSTIN, scrupled not to assure the world, that these devils had carnal enjoyment of girls, and boys too, in the very act of inspiration. The ge-

* Antiq. judaiques.

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neral effect of inspiration was madness and fury. Divine madness and divine fury they were called: and the persons, thus inspired, uttered their vaticinations in fits that made their bodies swell, and become distorted by convulsive motions. In this state, and when they were quite out of their senses, they were consulted by men who thought themselves in theirs, who were often the greatest, and in public opinion the wisest, of mankind. TULLY† asks on what authority we are to believe that the madman sees what the wiseman does not see, and that he who loses human sense acquires divine? His brother might have referred him, for an answer, to the works of his admired philosopher, to that passage in the Phaedrus particularly, where PLATO recommends so highly that divine fury which exerts itself in vaticination, mystery, poetry, and love; and where he gives the preference over all other wisdom to that which divine fury infuses.

Now nothing could resemble more a heathen, than a jewish vaticination; and no wonder is there that it should be so. Egypt and the east were the great schools of such philosophy and theology as I have mentioned. They abounded with seers of visions and dreamers of dreams, with prophets and diviners, with wizards and cunning men, with theurgic as well as natural magic, and all

† Quid vero habet auctoritatis furor iste, quem divinum vocatis, ut quae sapiens non videat, ea videat insanus, et is, qui humanos sensus amiserit, divinos affectus sit? De div. Lib. ii.

the occult sciences. The Greeks borrowed from hence almost all the knowledge, real and imaginary, that they had ; and so did the Jews too, as some divines have had the candor to confess, whilst the crowd of them affect to maintain the contrary against irresistible probability, and would persuade us that the whole heathen world was enlightened by the lamp of the tabernacle : as if any similitude of opinions, customs, and rites, which is a good proof in general that the more modern learned of the more antient nation, was equally good to prove that the more antient learned of the more modern, the masters of the slaves, and a people, that had an high opinion of themselves, of a people whom they despised. But however this may have been, the Jews, according to the spirit of the mosaic system, made the Supreme Being more frequently an immediate actor in matters of inspiration, as in all other matters, than the heathen did ; tho they too employed the ministry of angels, whose names, at least, they learned first from the Chaldeans, if they did not come first acquainted with these spiritual beings among that people in their captivity.

THIS notion of an immediate action of God on the human mind became more common, and inspiration more metaphysical, in the christian schools. Some of the heathen philosophers held opinions that led to this, and might have been improved so as to derive all inspiration immediately from the Supreme Being in some extraordinary manner or

other ; which they would not have been at a loss to represent, or rather to evade the necessity of representing, by the help of figurative style. Some of them assumed that the human soul was drawn out of the divine nature, or was tinctured by it, or had caught it's fire from it. I know not how to express better those strange words, strange I mean in this application, *hausti* and *delibati*. They assumed further, that the divine mind pervaded and filled all things : and when they assumed thus much, it seemed easy to conclude, from this near relation of the divine and human mind, to an action of the former on the latter, “*cognitione divinorum animorum animos humanos commoveri* *.”

PLATO'S trinity, as little intelligible as it was, might have been another assumption, by which to account more particularly for this divine act of inspiration. The second person, God's intelligence, the Word, made men : and what could be more consequential, than to ascribe all particular inspirations to the third person, that universal spirit, that energy of God, which animates and governs the whole ? No part of this could have shocked the opinions of those philosophical theists, who acknowledged not only a general providence, but particular providences. As little could it have been thought repugnant to that principle which seemed common to them all, that principle of reverence to the one, the father

* TULLY *De div.*

of gods and men, whom they conceived to be beyond and before all existence. They could conceive no being, nor manner of being, equal to the Supreme ; but neither did the platonic trinity suppose that there was any such : and they might have placed the source of inspiration, according to this theology, much higher, than obvious, visible causes, and even than the suggestions of demons and genii, without ascribing it to the first mind, or admitting any mind equal to the first. They had the more reason to do this, and to place inspiration, as it were, out of sight, when the credit of oracles began to fail, and a gross physical account of it would pass no longer.

BUT that which heathen theologers could do, christian theologers could not, after the nicean council at least, whatever they did, or might have done, before it. They ascribed inspiration, indeed, to the Holy Ghost : but, the three persons of this trinity making one God only, they ascribed inspiration to an immediate act of the Supreme Being, as the Jews had done before them ; among whom this act, and the immediate presence of the Deity, were said to be manifested often in a sensible manner. Something of this kind obtained at first among the Christians. Voices from heaven for instance, and the visible descent of the Holy Ghost, would have made inspiration, if these phenomena had continued, as much an object of sense in the christian system, as it had been ever in that of the Jews or of the heathen. But these

phaenomena did not continue : and tho signs and wonders were said to be wrought by persons inspired, inspiration became invisible, and the notion of it purely metaphysical ; less absurd than former notions perhaps, but more remote too from human comprehension.

THE consequence of all this was, that the proof of inspiration resting on authority and opinion, it became very equivocal. Every sect and every council pretended to it : and, whilst they opposed and damned one another, what one side attributed to inspirations of the Holy Ghost, the other attributed to suggestions of the devil : for in this system the Holy Ghost, that is God himself, is the inspirer and comforter ; and the devil, an inferior, a created spirit, and yet a rival to the father of all spirits, is the tempter and tormentor. How God acts on the human mind to inspire and comfort, and the devil to tempt, was then, and is still, a metaphysical or theological secret. But the power of tormenting, which the devil exercised in those days, was no secret at all. Legions of impure spirits were believed to take often possession of the body of men, from whence nothing could drive them but aspersions of holy water, and other forms of ecclesiastical conjuration, performed by priests, that is, by men on whom the imposition of hands had conferred the Holy Ghost in a constant succession from the apostles. This conjuration had been first taught by SOLOMON, as JOSEPHUS asserts in the eighth book of his Antiquities ;

quities ; and it continued long in credit, for much the same reasons that oracles and the arts of divination had done so formerly. It is kept in some use still by the roman clergy : and our reformed clergy would not be sorry perhaps to revive this pious practice.

WHILST ignorance and superstition reigned triumphantly, and the fantastical ideas and notions which they communicate, and which authority, education, and habit do in some sort realise in the mind, spread and prevailed ; men might be easily persuaded that the spirit or breath of God, which blew into the face of the first of men, and made him a living creature *, might blow likewise on extraordinary occasions, and in an extraordinary manner, into the faces of some of his posterity, as into chosen vessels. They might be easily persuaded that this breath was not only a principle of life to all, but an influencing, exciting, and enlightening principle to some. They might imagine, without any great effort, that the effect of this occasional breath was to fan into a flame the latent sparks of a certain fire, that had been kindled in the original constitution of man, and had been extinguished by the fall. They might imagine that they knew really what all this meant : and on such reasonings, which would have been none of the worst they employed, they might have proved to themselves and others the inspira-

* Inspiravit in faciem ejus spiraculum vitae, et factus est homo in animam viventem, are the words of MOSES.

tion of christian saints, to whom sublime mysterious truths were revealed and of jewish prophets and seers, who foretold future events, and recovered stolen goods: for even this, as low as it may seem, was a part of their employment, and one effect of their inspiration.

BUT this reign is well nigh over; or, if it continues in some of these parts of the world, it triumphs universally in none. He who pretends to instruct now must know first, and expect, if he uses any figure, to be called upon to explain, his meaning; that is, to shew this meaning without the veil of any figure. Inspiration was long understood in the literal sense of the word, not only whilst men imagined grossly that it was the effect of a subterranean wind or vapor, but when they had spiritualised it a little, and fancied it a breath that came from above, or a spirit that descended on one prophet, and passed from one to another with sensible effects. Since it could be received no longer in the literal sense, philosophers and divines have given up the literal sense, and kept the word, that signified something, to serve as a figure that signifies nothing, and that can be translated into nothing but some other figure. Figures and types are indeed the strongest entrenchments of metaphysics and theology: and it is in them that the professors of these reputed sciences defend themselves the best.

AN history of inspiration, like one of divination,
would

would be a collection of such extravagancies and absurdities, as might be sufficient to make our species forfeit the character of reasonable creatures, if it did not shew at the same time that by a free use of their reason men have detected, one after another, most of the fallacies, the grossest at least, that had been imposed on them by heathens, Jews, and Christians : for even of these it cannot be denied. The fautors of inspiration are thus reduced to their last entrenchment ; and, having abandoned all their other posts as untenable, they endeavour to defend this by not explaining what has been refuted as often as any explanation of it has been attempted. Your friend, ATTERBURY, who knew more of classical learning, and even of divinity, than he did of politics, tho he affected these the most, has sometimes lamented that any explanations of the real presence in the eucharist had been given, and that the church had made any decisions about it. As long as it was held an inexplicable mystery, it was believed, he said ; but as soon as divines had been so unskilful as to attempt to explain it, BERENGER's recantation signified nothing : and it has been a disputed point ever since. If this be a right notion, as I incline to think it is, these two mysteries, that of the real presence, and that of inspiration, have had very different fates. The first set out a mystery, and was piously believed, till attempts to explain it shewed that it implied contradiction. The other set out as a natural phaenomenon, and was so far from being thought a real mystery, how
much

much soever it might remain such to the vulgar, that prophecy and divination, the effects of it, were thought attainable by purifications, purgations, and other physical methods, and that they became arts which were taught in the schools of the Heathens and the colleges of the Jews. But the notion of inspiration has ended in mystery, where the other began : and this expedient, the only one that can support it at all, would support it effectually, if these ages resembled a little better those wherein the belief of the real presence was first established.

IT may be said that an extraordinary action of God on the human mind, which the word inspiration is now used to denote, is not more inconceivable, than the ordinary action of mind on body, and of body on mind : and I confess that it is not. But yet the cases are so widely different, that no argument can be drawn from one in favor of the other. It is impossible to doubt of an action which is an object of intuitive knowledge, and whereof we are conscious every moment ; and it is impertinent to deny the existence of any phaenomenon merely because we cannot account for it : but then this phaenomenon must be apparent, and the proof that it exists, or has existed, must be such as no reasonable man can refuse to admit ; otherwise we shall be exposed to make frequently the ridiculous figure that philosophers have sometimes made, when it has been discovered, after they had reasoned long about a
 thing,

thing, that there was no such thing. We must not assume for truth, what can be proved neither *à priori*, nor *à posteriori*. A mystery cannot be proved *à priori*; it would be no mystery if it could: and inspiration is become a mystery, since all we know of it is, that it is an inexplicable action of the divine on the human mind. It would be silly, therefore, to assume it to be true, because God can act mysteriously, that is, in ways unknown to us, on his creature man: for just so ASGYLL did prove, or might have proved, that men do not die, but are translated, because God can translate them. There is then no possibility of proving inspiration *à priori*; and the proofs, that are brought *à posteriori* for christian inspiration, are not more decisive to Christians, than those, which the Stoicians brought in favor of vaticination and divination, were to them; nor than those, which the Mahometans and the worshippers of FOE bring of the same kind, are to them.

THIS word inspiration, about which I have said so much more than I intended, belongs properly to you sons of APOLLO: and to you it should be of right restored. Whilst you were at once poets, prophets, philosophers, and divines, and went about from house to house singing, as the methodists do preaching, sublime doctrines, the use of it might be a little confused: and what you assumed in the two first characters, you might ascribe to yourselves and others in the two last. But since they are become distinct professions, as

well as characters, and one of them, that of prophets, is extinct, inspiration may have it's place and use in poetry ; but no where else. If philosophers and divines employ this word, which signifies a particular and determinate action, as a figure to signify some other action, they employ it improperly. It cannot serve to inform ; but it may serve, and it actually does serve, to deceive. Our quakers, our methodists, and enthusiasts of every sort and in every religion, are confirmed, by the received use of this word, in the belief that the Spirit of God descends upon them, is inspired into them, excites and enlightens their minds, and enables them by it's powerful operation to utter all the extravagancies, which are in their opinion so many divine truths.

It is the more reasonable to guard against every thing of this kind, because the hypothesis of some of our finest modern writers on the subject of the human mind, tho they do not pretend directly to be inspired, seem to renew and improve the reveries, or waking dreams, of ancient philosophers, in such a manner as to lay again the foundations of superstition, by supposing an immediate and constant communication between the divine and the human natures. That MALBRANCHE supposed such a communication, is evident in all his writings : and his christian and metaphysical meditations are nothing less than a dialogue between the Word and him. The conference was not held indeed in the terms and form
of

of the dialogue; but the language he makes the Word to hold in it, he affirms to be conformable to the answers which he thinks he received when he interrogated the Word on the same subjects.

I HAVE sometimes wondered that divines and metaphysicians, who have borrowed so many fantastical notions from PLATO, have neglected one, which they might have found in the Apology of SOCRATES, and by which they might have accounted more probably, and more decently, than they have done, for divine inspirations, revelations, and communications. They might have learned there to distinguish between the ethereal and elementary body. We may compare the first to a shirt, since the same PLATO compares the second in the Phaedrus to a suit of cloaths, and since it is worn under the other, “sub manifesto hoc corpore latens.” Now it was by this medium that SOCRATES was inspired by his demon, or guardian angel. He saw visions, and he heard voices: but how? Not by his elementary, but by his ethereal, senses. Thus an inferior spirit, and not the Supreme Being, is the immediate actor; and inspiration is no longer an unmeaning figure of speech. But this is not enough for metaphysical divines. Our notions of humanity must be raised higher, even at the expence of debasing (for as such it appears to me) our notions of the divinity. God and man must be more intimately joined; tho by endeavouring so to join them they renew, in some sort, the grossest absurdities of paganism.

MANY

MANY instances might be produced of this sort, and some very flagrant. I will content myself in this place with the mention of one. BAYLE observes that the notion of seeing all things in the Infinite Being, which father MALBRANCHE advanced on this assumption that our ideas must be in God because they cannot be modifications of any created mind, differs little from the doctrine of DEMOCRITUS *, who taught, that the images of objects, which present themselves to our senses, are emanations of God, nay that they are God, and that the idea in our minds is God likewise. The observation is certainly just; and I need not enlarge upon it to shew you that it is so. Instead of that, I will ask you whether the different hypothesis of a philosopher, whom you and I love and honor, has not some, tho' a more remote, resemblance to the same doctrine? Both of them at least have, in my opinion, one common tendency, that which I have just now mentioned. If I was perfectly persuaded, as I am very much of the contrary, that we perceive all our ideas in the divine mind, I could account for all that is attributed to inspiration by a figure,

* The words of TULLY are these: " DEMOCRITUS, qui tum imagines earumque circuitus in deorum numero refert: tum illam naturam quae imagines fundat ac mittat: tum scientiam intelligentiamque." They will be better translated thus. DEMOCRITUS, who places among the gods not only the images of the objects that surround and strike us, but that nature which pours forth and sends these images to us; and knowledge and intelligence. COTTA mentions the same notions afterwards, not in the same words as VELLEIUS, but to the same effect. TULLY De nat. deor. lib. i.

that

that would have a sort of metaphysical meaning. I could represent the soul as a mirror; and it has been so represented, I think, by some: and then suppose that images, received from the presence of God to it, are reflected by it, which would be like the reflected light of the sun; a secondary and fainter, but a divine, illumination. Again, could I comprehend that visual language, in which “the author of nature constantly speaks to the eyes of all mankind;” I might be able perhaps to comprehend how God may speak to prophets and apostles in visions, or else I might deduce by analogy, that as we think we see when we do not really see, but only receive ideas through the eye from an immediate action of God; so prophets and apostles might think that they employed the faculties of their own excited and illuminated minds, and signified their own thoughts by the words they pronounced, when they neither thought nor spoke, but when the breath of God articulated in their organs. I might be able to comprehend such sublime notions; and I should be glad, no doubt, to find how happily these doctrines coincide with that antient opinion, that prophets prophesied often without knowing that they did so. But I confess that I comprehend as little our friend’s hypothesis, as I do that of the father of the oratory; tho I comprehend very clearly how we may be said in some sort, and in some particular cases, to learn to see; that is, by the ordinary course of experience, and not by any divine agency.

SHALL

SHALL I own it? I cannot be mortified at my want of comprehension in this case. When philosophers employ clear and determinate ideas, such as are real not fantastical, and when they reason on principles that are evidently true, instead of such as are doubtful at best, I comprehend them without any extreme labor of mind. When they do otherwise, I mispend no time in making unprofitable efforts to comprehend them. COTTA treats the notions of DEMOCRITUS that have been mentioned with the utmost contempt, and even VELLEIUS had entered into no refutation of them. BAYLE thinks a little genius could never form them, and that in order to form them a man must comprehend the whole extent of power, which belongs to a nature capable of painting in our minds the images of objects. I will imitate in all similar cases the old academician, not the modern sceptic, who seems a dogmatist on this occasion. I will follow no man out of the high road of plain common sense. In that, the philosopher may lead me to all real knowledge: for common sense does not exclude uncommon discoveries in the search of truth. But the philosopher goes often out of this road, whilst the illiterate, unthinking crowd of mankind cannot go far in it. These are the two extremes in which men sometimes meet. The difference consists always in their acquisitions and habits, and not always in their natural faculties. The reason of one is not cultivated like that of the other; but the imaginations of both may be apt to warm and

transport them alike. Whilst the philosopher consults his reason alone, he will be always far before the other. But if his imagination carries him away, there is a chance that they may meet: and the philosopher with all his knowledge, and all his reason, may have not his own whimsies alone, but those of the most vulgar understandings, to support.

S E C T. VI.

HAVING dwelt thus long on one art of the mind that degenerates into artifice, it is time I should proceed to another: and the art to be considered next, is that which was intended when I said that we are sometimes obliged to pay in counters for want of ready money. What I mean by it is this. We are sometimes obliged, in philosophical, as well as in common, discourse, to make use of words that have no determinate, nor indeed, properly, any, ideas or notions at all annexed to them. I say, we are obliged to do so, in order to distinguish this case from that of metaphysics and theology, which are almost wholly conversant, when they keep within their own bounds and go neither into physics nor ethics, about words that have no intelligible meaning, words that have been invented to conceal ignorance, and to create an appearance of science: whereas the words intended here, tho they have no ideas nor notions, properly speaking, annexed to them, have however a meaning and an use, an intelligible meaning and a good use.

Two of them I will produce as examples, and they shall be words that serve to denote unknown causes of known effects. They take their precision, like the names of substances, from sensible effects, and they refer either to an unknown real cause, or to the unknown principle of some apparent cause.

OUR ignorance of causes, our curiosity, and the extravagant opinions of philosophers about them, are equally great. I shall not enter on that subject, here at least. Something, however, must be said about the notion of cause, in order to shew the reason, and even necessity, of employing such words as I have mentioned; and to introduce what I propose to say concerning the use and abuse of them. Neglecting, therefore, all the abstract notions that are entertained about cause, the nice and trifling distinctions between the cause and the sufficient reason of any thing, and the other distinctions, as well as divisions, and subdivisions, that have been made, and that serve, for the most part, to no other purpose than to perplex us in a labyrinth of words, let us content ourselves to understand, when we speak of cause in general, “That, by the immediate, or
 “ remote, the physical, or moral, virtue whereof
 “ any thing is what it is, or any thing is done
 “ as it is done.”

THE Supreme Being is the first, and, strictly, the sole efficient cause. But as we know nothing of his manner of being, so we know nothing of his manner of causing. In your HOMER's machinery

chinery the gods are perpetually actors ; but the poet neither employs them so much, nor more improperly, nor more unworthily, than philosophers and divines have presumed to employ the Deity. Let us think with greater reverence of God : and whilst we acknowledge him to be the first, let us not imagine him to be the immediate cause of every phaenomenon and every thing that happens. Through how many mediums, if I may say so, may not the rays of divine efficacy pass before they arrive at us ! Far be it from me to neglect or to discourage the contemplation of the first efficient cause, who shines so gloriously in all his works. But let us adore him in the contemplation of his works, and of the order of second causes, by which the system of them is maintained, and carried on. Second causes cannot be reckoned in a strict philosophical sense efficient, when they are considered relatively to the whole extent of being, at the head of which is God. But as they have a communicated efficiency in such degrees, of such kinds, and under such directions, as it is communicated to them by infinite wisdom and power, they appear efficient when they are considered relatively to us, and to our system : and since all our knowledge is in truth relative to these, we may be well content to admit ideas that are so too, and that reach no further. These are our limits : and where our experimental knowledge of second causes stops, there our physical enquiries should stop. All beyond is metaphysical jargon : for at what

point soever we leave physics, for metaphysics, we fall of course into jargon. The antients generally set out in it. The moderns too often conclude in it.

THE first example I shall produce of words that serve to denote unknown causes of known effects, shall be the word chance. Every event that happens in the course of human affairs, how contingent soever it may seem, has a real and peculiar cause. But when these causes are too remote, or too complicated, to be easily, or at all, discerned by us, we call the event contingent, and the cause chance. Thus we endeavour to supply our want of ideas, to think with less confusion, to discourse more intelligibly, and to make up the sum with counters which we cannot make up with money. But in this kind of payment there has been much abuse, and much deceit. Superstition attempted to make these counters pass for real money; and, instead of keeping the word chance to signify in it's application nothing more than this, that the cause of an event was unknown, to make it pass for an actual cause and a positive Being. Superstition impersonated it under the name of fortune: and this chimerical divinity was supposed to direct arbitrarily all the events whose causes were not apparent, or which exceeded in good or ill the expectations of men. The heathens accounted by it for past events, consulted it about future, and referred themselves to it in doubtful cases.

It is strange that such superstitions, instead of being confined to the heathen world, should have been as prevalent among God's chosen people, both Jews and Christians, and should be scarce exploded at this hour. It is stranger still that a recourse to the decision of chance should be expressly commanded in the Old testament, and occasionally countenanced in the New, even on so important an occasion as the election of an apostle in the place of JUDAS ISCARIOT. Yet so it is: and from hence we may believe it happened that some even of the most puerile and absurd appeals to chance, if one can be more so than another, were long preserved among Christians, and by them applied most profanely and cruelly. Many different sortes or chances were consulted by the heathen. Those of Praeneste, where FORTUNE had a temple adorned with mosaic work by SYLLA, who trusted much to the goddess, and took the name of FELIX, on account of his success which he ascribed to her, were extremely famous. I do not remember how these consultations were made; but those that had the names of Sortes Homericae, and Sortes Virgilianae, were made by dipping at random on some passage in the poems of HOMER and VIRGIL; and the superstition was sure to be confirmed whenever, as it could not but happen often, future events seemed in any degree to have been figured in these passages. An odd instance of this, which is preserved in a tradition, derived, I think, from Mr. COWLEY, I may mention as I go along. This poet, and some other persons attached

to CHARLES the first, were with him in the isle of Wight, where CROMWELL kept him in prison till he brought him to the block. Their amusement, for it could be nothing more, was to try the *Sortes Virgilianae*; and in trying them it is reported that the unfortunate prince dipped on those terrible imprecations that DIDO makes against AENEAS and his posterity, in the fourth book of the *Eneid*.

I SAID that these superstitious usages have been applied profanely and cruelly by Christians: and I was in the right to say so. What could be more profane than the practice of opening the sacred books, in order to take from the first passage that occurred a prognostic of events, and to degrade them to the same silly use that the heathens made of their poems? What could be more cruel than the custom of deciding causes criminal, and civil too, by duels; which was introduced by the barbarous northern nations; and was, notwithstanding the declarations of some popes against it, so far approved by the church, that it was followed on many occasions in ecclesiastical controversies, and that it was accompanied on all occasions with much ecclesiastical ceremony, even so far that a priest blessed in the field the weapons of the champions? This trial, like that of passing blindfold over red-hot plough-shares, and others, were appeals to chance, as to a judge: and both these appeals, and the consultations of chance about future events, were founded on a theological axiom invented to excuse them on

one hand, and to create more reverence for them on the other, that God presides over chance, and directs it by interpositions of his providence; so that to interrogate chance was to interrogate God, and the decisions of chance were the decisions of God.

To apply the word chance in this manner, was absurd enough. But what shall we say of those philosophers who ascribed the creation of the world to chance? Superstition 'perverted this innocent art of the mind: and a word, that signified no determinate cause at all, was made to signify a superior Being, who governs the affairs of the world, and to whose agency those events were to be ascribed that could not be accounted for otherwise. Philosophy, the philosophy of men who affected to put superstition under their feet, and to account by physical researches for all the phaenomena, attributed the original of all things to chance. By this proceeding the Epicureans did not endeavour to screen their ignorance, but they pretended to shew their knowledge of causes. They erected chance into a first physical cause, and derived the production of the universe from it. They assumed a chaos of innumerable heterogeneous particles, endowed with essential activity, and with whatever else was necessary for their purpose, like the declination of these atoms: after which they concluded that such a number of entities in perpetual motion and action one on another, must pass sooner or later through all

possible combinations. From hence they concluded again, that the formation of the world was caused by a certain concurrence, or combination of atoms, without the unnecessary help of a directing mind; and that, this concurrence being fortuitous, the world was made by chance. But enough has been said of the use and abuse of this word. It is time to speak of those that have been made of the word force.

SINCE EVEN ALCIPHON, the minute philosopher, could frame no precise idea of force, tho he “shut his eyes to assist his meditation,” it might well be asked, how it comes to pass that there are so many refined subtilties and nice distinctions about this same force? Ingenious and learned men might have employed their time much better most certainly, than they have done about “subtil
“abstracts, spiritual quintessences, un certo che
“and un non so che.” I am sorry to have this proof the more of the folly and affectation of philosophers. But I am not at all at a loss to account for them, nor to shew from whence the difference arises between these visionaries, and those great men who have discoursed rationally about force. The difference arises plainly from hence: The former have abused this art of the mind; and supposed, or reasoned as if they supposed, that this word signified what common sense never meant to signify by it. The others have not turned art into artifice in this manner; but have reasoned about force as about the unknown cause of sensible

sible effects, or the unknown causality of apparent causes. It may seem strange perhaps to our first thoughts, that men should talk sense, for it will never seem strange that they should talk nonsense, about something whereof they have no ideas. But the reason why they do so in the instance before us, will appear to our second thoughts extremely plain. That it may appear so the more, and that we may shew the better how industrious the mind is to help it's natural infirmities by art in the conceptions and expressions of things, let me add a few reflections to what has been already observed.

WITHOUT meaning what those philosophers meant, who screened so much ignorance behind the notions they endeavoured to establish of occult qualities and occult causes, we may say that the causality of apparent causes, and therefore the first efficient causes in the order of second causes, will be always occult, whatever hypothesis or system we follow. The peripatetics and schoolmen imagined the qualities of substances, as they were and are still called, and which are supposed to excite ideas immediately by their immediate action on our organs, and mediately by their action on other bodies, to be real entities derived from substantial forms, inherent in substances some how or other; but distinct from them, and added to them. Modern philosophers, more intelligibly and more conformably to experience, have banished all these notions of qualities distinct from

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body,

body, and have taught us that the action of body on body is produced, exclusively of them, by the inward constitution of body itself, and is varied according to the divers constitutions of the bodies that are at any time passive, and the different states they are in. This opinion leads us on to observe the mechanism of body, the laws of motion, and whatever else makes any part of physical enquiry. The other is founded in abstract general notions, which the knowledge of particulars had little share in framing, and points up to the chimeras of imagination. But still, even the best of them stops short of the real essences of substances, shews us more causes, but shews us as little the principles of their causality.

ALTHO the system of philosophy be in this respect totally changed, yet the mind has found it convenient to preserve the notion of sensible qualities. They were thought real, and referred to substances as inherent specifically in them. They are conceived now to be qualities by imputation only, and refer to the manner in which our senses are affected. We cannot say with strict propriety, this clock has several sensible qualities, tho it marks the days of the month to our sight alone, and the hours and the minutes to our eyes and to our ears. We know that there are no such distinct qualities in the clock, and that all these effects are produced by one spring, governed and producing effects according to it's own temper, according to laws and directions resulting from the

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structure

structure of the whole machine, and according to the texture and state of the organs of those to whom it is visible, or audible. Just so we cannot say with strict propriety, that snow is cold by a cold quality, any more than white by a white quality; or that fire is hot by a hot quality. They excite ideas that we distinguish and mark by these words; but they contain nothing in them that resembles these ideas. By the perceptions we have of these ideas, we mark, under the name of qualities, the divers effects of the unknown essences of substances.

THIS modern expedient (for the mind invents expedients as fast as it finds the want of them in the improvement, or more easy improvement of knowledge) is the more reasonably employed on another account. Tho' there are no such distinct specific qualities in bodies as were assumed by philosophers, yet the particles which compose bodies are often heterogeneous, as they appear by sure experiments; among other instances in that of light, and in the production of colors. Now this heterogeneity, which is thought to consist in the different sizes of the particles, and which may consist in other differences undiscoverable by us, continuing the same, and each kind acting and being acted upon according to its kind, this amounts in some manner to a notion of qualities contained in bodies: and being so conceived, the mind knows no more indeed of the real constitutions of bodies than it knew before, but proceeds

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in this hypothetical manner a little better, and with greater clearness and precision, in the pursuit of physical enquiries. These enquiries thus assisted enable us to analyse the component particles of bodies in their effects, and to discover in them too some general laws by which the action of these component particles separately and collectively is directed. This is some knowledge, and has the appearance of being greater than it is. But there is something still behind, concerning which we cannot boast even the least appearance of knowledge. Body acts on body by contact and pulsion. This is certain, tho' it be not so certain that body can act no other way, as philosophers generally assume. But even this pulsion is caused by motion, as motion is caused by pulsion: so that we get thus into a circle, and may go eternally round in the dark, without being nearer to discover what it is that puts mobility, that essential property of matter or body, into action, unless we suppose that the motion impressed originally continues still without any diminution. Who can doubt that there is attraction or gravitation, and repulsion, in body, as well as pulsion? Who can withhold his admiration from those discoveries that modern philosophy has made concerning the laws of motion, the properties of bodies that become apparent by them, and the actions of bodies on bodies that follow according to them? But who can or will ever be able to say what the springs of corporeal nature are, without which there could be neither
 action

action nor motion? What is that spring, for instance, which emits from the body of the sun innumerable particles of light, that make their passage of fifty millions of miles to our earth in seven minutes of time, or thereabouts, with a velocity inconceivable tho demonstrated? Well may the cause be incomprehensible, when the effect passes comprehension.

HERE now the word force, of which we are to speak, comes into play, and serves as a sign of the unknown causes of the phaenomena both of nature and of art; for effects are produced in the works of art by an imitation of those of nature, whereof the causes are unknown even to the artificer. When we employ the word alone, it is of very vague signification, and imports nothing more than some determining power intellectual or corporeal. But the mind takes two methods to give it greater precision, when that is necessary. We annex it sometimes to words which signify that whereof we would, on such occasions, denote the power in general to produce effects in physics, in mechanics, in ethics; and thus we say the force of wind, the force of a mill, or the force of habit. We annex at other times to it words, that, referring to particular known effects, serve to fix on every occasion the meaning of it; just as we annex the words hot or cold, to signify certain supposed qualities of body; and as intelligibly at least as we use the names of substances. Thus we speak of attractive, repelling, impelling force, of the force
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of gravitation, of cohesion, and even of inactivity. Our NEWTON, who has opened, by the help of these sure guides experiment and geometry, so large a field of knowledge and enquiry to present and future philosophers, concerning the greatest and the least phaenomena of nature, was far from pretending to determine the efficient cause of his attraction, or what that force is which makes bodies, and every particle of body, mutually tend to one another, and thereby give us an idea of attracting, according to what has been taken notice of already. He distinguished so carefully between the particular attractions of the schools, and his meaning in the use of this word, that nothing could be more despicable than the ignorance or malice of those who would have confounded them, and have made him an asserter of occult qualities, who discovered the most universal and the least occult quality, if I may have leave to call it so for once, that ever was, since it intercedes the whole corporeal system. To this, and to the several kinds of it, he referred all the phaenomena that cannot be accounted for by impulse: and they are many, tho many of those, which were ascribed to a sort of attraction by the antients, are on better foundations ascribed to impulse by the moderns. But neither for the cause of impulse, nor of attraction, nor of any action of body even the most sensible, can philosophy account. They, therefore, who use the word force as the sign of an unknown cause, whilst they apply themselves solely to discover the laws
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by which this cause acts, and the effects it produces, make a proper use of the word. They who affect to talk in any other manner, either physical or metaphysical, about force, abuse the word most impertinently, and pervert into artifice a very useful art of the mind.

BUT this is not the only method by which this art of the mind is perverted. It degenerates into artifice, likewise, by the use which they make of it, who invent words to point out causes, they suppose unknown, of effects whose real causes are known. In the former method men are led into error by affecting knowledge; in this by affecting ignorance. Whatever force is, it is the cause of effects, that are known, but cannot be ascribed to any cause that is known. In this the propriety of the word consists: for if they could be ascribed to any cause known and denominated, it would be improper, and the use of it could only serve to mislead. But there may be more than error, there may be fraud, in this case; for, to borrow an image from the application of the word chance, the fair gamester, who should see a raffle of sixes thrown several times together, might ascribe it to chance, that is, to an unknown cause, very properly; but the sharper, who had loaded the dice, or who knew that they were loaded, would ascribe it to chance fraudulently as well as improperly,

I could wish that ALCIPHON and LYSICLES had made this observation to EUPHRANOR, and had

had applied it to shew him why they admitted the word force, and rejected the word grace. The task would not have been hard, since it would not have been hard to shew him real causes sufficiently known, and sufficiently marked by words, of the effects ascribed by him to a cause supposed unknown, and marked by a distinct word appropriated to this purpose. They might have shewn these causes to be the influence of a religious education, a warm head, and a warmer heart; hope, fear, grief, joy, strong passions turned by prejudice and habit to devotion, devotion itself nursing it's own principles, the effect in it's turn becoming a cause uniform and constant, or redoubling it's force, on the least failure, in acts of attrition, contrition, mortification, and repentance. They might have proved not only by probable reasons, but by indubitable facts, the sufficiency of these and other known causes to produce all the effects commonly ascribed to grace, even the most astonishing that ever appeared in saints, confessors, or martyrs. Nay they might have shewn that effects more astonishing, and many of them better vouched, than most of these, have been, and are still daily, produced in men, whom it would be blasphemous to repute under the divine influence. ALCIPHON might have illustrated this argument in his serious character, by quoting the saints, confessors, and martyrs of idolatry and heresy; and LYSICLES in his gayer character, by quoting those of atheism, and of the most abominable vices, as well as the
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most indifferent customs; of paederasty, for instance, and of long beards.

I AM thinking what EUPHRANOR would have replied to the minute philosophers; and can discover no reply worthy of that solidity and that candor which render him equally admirable and amiable. He might have said indeed that he was misunderstood by them, that the parity he insisted on was not meant to “ consist in
 “ a proof of grace, as well as force, from the
 “ effects; that it was only meant to answer an
 “ objection against the doctrine of grace, sup-
 “ posing it proved from revelation, and not to
 “ prove it’s existence; that therefore if the pa-
 “ rity was sufficient to prove the possibility of
 “ believing grace without an idea of it, the ob-
 “ jection they had made was answered, and he
 “ aimed at no more.” But I think that, as minute philosophers as I am willing to allow AL-
 CIPHON and LYSICLES to have been, they would have maintained very easily the pertinence of their objection, and the insufficiency of EUPHRANOR’S answer.

THEY might have said, there is not even the parity you now suppose between force and grace. Our objection against the latter did in effect anticipate your reply: and if we allowed your reply to be a good one, it would neither strengthen your cause, nor weaken ours. The parity between force and grace, which you confine now to a possibility of believing one as well as the

other, is not sufficient; because it is not real. The possibility of believing force, is nothing more than the possibility of believing that every effect has a cause, tho' the cause be unknown to us, and the propriety of the word consists in the application of it to no other cause. The disparity and impropriety do not arise from our having no idea of grace; for it is true that we have none of force: but they arise from hence, that there is not the same possibility of believing a cause, whereof we have no idea, and which cannot be ascertained by it's effects, as there is of believing one whereof we have no idea indeed, but which may be ascertained by it's effects. You assume grace as a cause of one particular kind, an immediate influence of God on the mind; and you apply it to effects that may have causes of several kinds. Should a word be invented to signify a moral cause of effects purely physical, or a physical cause of effects purely moral, you would laugh at the invention: and you would be in the right. But is it a jot less ridiculous to assign a particular cause, either natural or supernatural, of effects that may be produced by any, or all, of these; and to think to save the absurdity by saying that the word, invented to denote this cause, has no idea attached to it, no more than that of force?

THE use of the word force can have no equivocal consequence: the use of the word grace may. The testimony, nay the conviction, of men, that they felt the influence of this unknown cause, would

would not take off the equivocation. How should it, after all the examples that may be brought from daily experience? A real enthusiast doubts no more of his perceptions of the operations of grace, informing his mind, and determining his will, than he doubts of his perceptions of the action of outward objects on his senses, and perhaps less.

ANOTHER thing, which I imagine that the minute philosophers would have said to EUPHRANOR, is this. Since the parity you endeavour to establish between force and grace, cannot be so established as to answer your purpose on any principles of reason; it remains that the notion of grace cannot be received, nor the word employed, on any other authority, than that of implicit faith in the revelation by which you suppose the existence of grace proved. That authority obliges us to believe an action or an influence of God on his elect, the manner of which no human idea can reach: but on what authority, EUPHRANOR, do you answer our “objection against the doctrine of grace, by supposing it proved by revelation?” If you have proved this fact, that the christian revelation, in which the doctrine of grace is contained, was made by God to mankind, as all facts, and especially one of this importance, ought to be proved, for every other kind of proof proves nothing; we will agree, tho there be not the same reason for admitting grace as for admitting force, that both are to

be received alike. Our objection was insufficient ; but your answer then was unnecessary : for surely nothing can be more unnecessary, than to go about to establish on probable arguments what is already established on demonstration : and the real existence of grace has been already demonstrated, if the truth of the revelation, in every part of it, has been so ; since no proposition can be more demonstrated than this, that a doctrine taught by infinite wisdom and truth is a true doctrine. If you have not proved this fact, and we think you have scarce attempted it, by the proper proofs, your argument is a pure sophism. When we urge that the doctrine of grace, or any other christian doctrine, is inconceivable, or that it is pregnant with absurd consequences, and therefore unworthy of God ; this is urged, in strictness, *ex abundantia* ; for we do not give up the fundamental point, which is, that the authenticity of your scriptures, in the whole and in every part of them, and the truth by consequence of your revelation, has not been yet proved. When you suppose the contrary, therefore, in disputing with us, you beg the question about a principle, in order to confirm a consequence. Thus it seems to me that the dispute between EUPHRANOR and the minute philosophers would have ended. What I have said upon it can be scarce called a digression ; since this comparison of force and grace serves admirably well to exemplify what has been said concerning the art and artifice of the mind in the

proper and improper use of words, to which no determinate ideas are annexed.

S E C T. VII.

MANY other arts there are, by which the human mind endeavours to help itself in the acquisition and communication of knowledge. Some of them are as liable to abuse, as these which have been mentioned; and all of them are abused more or less, to the production and propagation of error: for I presume, from what I have the means of observing, that this would be found true, on a strict examination, even in the applications of geometrical knowledge. But it is time I should put an end to this essay, that becomes a treatise in bulk at least, if not in matter nor method. That I may not conclude too abruptly however, even for such a rambling essay, it is necessary I should proceed to distinguish, in a few more instances, between real and imaginary knowledge, the natural powers and the arts, the arts and the artifices, of the human mind: and if these instances should lead me further than I intend, you will please to ascribe this prolixity to my love of truth, and to my desire of giving you all the satisfaction I can.

I WILL observe, therefore, that as the sagacity of the mind has invented various arts, whereby to improve the other faculties and even itself, and to carry their united forces a little further than

the immediate lessons of nature carry them; so the affections of the mind have not only turned these arts frequently into artifice, an example of two of which we have seen, but have gone further. They have not only slid imperceptibly, but have plunged openly, into artifice, and philosophers, those that I intend here, seem to acquire knowledge only as a necessary step to error: when they have done this, when they have lost sight of the former, they grow so fond of the latter, that they esteem it no longer an human, but raise it, by an imaginary apotheosis, up to a divine, science; which is, of all others the most pernicious artifice of the mind, according to my lord BACON, and according to truth. “Pessima
 “ res est errorum apotheosis, et pro peste intelle-
 “ ctus habenda est, si vanis accedat veneratio.”

ARE these lovers of wisdom, these searchers of truth, you may well ask, nothing better than venders of false wares, venders of hypothetical systems at best, and often of such as are entirely fantastical? I fear that they are: and that the only excuse to be made for them is, that they sometimes deceive themselves first. They put me in mind of a passage in PLUTARCH, who compares the Stoics to ships that set out under auspicious names, the Success or the Swiftsure for instance, and who are beaten by tempests in their voyage, or cast away. The great mischief is, that the implicit passenger shares the fate of the unwary mariner. In short, so it is: the most
 irrational

irrational of all proceedings pass for the utmost efforts of human reason; and that philosophy, which pretends to teach us the sublimest truths, serves only to amuse mankind in a middle or low region between truth and error, knowledge and ignorance.

LET us now resume the division of our ideas into such as are natural, and such as are artificial. Those of the first sort are such as God appointed them to be, and are therefore real human ideas. Those of the second are framed by the mind, sometimes under the direction of judgment, and sometimes under the prevalent influence of imagination; and are accordingly sometimes real, and sometimes fantastical. Real ideas are defined, by Mr. LOCKE, to be “such as have a foundation
“ in nature, a conformity with the real being
“ and existence of things, or with their archi-
“ types.” Fantastical ideas then are such as have not this foundation, nor this conformity. Now this definition requires a little commentary to make it more clear, and more exact too, if I mistake not, in one part of it at least.

OUR simple ideas are all real, whether they be ideas of the primary, or of the secondary, qualities of bodies, as some philosophers speak; or, as I had rather say, whether they be such as all body excites in us, like those of extension, solidity, figure, divisibility, and mobility; or whether they be such as particular bodies excite in

us, like those of colors, sounds, smells, tastes, and the whole tribe of tangible qualities. But in our complex ideas of substances, the case is not the same. They must be real as long as they are conformable to the combinations of simple ideas that exist in the substances which cause them. But they are liable to become fantastical, because it is in the power of the mind to form them without any regard to existence, and because their reality neither is, nor can be, founded in any thing but real existence actual or past. The reason of this, which Mr. LOCKE gives where he treats of the reality of human knowledge, is so obvious, that a very little reflection must suggest it to every thinking man, in the present state of philosophy. The real constitutions of substances being entirely unknown, it is as impossible we should know which of the powers, that cause our simple ideas, can co-exist, and which cannot, any other way than by experience, as it is that we should know what these powers are. Whenever we frame ideas, therefore, of substances, without being authorised by existence, these complex ideas must needs be fantastical; since they are composed of simple ideas proceeding from powers whose co-existence is, for aught we know, impossible. As obvious and as decisive as this reason is, it has not hindered men from exercising, even on substances, the power by which they boast themselves able to frame ideas of what may exist, as well as of what does exist, or has existed. Thus PLATO, and others both before
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and since his time, have peopled invisible worlds with so much poetical licence, that one is tempted to think of him, who seems to have been above the lowness of superstition, that he was very little in earnest, and meant rather to amuse, than instruct, an age wherein the marvellous was sure to please.

IT is the abuse and misapplication of this power, that has opened an inexhaustible source of fantastical ideas, and notions, which have been the bane of philosophy, and have infected almost every branch of science. The proofs are innumerable; and the instances that may be produced, are liable neither to objection nor evasion, among men who join candor with knowledge; two qualifications that are inseparable from the love of truth; that promote one another in the discovery of it; that should always go together, and scarce ever do so. Fantastical ideas and notions of every conceivable kind, and even of substances immortal and mortal, celestial and infernal, divine and human; or amphibious beings that partake of the two natures, stare us in the face whenever we look into the histories, traditions, and philosophical remains that are come down to us from the remotest antiquity. The same phaenomena appear in all those of the intervening ages: and, to say the truth, science, or rather that which passed for science, in many of these, was composed of little else. In these latter ages, even since the resurrection of letters,

since

since the improvement of philosophy and of human reason, several ideas and notions, that were principles of imaginary knowledge to the antients; have been preserved in esteem and veneration: as if that, which had no foundation in nature three thousand years ago, could have acquired it since, and ideas which were fantastical in their minds could ripen into reality in ours. They are not the less fantastical neither for having been purged of some circumstantial absurdities, and rendered a little more plausible by softenings and refinements. It must be confessed that, how deficient soever the antient philosophers might be in real, they left scarce any thing new to be invented in imaginary, science. But they left much to be improved: and this task several of the moderns have executed most successfully. We may say of fantastical ideas, in general, what TULLY says of one kind of them, that of prognostications by dreams, at the close of his treatise *On divination*; that the solicitude and fear they cause would have fallen into contempt, if philosophers, who seemed to be perfect masters of reason, had not taken upon them to be protectors of dreams.

BUT these general reflections would be more reasonable after some that are more particular, and that remain to be made. As far as we have gone, we have seen our way, I think, very clearly: and the distinction between real and fantastical ideas of substances is so well established, that they cannot be easily confounded. The distinction

agrees

agrees with one part of Mr. LOCKE's definition ; and is founded in the same reason. But there is another part of this definition, which seems too inaccurately expressed in the chapter of real and fantastical ideas, and quite untrue, as well as a little inconsistent with what he advances elsewhere, according to the explanation of it in the chapter of the reality of knowledge. In the definition it is said that our ideas are real when they have a conformity with their archetypes. In the explanation it is said that " all our complex
 " ideas, except those of substances, being archi-
 " types of the mind's own making, not intended
 " to be copies of any thing, nor referred to the
 " existence of any thing, as to their originals,
 " cannot want any conformity necessary to real
 " knowledge." Conformity with what ? With themselves ? That meaning is too absurd to be supposed. With other ideas of what exists, or has existed ? That cannot be intended neither ; for these ideas are " not copies of any thing, nor
 " refer to the existence of any thing as to their
 " originals." It remains, therefore, that we understand no conformity whatsoever necessary to make these ideas real, when it is said that they want not any that is necessary to make them so. Now this proposition I think absolutely untrue. There is a conformity in the strict sense of the word, tho of another kind, as necessary to make these ideas real, as the conformity proper to our ideas of substances is necessary to make them real : and all the complex ideas here spoken of are real

or fantastical, as they have or have not this conformity. Thus it will appear, if we do not suffer the word archetype to perplex our thoughts. If all our complex ideas, except those of substances, are archetypes, they must be applicable, and properly and really applicable, to something: for it is at least as fantastical to frame an archetype applicable to nothing that is really typified by it, as to frame the idea of a substance that can be referred to no real existence as to the archetype of it. When archetypes are made by nature, they determine our ideas, as God, the author of nature, has appointed that they should be determined: and the knowledge we acquire by them is real knowledge for us and to all human purposes, whether these ideas do really resemble their archetypes, or not; according to what has been inculcated already, and perhaps more than once. But when complex ideas and notions are framed by the mind to serve as archetypes in it, they must be framed with a conformity to the same nature that determines the others, or they will be fantastical and produce no knowledge, or such as is fantastical like themselves. I do not say that they must be framed so as to contain nothing which implies contradiction. They have been so framed, indeed, as to imply it on many occasions, by antient and modern sages and saints. But we will suppose that they are so no longer: and on that supposition we say that even this is not sufficient, and that all these ideas must have a closer conformity, than that of bare possibility,

to what we know of the existence of things corporeal or intellectual. Universal possibility is the range of divine; particular actuality past or present, and that in a very confined system, of human intellect.

THE ideas we speak of, it is said, are neither “intended to be copies of any thing, nor referred to the existence of any thing as to their originals.” If this was absolutely true, all such ideas would be archetypes in a strict sense, and could be conceived no otherwise. But it is not absolutely true. It is rather a definition of fantastical, than of real, ideas. Our most complex ideas and notions, which combine in the greatest variety modes and relations, as well as simple ideas, are often copies; they are often referred to existences, to particular existences, as to their originals: and when they are not so, when they are put together in the mind as the mind never perceived them put together in existence, tho this may be said to be done “by the free choice of the mind, and without considering any connection they have in nature;” yet are they not, when they are real, quite arbitrary, nor quite void of reference to existence. Mr. LOCKE shall prove this for me. He says that one of the ways, by which we get these complex ideas of mixed modes, is experience and observation of things themselves. In all these instances then, the complex idea is derived from existence, and is a copy first, tho it becomes an archetype afterwards. It is so in the example he
brings,

brings, in that of seeing two men wrestle. It is so in a multitude of others, in all those that are real and of real use. Murder is as old as human race, and theft as property. Shall we believe that men were lawgivers and moralists, before they were spectators of the actions of one another? Invention is another of the ways he mentions, in which, by a voluntary act of the mind, several simple ideas are put together in it, and the archetype precedes existence. But even in these cases, the combinations of ideas, ascribed to the invention of the mind, are suggested to it by other combinations, as it would be easy to shew in the example brought of printing: and tho' the mind cannot be said to copy, when it has no particular existence in view, yet must it be allowed to imitate, when it has in view not only it's simple ideas, but divers combinations of them, derived immediately or remotely from what exists, or has existed, in the system of nature: and these it has in view always when the complex ideas and notions we frame are not purely fantastical. Those of parricide and sacrilege were framed perhaps by some men, for they were not by all, before either of these crimes had been committed; and so they might, without doing much honor to the boasted power of knowing *à priori* and independently of existence. The relation of father and son is added to the complex idea of murder in one: and as soon as one order of men and their property came to be reputed sacred, it required no superior intelligence to foresee that they might be robbed as well

well as other men. But the mathematician never saw a circle mathematically true, such as he describes, and whose properties he considers : neither did TULLY ever see such an image of virtue as he proposes, and whose principles and effects are explained in his Offices. Be it so. But the mathematician, who considers the properties of a circle, a square, or a rectangle, had observed the various terminations of extension before he turned mathematician : and the moralist had observed wherein the good and evil of society consists, and had framed, on what he observed, ideas and notions concerning virtue and vice, and the perfection of human nature, before he writ of ethics. The ideas and notions of both, to be productive of real knowledge, must be derived from existence, and referred back again to it.

ACCORDING to Mr. LOCKE, our knowledge
 “ concerning these ideas is real, and reaches things
 “ themselves ; because we intend things no farther,
 “ than as they are conformable to our ideas.”
 These ideas then, to be real, must reach things themselves ; that is, they must be rightly abstracted from things that exist, and they must be applied to things no farther, than things are conformable to them. This now coincides enough with the opinion I advance. Our ideas are fantastical, and our knowledge imaginary, when the former are framed without a sufficient conformity to existence, and when they are applied to things to which they are not applicable ; for as ideas and
 notions

notions may be void of all reality in themselves, so may they become fantastical by a fantastical application.

THE mistake about these complex ideas carries much resemblance to that which Mr. LOCKE exposes so justly about maxims or axioms. These have been reputed the principles of science; whereas they are in truth the result of it, when they are evident: and cannot pass therefore with any propriety for the *praecognita* and *praeconcessa*, for which they have been vended in the schools. Just so the complex ideas we speak of are called archetypes; and men infatuate one another enough to imagine that there is a superior intellectual region, as it were, a region of ideas, that are the principles of general scientific knowledge, from whence particular knowledge is to be deduced, and by which it is to be controlled. Whereas in truth all our ideas and notions are fantastical, as all our maxims are false, when they are not founded in particular knowledge; when they are carried further than evidence, the criterion of truth, accompanies them; and, above all, when they are repugnant, as philosophical and theological ideas and notions frequently are, to this very evidence and to our knowledge of things as they exist.

SOMETHING has been said concerning ideas and notions in a former part of this essay, that may seem to render what is here said about such as are
fantastical

fantastical the less necessary. But having occasion to speak of these, I chuse rather to run the risque of repetition (usefully, I hope, to the great end of fixing the bounds of real knowledge) than not to bring into a fuller view this intellectual artifice, which has served to build up so much imaginary knowledge at the expence of neglecting the other, and of corrupting it in all it's parts. It was by the means of fantastical ideas and notions that chemistry was turned into alchemy; astronomy into judicial astrology; physics, by which I understand the contemplation of mind as well as body, into theurgic and natural magic; and the religion of nature into various systems of plain but almost blasphemous doctrines, of absurd mysteries and superstitious rites. All these effects proceeded from the vain philosophy of men more intent to imagine what may be, than to observe what is: and if we add to these such as have proceeded from fantastical notions of abstraction, upon which the tedious and impertinent subtilities of ontology are founded, we shall have before us very nearly the sum of all that learned error, into which men have fallen by reasoning on fantastical ideas and notions instead of real: as if it was below the majesty of the human mind to seek for reality and truth out of itself; and as if our senses were given us only to excite our intellect, and not to inform it by experiment and observation.

THE principal occasions, on which the mind exercises the artifice spoken of in framing ideas

that are fantastical, may be reduced to these three. Philosophers invent hypothetical ideas and notions in order to erect on them such systems as cannot be erected on real ideas and notions, that is, on ideas and notions that have a known foundation in nature. They treat of ideas and notions that are incomplete and inadequate, as if they were complete and adequate. They dogmatise on obscure and confused ideas and notions, as if they were clear and distinct. Let us produce in this essay one example at least of the first. Your patience and mine too may be worn out by that time: and the examples omitted now may be taken up at some other.

SECTION VIII.

I MIGHT have reckoned hypotheses among those arts of the mind that degenerate into artifice; for such they have been often. The greatest part of antient philosophy, almost all except ethics, was nothing else: and, to mention no other among the moderns, DES CARTES had much to answer for of this kind. His great reputation put hypotheses into fashion; and natural philosophy became a sort of physical romance. But this manner of imposing imaginary for real knowledge is over, whilst one more absurd remains in credit: and, whilst naturalists can slide no longer from art into artifice without being detected, metaphysicians set out in artifice; and they succeed. An hypothesis in physics can make it's way now no
faster

faster, nor no further, than experience countenances and supports it. But in metaphysics it is otherwise. There hypotheses stand alone: they stand in the place of experimental knowledge; are not so much as deduced from it by a fair analogy, but are made independently of, and frequently in direct contradiction to, it.

THEY who plead for hypotheses urge, not very unreasonably, that they may be of some use in the investigation of truth, whilst they are employed; and that they may serve to the same purpose, even when they are discovered to be false and are laid aside: as men who have missed their way give some instruction to others to find it. Besides which, they do not so much as pretend that any hypothesis ought to be maintained, if a single phaenomenon stands in direct opposition to it. I do not agree to this plea in the whole, but to the latter part of it entirely. By that, the criterion of hypotheses is established by the favorers of them: we take it as they give it; and this criterion in the physical world is real actual existence. The copernican system itself stands on no other bottom. The newtonian system of attraction stands on the same: and this bottom is grown so broad and so firm, that neither the jokes of foreign wits, nor the cavils of foreign philosophers, can shake it as far as sensible bodies and sensible distances are concerned. But, at the same time, they who presume to suppose it equally certain where insensible bodies, the *minima naturae*, and

insensible distances, are concerned, as some of our countrymen have done, presume too much; this application of it not having been yet enough confirmed: and they have been accordingly justly censured for raising too hastily an hypothesis into a system. With such precautions, and under such restrictions, hypotheses can do no hurt, nor serve to propagate error. But then it is surely a ridiculous scene to observe how confidently some metaphysical philosophers, who shew themselves extremely scrupulous about such hypotheses as I have mentioned, either admit on the authority of others, or publish on their own, not barely as hypotheses but as demonstrations, the wildest notions imaginable; notions, that are founded in nothing known nor knowable, and that can be tried, therefore, by no criterion whatever.

I HAVE spoken of physics and metaphysics sometimes in the usual style; but I am far from altering the opinion I have already owned, and cannot, therefore, acquiesce to the pretensions of those, who, under the umbrage of a supposed science that considers general natures, essences, being in the abstract, and spirit or immaterial substance, would place themselves in a rank of philosophical precedence above those, who consider corporeal nature in the several phaenomena, and would controul, what they neglect, particular experimental knowledge. As to the ontosophists, they are the lineal descendants of the schoolmen; and they deal, like their progenitors, in little else than hard
words

words, and such abstract ideas and notions, as render our knowledge neither more distinct nor more extensive, but serve to perplex it and to envelope in their obscurity what is in itself very plain. I shall neglect them therefore, as the rest even of the learned world appears to do. The example I am to produce, under this head of hypothetical ideas and notions, shall be taken from those philosophers who usurp and appropriate to themselves, as if it were their peculiar province, the doctrine of spirits and spiritual things; whereas pneumatics, taken in this sense, if they are any thing, are as truly objects of physics, as pneumatics taken, in a more proper sense, for that branch of natural philosophy whose object is the air we breathe. This distinction, however, has been established: and by the help of it, whilst naturalists are not at liberty to make hypotheses that are not founded in some degree of experimental knowledge, and that are not liable to be controlled by it in all their parts and in all their progress, metaphysicians are left at liberty to frame as many fantastical systems as they please on ideas and notions purely hypothetical, without any regard to this foundation, or this controul, as we observed just now.

As soon as men began to reflect on their own nature, and on that of all the bodies which surrounded them, they could not fail to observe solidity, extension, figure, divisibility, and mobility, the most apparent properties of body or matter. As little could they fail to observe the operations

of their own minds, in which they had the perceptions of these ideas; and to frame ideas of thought, and of the several modes of thinking, particularly of that which has the power of beginning motion. None of these ideas were contained in their ideas of body, nor necessarily connected with them: and that of a power to begin motion, which they observed to be in the whole animal kind, and which they knew consciously to be the effect of thought, must strike them as a superior property to that of mobility, with which they had occasion to compare it every instant. Taking it for granted, then, that they knew, as soon as they began to philosophise, all the perceivable properties of matter, they concluded that such things, as could not be accounted for by these, were to be accounted for by the properties of some unperceivable or unperceived matter, or else by the properties of some other substance. The first assumption was that of the most antient philosophers: the other was made much later, at least it was much later that extended and non-extended substance were plainly contradistinguished.

THUS the distinction of body and soul came to be made and established among almost all the philosophers. It would be tedious even to run over the confused notions that were entertained about soul. It was fire; but a divine fire to some: it was air to others: a fifth element to others, “*quintam quandam naturam* *,” and

* *Tusc. quaest.*

therefore

therefore ARISTOTLE called it by a new name, entelekia, to signify a certain continued and perpetual motion. “ Sic ipsum animum entelekian “ appellat novo nomine, quasi quamdam continua- “ tam motionem et perennem*.” In a word, it was something, they knew not what, which they thought fit to call breath or spirit, for a reason obvious enough : and the notion of it answered philosophical purposes in metaphysics, just as well as that of occult qualities answered them in physics. A vast profusion of souls followed. They were created by the exorbitant power of hypothesis as fast and as often as they were wanted. There was an universal soul common to the whole system of corporeal being, or a soul of the world ; for the world was, in the imagination of some of the antients, a great animal, and consisted, like the animals it contains, of a body and a soul. There were particular souls for celestial and terrestrial bodies, a soul of the sun, a soul of every star and planet, a vegetative soul for plants, a sensitive soul for other animals ; and for man there was an ample provision of three, of the two last and of a rational soul, which was a participation of the divine mind, or an emanation from it, or an infusion out of it.

IF we descend from those times to our own, we shall find the same hypothesis maintained with a little less confusion of opinions, in more precise and uniform terms at least, but still as unintel-

* Tusc. quaest.

ligibly as ever. SPINOZA, indeed, acknowledged but one substance, and that matter; as absurdly as others have acknowledged but one substance, and that spirit. On the principle of the former, the vegetative, the sensitive, and even the rational, soul can be nothing else than matter differently fermented and subtilised in systems of it differently organised; for which opinion whatever is said, should be said, and might be said, without admitting the principle of SPINOZA in its full extent; without supposing God a material being, from whence the most absurd consequences would follow; and without denying his existence, which would imply, if that be possible, more. But the general run of opinion assumes the soul to be a spiritual substance, and a spiritual substance to be unextended, indivisible, and therefore immortal. Now this assumption helps the hypothesis so little, that the extravagancies fancy builds on it are as great, and the difficulties opposed to it perhaps greater, than when the soul was deemed material by some christian, as well as pagan, philosophers; for that it was so your learned friends will, I am sure, confess. Many notions, extravagant and fantastical to the utmost, might be cited. Can there be any thing more extravagant, or that implies contradiction more grossly, than to divide this indivisible substance, like the mystic divines, who had a precedent for it in that mystic philosopher PLATO, into an upper and lower part? The good madmen mean well, no doubt: but there is reason to suspect that, among their disciples, the
lower

lower part of the soul and the body are much defiled by imagination, and sensation too, whilst the purity of the upper part, where the understanding and the will reside, preserves the conscience in a most heavenly tranquillity.

SHOULD you object to this instance of extravagant opinions, built on the hypothesis of the soul considered as a simple un-extended being united to the body, because it is taken from those of madmen who are capable of framing the most extravagant and falsest notions on the most reasonable and evident principles; let us lay aside all other instances, and produce, as the most extravagant of all, that wherein every man who deals in theology, mad or sober, concurs; that opinion for the sake of which this hypothesis of the soul was invented, and which is as little reconcileable to the wisdom of God and to the moral ideas of justice and goodness, as thought is to all the properties that we know of matter. The human soul then, which participates of the divine nature by emanation, by infusion, or by some other incomprehensible act, on account of which alone we are said to be made after the image of God, is confined to the human body, and is diffused through the whole to inform and to govern; or has a principal residence, like the seat of empire, in the pineal gland, or in that part of the brain where I have read that there is a sort of nervous juice, the source of animal spirits, of a most fragrant smell; and which puts me in mind of the
 perfume

perfume that the inspiring divinity spread in the temples where oracles were delivered to the Pagans. Whilst the soul is thus immersed in matter, the lustre of it is obscured by this removal from it's divine original. The force and energy of it is clogged; nay it seems since the fall to contract an inclination to corporeity, and to assimilate in some sort with this inferior nature, as if they were homogeneous. Our first parents received from sensible objects, after their fall, such strong impressions and such deep traces in their brains, “*de si grands vestiges, et des traces si profondes**.” that they may well have communicated these to the brains of all their descendants. Now the thoughts of the soul being necessarily conformable to the traces that are in the brain, it is, you see, demonstrated most metaphysically, that in this respect the soul is dependent on the body, and it's thoughts and inclinations on the thoughts and inclinations of those who begot the body it inhabits, in a perpetual gradation of generations down from ADAM and EVE. Thus the soul, that spiritual monarch of the human system, is subject not only to a limitation of power, but to a determination to govern ill. The soul does not remain long indeed in this state, because the system it governs is soon dissolved by death. But the short time it remains in it decides of it's state for eternity. It seems to be delivered from the body, and to be restored to the full force of it's nature, and to the free exer-

* MALB. lib. ii. c. 7.

cise of it's powers, in order only to suffer, for the most part, during an eternity, for what it did in the government of the body when it enjoyed neither during a moment. As soon as philosophers and divines are able to reconcile all this to their ideas of the wisdom, justice, and goodness of God, the hypothesis will be no longer necessary, at least to the former; since they will not find it at all more difficult to reconcile thought to their ideas of the properties of matter.

THE task would be endless, and I shall neither give myself, nor you, the trouble to enumerate more of the fantastical ideas, notions, and opinions, that have been raised on this hypothesis, of a simple immaterial active being, which understands and wills, or by which we are made able to understand and will. I make this distinction, because philosophers who set out from the same goal, take very different ways in the pursuit of ideas equally fantastical. Some of them banish out of the whole extent of Being, every thing, except ideas and spirit, whereof we can have no idea, and which is only known by consciousness. Nothing in heaven nor earth, none of those bodies which we repute to be sensible objects have any existence out of some mind or other. They may exist, eternally, and be always actually present in an eternal spirit; but they have besides this no existence, except one that is occasionally communicated. They exist in created spirits, when they are perceived; and they cease to exist, when they are not perceived there. Other philosophers, again,
 declare

declare the existence of body hard to be proved ; whilst that of spirit, under this notion of it, needs no proof according to them. They pretend to have a knowledge of immaterial spirit that excludes all doubt, and they assume hypothetically that there is such an entity as body : which is the very reverse, I presume, of the most evident dictates of common sense. But however, on this bold assumption that there is such a being as body, they proceed to account for the union of the soul with body, on one hand, and with God on the other ; and so multiplying hypothetical ideas one on another, they open a fantastical scene of science, wherein every man's imagination (for every man has the same right to imagine) is his sole guide, and wherein it is plain from their extravagant writings that they have, and from the nature of the thing that they can have, no other guide.

DES CARTES, who might not so much as dream perhaps that philosophers would set themselves in good earnest to banish body out of the universe, and the universe with it, affirmed two substances ; one, whose essence is extension, and to which all the modifications of extension belong ; and one, whose essence is thought, and to which all the modifications of thinking belong. Now both these definitions are so evidently false, that every man may know them to be so, who considers them without philosophical prejudice, of all prejudices the strongest. How strong it is, ap-
 pears

pears in this very instance ; for when DES CARTES affirmed extension alone to be the essence of body, he was led by his philosophical prejudices to affirm an identical proposition and to beg a question. He affirmed that body is body, for he supposed the plenum. It is true we cannot separate body in our ideas from extension, neither can we conceive body exclusively of solidity. But we can separate extension from solidity in our ideas ; and therefore, as Mr. LOCKE observes, if it be a good argument “ that spirit is different “ from body, because thinking includes not the “ idea of extension in it ; space, or extension “ alone is not body, because it includes not the “ idea of solidity in it.” In short, they are so evidently distinct ideas, that he, who confounds them in words, must discern their difference in his understanding, whether he will or no. The difference is so evident, that if the plenum was admitted, and pure space rejected, yet still the definition of the Cartesians would be imperfect ; for the essence of body throughout this imaginary plenum could not be extension alone. Solidity could not be banished out of it, but extension would continue to include solidity, as solidity is allowed to include extension ; and extension and solidity would be two distinct ideas, but two essential properties of the same substance still.

THE definition of thinking substance is not truer than this of extended substance, and the falsity of it is obvious to constant experience. That

we live, and move, and think according to certain human modes of thinking, and that there must be something in the constitution of our system of being, beyond the known properties of matter, to produce such phaenomena as these, are undeniable truths. But here certainty ends: what that something is, we know not: and surely it is time we should be convinced that we cannot know it. Thankfulness and modesty would become us better, than philosophical and theological assurance: thankfulness, when we look up to the great Author of all natures, for raising ours, either in kind or in degree, above that of any other animal; and modesty, when we look down on ourselves, to avow our ignorance. Instead of this, vanity and presumption determine philosophers to conclude, that, since they cannot account for the phaenomena of the mind by what they know very superficially of solid extended substance, this mind must be some other substance. On this foundation they reason admirably well *à priori*, and prove with much plausibility that this mind, this soul, this spirit, is not material, and is immortal. In the same manner they proceed, and well they may, to prove any thing that metaphysics and theology want to have proved. But this foundation is an assumption that cannot stand an examination *à posteriori*, and that, if it could stand it, would carry us but one step forward in knowledge; for if nothing which is an object of real knowledge could be opposed to the immateriality and immortality of this substance, the insuperable difficulty

difficulty of accounting for the action of mind on body, and of body on mind, that are reciprocally and in their turns both active and passive, would stop our philosophical enquiries. The divine alone would have made a step sufficient for his purpose. Thus do the reputed masters of human reason advance propositions as demonstrated truths, which have not even the merit of a tolerable hypothesis. But it is not enough to affirm, like them: I must prove what I say by appealing to that criterion of truth, from which there lies no appeal, to clear and determinate ideas duly abstracted from the phaenomena of nature, and to an intuitive knowledge of their agreement or disagreement. Now this, I think, it will not be hard to do.

I do not pretend to deny the possible existence of spiritual, that is, according to the present notion, of immaterial, beings. I have no more right to deny that there are such, than the persons just mentioned have to affirm it. God alone, the author of all beings, knows how many different kinds of substances, how many various sorts of beings, his omnipotent will has made to exist. But this I say, that we have not the same proof of the existence of unextended and spiritual, as we have of extended and solid, substance. We have not the same proof, because we have not the same knowledge on which to ground any. We guess probably, if you please, from what we observe of our own minds, that one exists; but we know as certainly, as God has given us the means

means of knowing outward objects, that the other exists. The ideas we receive by reflection are in this case and in this respect equivocal: they do not reach up to the apparent nature of the substance that causes them. But the ideas we receive from sensation are not so; they do reach up to the apparent nature of the substance that causes them. The former do not so much as constitute what Mr. LOCKE calls a nominal essence: the latter do. There are many questions to be asked, no doubt, concerning body, which it is impossible to answer, as well as concerning spirit; because we are made incapable of knowing the real essence of any substance: and if there was no other difference, we might as well affirm the existence of immaterial, as of material, substance. But there is another difference; and it is not enough to have hinted it, I must explain it.

MR. LOCKE takes much pains to shew that the notion of spirit involves no more difficulty nor obscurity in it, than that of body*: and yet, I think, I can make him prove the contrary for me, and shew, against his own assertion, that we have “more and clearer primary ideas belonging to body, than we have belonging to immaterial spirit.” Primary ideas are the ideas of such qualities as exist always in the substance to which they belong, whether they are perceived or not. They are, therefore, essential to it, and

* Essay, lib. ii. c. 23.

productive, by their operations, of those secondary qualities which may be said only to exist in our perceptions of them. Of the first sort are solidity and extension, to mention no others, the primary qualities, and in our ideas the essence of matter, of which we can frame no conception exclusively of them. These notions I have taken from Mr. LOCKE : and they lead me to ask what the primary ideas are of spirit or immaterial substance ? The primary idea or the essence of it is thought : as body is the extended, this is the thinking substance, says DES CARTES. Thought then, actual thought, is the essence of the soul or spirit ; and by consequence so inseparable from it, that we cannot conceive the soul or spirit to exist separately from, or exclusively of, thought. But this I know to be untrue : and I may well own, since LOCKE has owned the same, that I have “ one of those dull souls that does not “ perceive itself always to contemplate ideas.” I distinguish very well between being asleep and being awake. I continue to live, but not to think, during the soundest sleep ; and the faculties of my soul and body awake together. Thus evidently do I know that thought is no more the essence of soul, than motion of body : and if thought is not so, I ask what is ?

BODY is capable of receiving and communicating motion by impulse ; but without solidity and extension it would be capable of neither. Thought, not being the essence of the soul, can

be nothing but an action of it ; and thus far answers motion in body. But what is it then which answers solidity and extension, and is the primary quality of spirit ? Is it immateriality ? Is it the negation of material essence ? No man will, I presume, give so silly an answer. At least no man who does, must expect a reply. He who affirms that there is in the composition of the human system a substance to which cogitability belongs, as well as a substance to which mobility belongs, must have ideas of the first of these substances prior in the order of nature to that of its cogitability, as he has ideas of the second prior in the same order to that of its mobility ; or he must talk at random, and affirm what he does not know. His supposed distinct substance must sink into nothing, or be confounded with the other : for it will cost a reasonable mind much less to assume that a substance known by some of its properties may have others that are unknown, and may be capable, in various systems, of operations quite inconceivable by us, according to the designs of infinite wisdom ; than to assume that there is a substance, concerning which men do not pretend to know what it is, but merely what it is not.

It may be said, LOCKE has said it, that we know no more of the solid, than of the thinking, thing ; nor how we are extended, than how we think. But the comparison is improper, and unfair. It is improper, because it compares the
operation

operation of an assumed substance, with the known properties of a real substance. It is unfair, because it slides over and evades the objection that we have not a positive idea of any one primary property of spirit, or at least that if cogitability be such a primary quality, this definition of the soul is no better than that of a moveable substance would be, if it was given as the full definition of body. But, besides, tho' the cohesion of the solid particles of body be not sufficiently accounted for by the pressure of the air, or of any ambient fluid; and tho' that seeming property of matter, which is called for want of a better name attraction, be not yet perhaps enough established; yet we have a very clear idea of cohesion in it's effects, by which insensible atoms are so united and held together, that the bodies they compose become sensible to us, and give us the ideas of solidity and extension. Have we any knowledge proportionable to this, as imperfect as it is, of soul under the notion of an immaterial spirit? It cannot be said that we have. Upon the whole, therefore, we may conclude without presumption, against two of the greatest men of their age, against DES CARTES, that thinking is not the essence of the soul; and, against LOCKE, that a solid extended substance is not quite so hard to be conceived as a thinking immaterial one.

BUT LOCKE, much less dogmatical than DES
 CARTES, how far soever he favored the reigning

ing opinion, or thought it necessary for him to keep measures with those who support it, was far from asserting the immateriality of the soul. He found inducements of probability to this and to the contrary opinion; certainty of demonstration for neither. When he is to shew that our knowledge is narrower and more confined, than our ideas*, he brings the instance of these two, of matter and thinking, and of the impossibility of knowing, by the contemplation of them, or by any other way, except by revelation, whether that which thinks in us be not material. He sees “no contradiction in it, that
 “the first eternal thinking Being should, if he
 “pleased, give to certain systems of created
 “senseless matter, put together as he thinks fit,
 “some degrees of sense, perception, and thought.” He endeavours to guard against theological choler, by urging “that the great ends of morality
 “and religion are well enough secured without
 “philosophical proofs of the soul’s immateri-
 “ality, since it is evident that he who made us
 “——sensible, intelligent beings can,” and he adds, “will, restore us to the like state of sensi-
 “bility in another world.” But all this precaution could not save him from the joint attacks of philosophers and of divines, not very orthodox on other points. They † have insisted, since thought is not the essence of matter, nor an attribute of matter neither, in as much as it does not flow necessarily from that essence, it can-

* Essay, lib. iv. c. 3. † LEIBNITZ, WOLLASTON, &c.

not have been communicated nor superadded, even by omnipotence, to any system of matter; because essences are unchangeable, and attributes uncommunicable: so that matter cannot be made to think. The moment any system begins to think, it ceases to be material: and that which was matter becomes a substance of another kind. In fine, that it is nonsense to assert that God
 “ can * superadd a faculty of thinking to inco-
 “ gitativity, of acting freely to necessity, and so
 “ on †.” It is hard to say, whether in these

* Rel. of nature delineated, §. 9.

† SINCE it has been observed on this occasion, in how trifling a manner the pretended masters of abstract reasoning subject the reality of things to words; it may not be improper to observe another fallacy that runs through all their discourses, concerning the thinking substance.

WHEN we know with certainty that any being exists, many doubts may be raised, we may endeavour to solve them by hypotheses, and we may endeavour it in vain: but still they will be no more than difficulties, to the solution of which our knowledge does not extend. The known truth will remain unshaken. On the other hand, when we assume on probable arguments that any being exists, the doubts and difficulties that arise are real objections; because they are probable arguments opposed to probable arguments, and the whole being hypothesis, the whole may be shaken.

THEISTS demonstrate the existence of one supreme, infinite, all-perfect Being. Atheists cavil; and, tho they cannot unravel the demonstration, they oppose doubts and difficulties: as if probable arguments, supposing these to be such, could prevail against demonstration. Their proceeding is absurd: and reason is evidently on the side of the theist. But now, are they, who assert a distinct thinking substance united in the human system to a material unthinking substance, in the case of the theists? Are they, who deny this, in the case of the

and other common-place reasonings on the same subject, there is more presumption, or trifling

atheists? Certainly not. The former, except a few who are in the height of a metaphysical delirium, do not pretend that they can demonstrate by reason what they maintain, and yet they argue as if they had made this demonstration. This is the fallacy I mean: and I need not go far to seek an instance of it, since I find one in the Religion of nature delineated, that follows the passage I have quoted.

THIS solemn author then, in his third argument for the immortality of the soul, drops the question, whether it be immaterial or not, on which he had pronounced so dogmatically, a few pages before, and asks, only by way of objection, “whether that soul, be it what it will, which ceases to think when the body is not fitly disposed, can think at all when the body is quite dissolved?” Now to this question he proposes to give an answer, of which he speaks modestly and diffidently, and yet presumes it may be turned “even into an argument for the immortality of the soul.”

THIS answer comes out to be nothing better than a string of suppositions. He, who says that the power of thinking is a faculty, superadded by the Creator to certain systems of matter in various degrees and proportions, assumes indeed, but he assumes conformably to the phaenomena. He, who says that thought is the essence of a distinct substance united to certain systems of matter, because he cannot conceive how matter can be made capable of thinking even by omnipotence, assumes without any support from the phaenomena, nay even in an apparent contradiction to them. Every instance, therefore, of this contradiction is a good argument in favor of the former, and against the latter, opinion. No matter. The pneumatic philosopher proceeds as if his first proposition was proved, and he had only a few difficulties to remove, rather than objections to refute, as if his doctrine wanted only to be explained. He explains it no more, than he invented it, on the foundation of that which actually is, but on what he thinks may be: and so he may argue on, if he finds men idle enough to dispute much with him, as long as his imagination can supply fantastical ideas and notions.

and

and playing with words in a solemn dogmatical tone. They amount to no more than this. We

THE very question, whether “ the soul which ceases to think when the body is not fitly disposed, can think at all when the body is quite dissolved,” supposes that there is a soul, that is, a distinct substance, united to it, tho this neither has been, nor can be, proved. The answer sets out by supposing that this distinct substance is a limited being; limited, obstructed, clogged by the body. Even here we might interrupt this licentious maker of hypotheses, and insist that it is not congruous to reason to assume that a substance, which is immaterial according to him, which has none above it except the substance of God himself, according to St. AUSTIN, and by which we are made after the image of God, according to all those who maintain the same doctrine, (for he must not be suffered to slide over any of his, or their extravagant assertions) is limited, obstructed, clogged by that material substance, by which we are allied to the beasts of the field, and made after the image of other animals.

BUT to pass by this, the soul then is “ limited, it’s activity and faculties being more obstructed and clogged at one time, than another, and most of all in sleep, or a deliquium.” The eyes, the two windows of it’s prison, are shut, and the nerves which receive the impressions of outward objects, and convey sensations to the soul, are benumbed. This branch of knowledge is cut off, therefore, in such circumstances; and thought cannot be exercised on objects that do not present themselves to the soul. But why then is it not exercised on the ideas and notions that the soul is possessed of already, in the contemplation of which it has no need of sense; so much otherwise, that detached from sense, and wrapped in pure intellect, the soul meditates, and reasons with greater intenseness and clearness about these abstract ideas and notions?

If you ask this question, you will be answered by other suppositions. You will be told, that the use of words is necessary, even in abstract meditation, that this silent language depends on memory, and that memory depends on certain tracks which are made on the brain. You will be told that these tracks are the characters of that book wherein the soul must

metaphysicians and ontosophists have fixed the essence of matter. It can be no other than it is

must read to think in this manner ; and that when the characters are overcast by vapors, or any other way darkened, the soul can read them no more till the cloud is dispelled. You may object that thinking cannot be, on this hypothesis, the essence of the soul, or that the soul must cease to be what it is every time we fall into sound sleep, or faint entirely into a deliquium ; and return to be what it was before, every time we awake or come out of the deliquium ; which differs little from assuming a perpetual creation of souls every twenty-four hours at least. There is something so very ridiculous in this notion, that I should be ashamed to mention it, if it did not follow necessarily that of a substance whose essence is thought, and who does not always think, and if it was not of use to shew in every instance, as it occurs, the monstrous absurdities in which the reasonings of these metaphysicians are apt to terminate.

THE metaphysician we have to deal with here screens himself from the imputation of this absurdity, as well as he can by a change of terms. He asserts only that the soul preserves a capacity of thinking “ even in those circumstances in which “ it thinks no more than if the body was destroyed :” And from hence he assumes, that “ it may, and will, preserve this “ capacity when the body is destroyed, cut to pieces, or “ mouldered to dust.” He asserts the first on the evidence of the phaenomena. He assumes the last without any possible evidence from them, nay with a strong presumption derived from them against him. Whilst we are alive we preserve the capacity of thinking, I should rather call it the faculty ; just as we preserve the faculty of moving, and other faculties plainly corporeal, subject alike to many impediments and many infirmities of the body in which the faculty of thinking has the largest share, as it might be shewn in various instances, in that of madness particularly. When we are dead, all these faculties are dead with us : and the sole difference that we make in our judgments of the one and the other arises from hence, that we imagine the capacity or faculty of thinking to belong to a substance distinct from the body, concerning which the phaenomena can shew us nothing after death ; and concerning

repre-

represented in our abstract ideas, those eternal natures independent of God himself. If you sup-

which by consequence metaphysicians and divines think themselves at liberty to say whatever they please. You would smile, if you heard any one say, that the man who has preserved the faculty of walking, after having lost and recovered frequently the use of his legs, will for this reason walk eternally. But you hearken very gravely when you hear another say, on as little knowledge, that he will think eternally, because he has preserved the capacity of thinking, after losing it, in the whole or in part, on so many occasions.

How much soever we may deem the thinking and unthinking substance to be distinct in nature, still it will be true that these assumed souls were given to inform bodies, and thereby complete the human system. The system would be too imperfect to answer any conceivable purpose of making it, if either of them was wanting. Without thinking, the body would be unable to begin motion, and to perform many necessary corporeal operations. Without a body, the soul would be unable to acquire the first elements of knowledge, the materials of thought. In short, neither of them could exist, and act, in a state of total separation from the other. WOLLASTON was so sensible of this, that he supposes it, and in order to maintain that the soul does not cease to exist when the body does, notwithstanding this admission, he retails to his readers an old trite chimera of the platonic philosophy, which has been mentioned above. He assumes that the soul has another body besides this which perishes, "some fine vehicle, that dwells with it in the brain, and goes off with it at death." This innermost body, which may be compared to the shirt of the soul, receives impressions from the outward body, which may be compared to it's great coat: and as those impressions of sensible objects are communicated to the shirt, so the shirt communicates them to the soul, who sits enveloped in it in the brain. On the other side, reciprocally, the soul, being thus put into motion, produces motion in the "contiguous spirits and nerves by moving it's own vehicle, and so moves the body." When the great coat is worn out, or destroyed by any accident, the soul flies in it's shirt away into the open fields of heaven,

pose it modified or mixed in any system, so as to be no longer inert and senseless, it is no longer

and thus undressed as it were, the impressions, that were made mediately by the nerves, are made immediately on it: thus it becomes, “ as it were, all eye to visible objects, and all ear to “ audible, and so on.”

I MIGHT have explained this hypothesis further, with Mr. WOLLASTON's help, but my patience would not serve me; tho he thinks it contains nothing impossible, and therefore nothing but what may be. Many things are, he says very truly, by ways which we do not, nor can understand. But then this plea is not to be admitted in every case alike; for if it was, it would go a great way to screen the false theories which philosophers are apt to frame both in physics and metaphysics. A *primum mobile*, an element of fire, were names invented to signify things which have no existence; and such was the word soul, perhaps, in philosophical consideration, if we take it not for a faculty superadded to the human corporeal system, but for a distinct substance united to it, and cooperating with it. But metaphysical figments impose longer than physical, because there is more room for WOLLASTON's plea, and because hypotheses may be heaped on hypotheses with less controul in one, than in the other.

I MIGHT add, that this figment of a soul, if it be a figment, received strength from the superstitious theology of the heathens. Nothing can confirm and consecrate notions, however erroneous, so much: and this philosophical notion was incorporated into theology from the first. Legislators and magistrates, poets and priests, as well as philosophers, enforced it with all their authority: and the event has been a proof of this great truth, that “ the understanding is as subject to the “ impressions of fancy, as to those of vulgar notions *.”

I MIGHT observe further how little it became WOLLASTON, who would not believe that thinking is a faculty added by the Creator to certain systems of matter, because he could not reconcile this opinion to his idea of matter, tho this opinion conformable to all the phaenomena of the mind; how little,

* BACON,

conformable to our ideas: it is therefore no longer matter, such as it came out of the region of possibility into that of actuality; it is another substance, and must be called by another name. God cannot make our ideas of incogitativity to be ideas of thinking, nor our ideas of necessity to be ideas of acting freely. To such reasoners it would be, I think, sufficient to say: Learn that human knowledge is derived from existence; and that to be real, it must be conformable to things as they exist. Conform your ideas, therefore, to them, and pretend no longer to controll or to determine particular existence by abstract notions. As long as matter is senseless and inert, it is not a thinking substance, nor ought to be called so. But when, in any system of it, the essential properties, extension, solidity, &c. are maintained, that system is material still, tho' it become a sensitive plant, a reasoning elephant, or a refining metaphysician. It would be nonsense to assert, what no man does assert, that the idea of incogitativity can be the idea of thinking: but it is nonsense, and something worse than nonsense, to assert what you assert, that God cannot give the faculty of thinking, a faculty in the principle of

I say, it became him, and must become any other man who reasons in the same way, to urge, in defence of all his hypotheses and paradoxes, that many things are by ways which we cannot understand.

BUT I will detain you no longer about such discourse as would convince you; if you heard it at MONRO'S, that the philosopher who held it was a patient of the doctor, not yet perfectly restored to his senses.

it entirely unknown to you, to systems of matter whose essential properties are solidity, extension, &c. not incogitativity. This term of negation can be no more the essence of matter, than that other, immateriality, can be the essence of spirit. Our ideas of solidity and extension do not include the idea of thought, neither do they include that of motion; but they exclude neither: and the arguments you draw from the divisibility of matter against its cogitability, which you deny, might be not ill employed against its mobility, which you admit, as I suppose.

S E C T. IX.

IT has been said that this boasted science about soul or spirit has not the merit even of a good hypothesis, tho it pretends to be demonstrated. You may perhaps begin to think so. But in order to be the more convinced of this, it may not be time mispent to reflect, before we leave the subject, on the sole means we have of acquiring any knowledge of this kind, and to consider how far these means can carry us in the enquiry.

THAT all our knowledge of corporeal substance must be founded in the experience we have of our own, and in the experiments and observations we are able to make on other, bodies, will not be denied in the present state of philosophy. As little can it be denied that all our knowledge of soul or spirit must be founded, to be real, on what every man may know by intuition of his own soul

foul or spirit; for we cannot contemplate other souls, as we can other bodies. Hypotheses may be made about either: but they must be made in both cases under the same restrictions. When they are designed only to amuse the mind with a sort of analogical appearance of probability, and pretend to be nothing more than physical and metaphysical romances, they are surely very innocent, and employ our time better at least than most of our other amusements do: and yet even then they must contain nothing that is absolutely repugnant to the phaenomena. But when they take a more serious air, when they pretend to be founded in some knowledge, and to lead to more; and, above all, when they pretend to be not so much hypotheses, as demonstrated systems; it is not enough that they be barely reconcileable to the phaenomena, the phaenomena must confirm them, or they must be rejected, on what authority soever they come recommended. Authority has been extended very far in theology and philosophy from the time when these names were first assumed, and perhaps long before. PLATO having spoke in that pythagorical rhapsody, the *Timaeus*, about the visible gods, the gods made to be seen, “*qui tales geniti sunt ut cernantur,*” that is, the celestial phaenomena, he proceeds to speak of demons, that is, of invisible spiritual natures: but of these he confesses himself unable to speak on the strength of his parts, or on his own knowledge; for which reason he has recourse to tradition, and to the authority of the antients,

who were born of gods, and knew their parents extremely well. “ Priscis itaque viris in hac re
 “ credendum est, qui diis geniti parentes suos
 “ optime noverint.” These men we must believe, he says, tho the things they have delivered down be not confirmed by conclusive, nor even by probable, reasons, “ licet nec necessariis nec verifimilibus rationibus eorum oratio confirmetur.” On such respectable authority did the divine PLATO vend, to his own and to future ages, all the mysterious nonsense that PYTHAGORAS and he had imported from the egyptian and eastern schools of theology and philosophy. But if this might be borne in a theology that pretends to be revealed, and ought to be submitted to in one that proves itself to be so, it is intolerable in philosophy; for in all the parts of that, in the very first, in natural theology, human reason, that is common sense, is the sole judge; and the greatest doctor has no more right to impose his authority on me, than I have to impose mine on him. I do this justice therefore to PLATO; I do not believe he was in earnest when he set the example: tho I believe that many great divines and metaphysicians have been in earnest when they have followed it.

IF men had consulted the phaenomena of their own minds alone, which can alone afford us any means of acquiring knowledge of spirit or thinking substance, instead of hearkening to such idle traditions, and raising chimeras of their own upon

on those of other men ; if they had proceeded in the analytic method from particulars to generals, as far and no farther than the former justified the latter ; it seems to me that they could scarce have imagined the substance of soul absolutely distinct from that of body ; nor have created an habitual reverence for an opinion so ill founded in appearances. They have pursued another method, which has brought them, after two or three thousand years, to this paradoxical dilemma : they must either maintain the hypothesis of two distinct substances, and explain in some tolerable manner, which they have not yet done, the union and mutual action on one another of unextended and extended beings ; or they must deny the absolute existence of any thing extrinsecal to the mind, and maintain that God did nothing more, when he created the world, than give a relative existence to things ; that is, make objects perceptible to his creatures which had existed eternally in the divine, and acquired then a new existence in the human, mind, but had no other ; that he created finite spirits, in short nothing else, spirits to perceive, but nothing to be perceived, except his eternal ideas ; that there is no material world, but that the intellectual world is made perceivable by us, according to an order that God has established. Was I obliged by the terrors of an inquisition to embrace one of these two hypotheses, I confess freely that I would embrace the last, strange as it is, as the least inconceivable in itself, and the most convenient in its consequences.

But

But the method taken to frame them revolts me against both.

THIS method we find recommended very emphatically in several places, and on several occasions, in the works of PLATO: and I chuse to give it you, or at least some general notion of it, according to the exposition of MARSILIUS FICINUS*, his best interpreter and commentator. First then, of bodies there are several sorts, ethereal, that is, celestial; aërial, such as ghosts wear; and terrestrial, such as we wear during our lives. We cannot have experimental knowledge of the two former; and experiment and observation are not proper means of arriving at knowledge even of the latter. Corporeal objects dim the sight of the soul: to know them we must look off from them, and must not expect to discover any truth concerning them, unless we have recourse to the ideas of things, “*nisi ad ideas confugiamus.*” Of souls, in the next place, it is extremely hard to know the substance in this life, because we perceive it “*sub corporea specie,*” under a corporeal appearance, and are apt to think in a corporeal manner. The surest way therefore to comprehend it, is to proceed by moral purgation, and metaphysical abstraction. “*Ideoque tutissimam rationem ad animam comprehendendam esse tum moralem purgationem tum metaphysicam abstractionem.*” And if all this will not do, some re-

* MARSIL. FIC. Argum. Phaed. et alibi.

velation is necessary, “opus est divino quodam
 “verbo.” One would think, however, that it
 should do; since by intenseness of meditation a
 philosopher may abstract himself from his senses
 and his imagination, according to PLATO, and
 employ his mind wholly about incorporeal na-
 tures and ideas, to which it becomes united by this
 abstraction; and since in this state he alone has
 wisdom and knowledge, tho, being as it were out
 of himself, “extra se positus,” he is laughed at
 by the vulgar as a madman. You smile, per-
 haps; but reflect a little on the systems (so we
 will call them civilly for once) of some modern
 philosophers about body as well as spirit, on their
 method of reasoning, and on the dogmatical lan-
 guage they hold, upon subjects the most remote
 from human apprehension; and you will not
 think that I do them any wrong in comparing
 their manner of philosophising with that of the
 founder of the academy, his mysterious masters
 the Egyptians, or his enthusiastical scholars the
 latter Platonists. Let us then leave those, who
 think themselves able to arrive at superior know-
 ledge by some such methods as these, to be happy
 in their own imaginations; and let us rather pity
 than blame them, when they treat our real tho
 imperfect knowledge as a chimera, and the chi-
 meras of their own brains as real knowledge. But
 then let these purged, these purified, these illumi-
 nated spirits, who have a constant communica-
 tion by ideas with the supreme spirit, allow us,
 who have none of these advantages, nor any con-

ception that they have them, to pursue quietly the acquisition of a little human knowledge by human means.

WE have clear and determinate ideas of what we call body by sensation, and of what we call spirit by reflection: or, to avoid cavil as much as may be without giving up common sense, we have such ideas by sensation as the various powers of that substance, called body, are ordained to produce in us; and we have such ideas by reflection as the inward operations of that which we call spirit, be it substance or faculty, excite in us. We are able to contemplate these ideas naked, if I may say so, and stripped of the dress of words. How far then does the contemplation of these ideas carry us towards knowledge, or how high do we rise by it in the scale of probability? That is the only question which a reasonable man, who is content to know as God has made him capable of knowing, will ask. The answer must be to this effect. Philosophers talk of matter and spirit, as if they had a thorough acquaintance with both, when in truth they know nothing of either beyond a few phaenomena insufficient to frame any hypothesis. The atomical system, which LEUCIPPUS took perhaps from other philosophers, which DEMOCRITUS took from LEUCIPPUS to improve it, and which EPICURUS took from DEMOCRITUS to corrupt it, has been revived with great reason. But yet we must not talk of matter as if we knew it in these first elements or principles

principles of it, and abstractedly from all the forms under which we perceive it. These original particles, in which the nature of it consists, and on which the constitution of it under all its forms depends, are far beyond the reach of any analysis we can make, of any knowledge we can acquire. Whether these particles be uniform and homogeneous, or whether they be of different kinds, different even in substance as well as in size, figure, and other circumstances or accidents, is as much unknown to the proudest dogmatist, as to you or to me. Nay, whether many of these original particles may not be endued with active principles, such, for instance, as cause fermentation in some, and cohesion in all, bodies, is a point that none of them can determine: and yet one need not scruple to say that the affirmative may be assumed on better grounds, than their hypotheses are, notwithstanding the repeated din of inert, senseless, stupid, passive, and similar epithets, which they ring in our ears whenever they speak of body or matter. Their whole discourse, when they go beyond a few apparent properties, whereof we are fitted to have ideas, and which have been already discovered, is one continued petition of principle, and grows as nauseous, tho' not so mortal, as the crambe of JUVENAL.

BODY or matter is compounded and wrought into various systems before it becomes sensible to us. We behold some that are indeed inert, senseless, stupid, and in appearance merely passive.

But we behold others that have vegetative life, juices and spirits that circulate and ferment in them, by which they are nourished and by which they grow. They have not the power of beginning motion; but motion, which is renewed in them after it has entirely ceased, and both by causes as material as themselves, continues in them, and they live, and move, and propagate their species; till their frame is dissolved by age or sickness, or some external violence. We behold others, again, that have animal life, and that go from rest to motion, and from motion to rest, independently of any outward cause that determines such effects by a physical necessity in this case, as we observe to be done in the former. We discover, by the help of microscopes, an immense variety of these animal systems. Where they begin, God alone their creator and ours can tell: and it would be as impertinent to ask this question, as it is to demand what “the degree of fineness, or the alteration in the situation of its parts, is, at which matter may begin to find itself alive and cogitative*?” They who defend so ill their own hypotheses would do well to be less dogmatical and supercilious when they attack those that seem probable to other men. Wherever these animal systems begin, their beginning and the principles of their composition are alike unknown. All we know is that they are, and all we suppose is that they are material beings, to which no Cartesian nor any philosopher,

* Rel. of nature delin. §. 9.

who does not deny the existence of body, will, I presume, object.

As these animal systems come to be more and more sensible to us, and as our means and opportunities of observing them increase, we discover in them, and according to their different species, or even among individuals of the same species, in some more, in others fewer, of the same appearances that denote a power of thinking in us, from the lowest conceivable degrees of it, up to such as are not far, if at all, remote from those in which some men enjoy it. I say some men, because I think it indisputable that the distance between the intellectual faculties of different men is often greater, than that between the same faculties in some men and some other animals.

IF now we are to form a general conclusion from all these concurrent phaenomena, without any further reasoning about them than such as they justify, what must it be? It must be plainly this, that there is in the whole animal kind one intellectual spring, common to every species, but vastly distinguished in it's effects; that tho it appears to be the same spring in all, yet it seems to be differently tempered, and to have more elasticity and force in some, and less in others; and that, besides this, the apparent difference in the constitutions and organizations of animals seems to account for the different determinations of it's motion, and the surprizing variety of it's effects. If the plain man, who has formed these

general conclusions, on particular observations and experiments, should be asked the trite question, Whether he conceives that matter, however figured or moved, subtilised or fermented, can be pleasure or pain, desire or aversion? to answer truly, I think, he must answer, that he cannot conceive matter to be any of these, nor even how a system of matter becomes capable of having any ideas, affections, or passions, any more than he can conceive how a multitude of other phaenomena can be as he perceives evidently that they are: but that he has pushed his enquiry as far as the true means of enquiry are open, that is, as far as the phaenomena can guide him; that he cannot draw any other conclusion from them than this, that all animal systems are material; and that he must content himself with this, unless some other can be drawn from the same phaenomena.

THE philosopher is not so content. If physics will not serve his purpose, metaphysics and theology shall. “Ad ideas confugiendum est;” and since the particular phaenomena of the whole animal system lead to a conclusion he dislikes, he resolves not to be determined by them, but to reason, without regard to them, from his own abstract ideas: and from these he draws a conclusion as inconceivable as that which he rejects. The plain man owns himself unable to explain how material systems think, tho their phaenomena are so many positive proofs that oblige him

him to conclude they have this power. The philosopher decides, negatively, on such proofs as his abstract ideas of matter furnish to him, that no system of matter thinks, that omnipotence cannot any way communicate to it the faculty of thinking; and, positively, that whatever thinks is a simple being, immaterial, indissoluble, and therefore immortal. The plain man has recourse once more to the phaenomena; and objects that we must be reduced, if we receive this hypothesis, to assert that other animals, besides men, have immaterial and immortal souls; or, that no other animal, besides man, has the faculty of thinking. The immaterialist is far from contending for the first: and the materialist cannot admit the latter, in opposition to the phaenomena; in opposition to which no hypothesis is admissible.

THERE seem to be but three ways to get rid of this objection. Each of them has been tried, and each of them is a different hypothesis. By one, this knot and a multitude of others are cut asunder very easily; for it consists in asserting roundly that there is no such thing as material systems, nor matter, nor any existence, out of mind eternal or created, as we have mentioned already. All observations of the phaenomena, which suppose such an existence, are therefore deceptions according to this scheme: and it would be ridiculous to attempt proving that other animals, besides men, think, to one who denies that these animals exist, or even that he and the man who

should dispute with him exist, in the sense in which existence is universally understood.

As these philosophers take body from men, there are others, who not only take thought from the rest of the animal kind, but reduce them to the state of automates or machines. Whether DES CARTES advanced this paradox in good earnest, and really doubted whether other animals had a power of thinking, or not, it is impossible to determine. That he should be in earnest it is hard to conceive; since any reasons of doubt which he might have in this case, would have been reasons of doubt in the case of other men, who may give more, but cannot give more evident, signs of thought than their fellow creatures. But we may persuade ourselves very easily that MALBRANCHE maintained the same paradox in very good earnest; since it has a nearer and a more favorable relation to his own whimsies, and to some theological tenets, than is commonly observed. Thus the same thing, which happens to liars, happens often to men who seek the truth very sincerely, but imagine too lightly that they have found it when they have only made an hypothesis, and that they know things as they are, when they only guess how they may be: one hypothesis wants another to support it, that a third, and so on, till philosophy grows to be, what it has always been, an aggregate of motley systems, partly real and partly fantastical.

THESE

THESE two paradoxes have not maintained much credit in the world. Men continue to be persuaded that there are mountains and rivers, and trees and animals: and I apprehend that this vulgar notion will continue to prevail. Just so they believe still that there is some difference between the parish clock, and the town bull; that the shepherd's dog perceives and wills as really, as the shepherd himself; and that the philosopher's horse knows the way to his stable as well, as the philosopher knows the way to his study. They will not be sufficient, therefore, to remove the plain man's objection: and recourse must be had to the third hypothesis, which compounds matters a little, and is a little more plausible in appearance, but in reality less defensible, than that of DES CARTES. One stands in direct opposition to the phaenomena, but the other contradicts itself. The hypothesis I mean, is that which assumes a rational soul in man alone, and a sensitive soul alone in all other animals.

HE who should have read all that has been written on this subject, from ARISTOTLE down to the author of the Prae-established harmony, and who should have meditated ever so long on these writings, would find it a very hard task to give a full, and an impracticable one to give an intelligible account of what he had found there; so confused, so obscure is this labyrinth of hypotheses. I shall not set my foot far into it; for philosophers, according to their usual practice, have reason-

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soned and disputed in this case to no other purpose, than to render diffuse and intricate, what lies in the narrowest compass, and has really no difficulty in it, if we know where to stop.

IN order to avoid that paradox, which some at least of the Stoicians held, and which GOMEZ PEREYRA and DES CARTES renewed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; and to maintain at the same time the superiority of the human nature, not only in degree but in kind too, this notion of a sensitive soul has been advanced, or rather continued and enforced; for it descends to us from the same springs from which so many other absurdities have flowed. The distinction between souls, and images of souls, “*animae et animarum simulacra,*” might lead to it. But there are other passages in PLATO, that favor it more directly. ARISTOTLE spoke less figuratively and more clearly on the subject, for he bestowed sensation, memory, and the passions on other animals, and reason on man exclusively. On this principle the schoolmen and all the Peripateticians have proceeded: and it is at this hour the reigning opinion among sound divines. There cannot be, however, a more unsound doctrine, if extreme absurdity can render it so; for either they, who maintain it, suppose the sensitive soul to be a middle being between body and spirit, or they do not. If they suppose it so, they suppose it to be neither extended nor unextended, neither material nor immaterial; and we have no idea
of

of any other substance. If they do not suppose it to be so, they affirm, without knowing it, what they mean to deny; for they must admit (unless philosophers have a right to contradict the inward, as well as the outward, phaenomena, and intuitive, as well as, sensitive knowledge) that the power of thinking, that very power whereof we are conscious, is as necessary to the perception of the slightest sensation as it is to geometrical reasoning. There is no conceivable difference in the faculty or power: the sole difference arises from the degree in which it is, or can be, exerted. It has been asked, will you deny the power of God, to create a substance capable of sensation only, and not of reason? No man living has higher notions of the divine omnipotence, nor carries them further than I do. An argument fairly drawn from the power of God will determine me at any time, and on any occasion; tho' it does not determine these men, who insist so much upon it when they hope to make it serve their purpose by an unfair application of it. I am persuaded that God can make material systems capable of thought, not only because I must renounce one of the kinds of knowledge, that he has given me, and the first, tho' not the principal, in the order of knowing, or admit that he has done so; but because, the original principles and many of the properties of matter being alike unknown to me, he has not shewn me that it implies any contradiction, to assert a material thinking substance. This now, which implies no contradiction,

dition, except it be with their precarious hypothetical ideas, these great asserters of the divine power deny. But, at the same time, they draw another argument unfairly from this very power, by assigning it as the cause of an effect, which does manifestly imply contradiction. It implies contradiction manifestly, to say that a substance, capable of thought by it's nature in one degree or instance, is by it's nature incapable of it in another. God may limit the exercise of this power, no doubt, in his creatures variously, according to their different organizations, or to the imperceptible differences that there may be in the atoms that compose their bodies, or by other causes absolutely inconceivable. This happens to other animals: it happens to men; and the largest understanding is limited in the exercise of it's mental faculties. But a nature capable of sensation, that is of perception, that is of thought (to say nothing of spontaneous motion, of memory, nor of the passions) cannot be incapable of another mode of thinking, any more than finite extension can be capable of one figure alone, or a piece of wax, that receives the impression of one seal, cannot receive that of another.

WE may apply very justly to those who have maintained the doctrine of sensitive, and rational souls, and to those who have made new hypotheses concerning them, as well as concerning the apparent reciprocal action of body and mind, what BACON says of the greek philosophers,

“ Impetu

“ Impetu tantum intellectus usi sunt, regulam
 “ non adhibuerunt; sed omnia in meditatione
 “ acri et mentis volutatione et agitatione per-
 “ petua posuerunt.” It must be confessed that
 some of the moderns have been guilty of this,
 as well as the antients; and, I think, with less ex-
 cuse, because experimental philosophy has been
 more in use, and the means of acquiring know-
 ledge of this kind have been more common, in
 our days. Notwithstanding this, we have seen
 men of the greatest name neglect sometimes en-
 tirely, at their first setting out to enquire into the
 nature of things, spiritual or corporeal, an exact
 and sufficient observation of the phaenomena;
 and still oftener, contenting themselves with a
 transient view of particulars, hurry on to gene-
 ral knowledge, according to the natural propen-
 sity of the human mind, without having this
 rule, if I may say so, in their hands; or else
 bending it to their abstract notions, instead of
 squaring these scrupulously by it. It seems that
 the great author himself, whose censure I have just
 quoted, does something of this kind in his fourth
 book of the Augmentation of science, where he
 makes a distinction between rational and sensitive
 souls. The latter he affirms to be a material
 substance “ plane substantia corporea censenda
 “ est,” without perceiving that this cannot be,
 unless matter can be made capable of think-
 ing. This soul he assigns to brutes, according
 to the received notion. According to the same,
 he supposes the rational to be a superior soul in

men, without perceiving that the supposition of these two souls is as absurd, as that of an upper and lower part in the same simple and indivisible being. He concludes by hinting that the sensitive soul in man may be considered as confounded with, and lost in, the rational, “*ipsa anima rationalis et spiritus potius appellatione quam animae indigitari possit,*” without perceiving that we may just as well confound the rational with the sensitive, as the sensitive with the rational, soul; and that, if nothing can think which is material, that which thinks in other animals must be immaterial; or, if any thing can think which is material, that there is no pretence to conclude that which thinks in man to be immaterial. I am afraid, therefore, that the inquisition which he recommends in this place, and which seemed to him to be almost wanting, “*quasi desiderari videtur,*” must have been pursued, on his principles, under the influence, not of one, but of all the four kinds of false ideas and notions, the “*idola tribus, specus, fori, et theatri,*” which he has named, not without some of the affectation prevalent in his age; and which must in all ages render it hard for truth to enter into the mind, and be apt to disturb the progress of it when it is there.

THIS hypothesis, and the others of fresher invention, are like the armed men of CADMUS; they kill one another: not one survives the rest. Affectation of superior genius and knowledge
has

has decoyed men, no doubt, into these scenes of fantastical ideas and notions : but it must be confessed that they have been forced into them likewise, in some degree, both by interest, another interest than that of truth, and by invincible prejudice. There are certain opinions fixed by authority ; an authority that deserved no respect in it's original, and that could never have imposed by itself, but one that custom renders sacred, and that acquires by subsequent authorities, and by circumstances foreign to it, an importance in the whole, or in part, which nothing else could have communicated to it. My lord BACON himself observes to this purpose, and he might have applied the observation to himself on this, and other occasions, that the greatest genii have suffered violence in all ages, whilst, out of regard to their own characters, they have submitted to the judgment of their age, and of the populace : so that time like a river, has brought down light and tumid error, whilst solid and weighty truth is sunk to the bottom, and is dived for by few. Thus the notions that prevail about soul, spiritual substance, and spiritual operations and things, took their rise in schools, where such doctrines were taught, as men would be sent to bedlam for teaching at this day. Their inward doctrine, for they had two, might be more reasonable, perhaps : but we cannot wonder if that which was taught to a few, and which the few kept secret, was soon lost ; whilst the outward doctrine, which was taught to whole nations, and

glared

glared with symbols, allegories, and parables, or philosophical fables, was preserved. Some of these doctrines are come down to us: and it is probable that they have lost nothing of their primitive extravagance in the writings of PLATO, through which they have been conveyed principally; since there never was a more wild or less consistent author in prose or verse.

IN the confusion of fantastical ideas, and notions which the introduction of the platonic philosophy into christianity occasioned or increased, as I shall shew at large hereafter and on more occasions than one, that of a material soul seems to have prevailed at first; at least it is certain that the most zealous writers for christianity maintained it, or supposed it. The notion, however, of it's immateriality was soon, and more generally, established. PLATO, their great master in metaphysical pneumatics, gave them, in his vague and figurative manner of writing, sufficient foundation for either of these opinions: and the last seemed the most favorable to that of the immortality of the soul. From that time to this, whoever attacks one is supposed to attack the other, and is clamored against, accordingly, by every one who affects a strict orthodoxy, without observing, or perhaps tho he does observe, that the opinion of the soul's immateriality adds no strength to that of it's immortality; nay, that by resting it too much on the former, they weaken the latter, and build on a principle which they can never make intel-

intelligible, when they might assume another very intelligible and quite sufficient for their purpose. Now these opinions being thus united, their union being confirmed by the authority of the whole christian church, and the belief of it inculcated by the process of education, the ideas of immateriality and immortality become so intimately associated in the minds of men, that many can no longer separate them when they commence philosophers; and that those, who see, that if immateriality may be said to imply immortality, it will not follow that immortality, in this case, implies necessarily immateriality, chuse rather to keep terms with error than pass for heterodox. Thus prejudice and interest conspire to put philosophers under a necessity of maintaining that the soul is an immaterial being, and, in order to maintain it, of inventing the most extravagant hypotheses. When they have once agreed that twice two make five, they may well assert that twice four make ten.

THE plain man, a much better philosopher in the true sense of the word, keeps out of this confusion; for he pushes his enquiries no further than the phaenomena lead him, nor presumes to affirm any proposition which is not suggested and confirmed by them. They do not lead him far in his enquiries about spirit, but they lead him surely. Corporeal nature affords men a fund of knowledge, such as it is, which they can never exhaust. We acquire our first ideas from thence, and by

industry and experiment it is in our power to acquire more, and to improve this kind of knowledge daily. How much it is so appears in the vast improvements that have been made since experimental philosophy has been cultivated. The plain man will be apt to ask why a proportionable improvement has not been made in that knowledge which is called metaphysical? And I think he will give himself this plain answer, that men have in one case means in their power that are proportioned to their ends in some degree; and that they have them not in the other in any degree, tho they proceed fantastically as if they had. That there are corporeal natures, we have sensitive knowledge. That there are spiritual natures, distinct from all these, we have no knowledge at all. We only infer that there are such, because we know that we think, and are not able to conceive how material systems can think. We are conscious of certain modes of thinking, of certain faculties and operations of what we call mind, and of certain inward emotions which we ascribe to the mind, and which call affections and passions. This is some degree of knowledge, no doubt; and it might be improved to conduct better our understandings, and our lives too. But then the principles of it, the mental phaenomena, are few; and, beyond those that are obvious to immediate reflection, there are none to be discovered. There are neither microscopes nor telescopes to assist our inward sight, and neither geometry nor algebra can be of any real use

in this part of natural philosophy: whereas, in the other, the vast scene of corporeal nature, which will never be quite opened, is always opening to human industry. We discover frequently new phaenomena, or we correct and improve our former observations: and every step of this kind is an advancement of science. These reflections may serve to explain how it has come to pass that philosophers have made such a mighty progress in the knowledge of corporeal nature, even within little more than a century; whereas their knowledge of spiritual nature is no greater now than it was three thousand years ago, and than it will be three thousand years hence, if the generations of men continue so long.

MEN were conscious, ever since their race existed, that there is an active thinking principle in their composition: and the first reflection they made, as soon as they began to reflect on what passes within them, could not fail to be this, that there is a mutual influence of body on mind which shews itself first, and of mind on body which appears a little later. With this knowledge men of common sense have contented themselves in all ages; whilst philosophers, those men of uncommon sense, have filled their own heads and the heads of all who have hearkened to them, in every age, with fantastical ideas and notions, on which they have erected hypotheses repugnant to one another as well as to the phaenomena. It would be astonishing, if it was not so common, to see

men advance hypotheses sometimes with no regard, and often with very little, to those phaenomena whereof we are able to acquire sensitive knowledge alone: but that they should do the same thing in cases, where every man has the same intuitive knowledge of the phaenomena, might be deemed impossible; and yet both are true. The distinction between sensitive and rational souls, and the immateriality of the latter, had been long established: and the schoolmen, who spun their cobwebs of philosophy, as well as theology, out of their own brains, had settled most accurately the bounds of each, when DES CARTES arose: a great genius surely. The French, a little like the Greeks, “*qui sua tantum mirantur,*” affect to speak of him as if he had first dispelled the mists of antient philosophy, and taught mankind both to enquire and to reason. But our VERULAM, as great a luminary as he, perhaps a greater, one more useful certainly in the advancement of knowledge, had appeared before him to dispel these mists and to put the clue of experiment into our hands; to deride contentious logic, and to distinguish, between fantastical and real, the knowledge men had, and the knowledge they wanted, in every branch of human science. The english and the french sun both had their spots: and if they dispelled some mists, they raised others. The great obligation we have to them is, that they set us in the way of discovering their errors, as they had discovered those of other philosophers.

DES CARTES saw, what the schoolmen had not seen, that a sensitive soul, capable of all the functions and endued with all the faculties that they or their master ARISTOTLE allowed to belong to it, must be capable of thinking by it's nature, and therefore in every respect as well as these; and that all their distinctions were without differences, and mere arbitrary suppositions. If he had stopped here, he had defeated them, and not exposed himself to be defeated in his turn. But it did not become the majesty of his philosophy to leave any thing unaccounted for, how deeply soever hid, to speak like PLINY, in the majesty of nature. He therefore assumed two substances, the extended and the thinking substance. But as soon as he had done so, two difficulties presented themselves; one arising from the precise definition he had given of the soul, more obviously at least, if not more strongly, than from the vague notions of the Peripateticians; and the other concerning the mutual action of mind on body, and of body on mind, arising as obviously and as strongly from his, as from the common, hypothesis; which were in effect, as to the rational soul, the same. DES CARTES, therefore, thought fit to make two other assumptions; one, that, since beasts must either not think at all, or have souls like men, whose essence is thought, they should have no souls at all, but be reduced to be material automates. Such he made them: and such they continue among his disciples, as far as it is necessary they should be such to make his system

consistent with that of christian divines. It is, in truth, more favorable to them than their own; for besides other absurdities that attend the notion of a sensitive soul, the perpetual creation and annihilation of so many souls, as all the animals and insects of the world require, was a consequence that formed an objection the more against the notion. DES CARTES swept all these souls away at once, and the objection with them. The other assumption that this philosopher made, by the plenitude of his power in hypothesis, was this; that since he had established an heterogeneity between the soul and the body, more absolute than that which there seemed to be whilst a sensitive soul was placed like a middle being between them, and since their mutual operations on one another became consequently more inconceivable than ever, this reciprocal action should be no longer admitted, however conscious of it men might imagine themselves to be. Volition, for instance, is made by this cartesian hypothesis the occasional, not the efficient, cause of the motion of body: and the impression of an outward object on our organs is made the occasional, not the efficient, cause of the sensation that our minds perceive: God is the sole efficient cause in all these cases. He acts directly and immediately according to the laws on which he has established this strange union between soul and body. A strange union it must needs be! and one would be tempted almost to think, that it is indifferent whether the soul resides in the body it is supposed to inform, or any
where

where else ; since, united as they are, there is no immediate intercourse between them, nor any other than that which is carried on mediately by the Supreme Being, who is every where present, and may therefore be determined to act by a mind on a body, and by a body on a mind, how remote soever from one another. If we speak with the vulgar, with whom it is more reasonable to speak and to think too, than with philosophers, on some occasions, we must say that the death of PYRRHUS was the effect of a tile falling casually on his head. But if we speak with the Cartesians, we must say that the passing of PYRRHUS before the old woman's window was the occasion which determined God to make her see him ; that on this second occasion, the sight of him, God impressed a sentiment of anger and vengeance on the old woman's soul ; that on this third occasion, the sentiment of anger in the old woman's soul, God moved her arm to throw the tile ; and that on this fourth occasion, the falling of the tile, God broke the skull of this fighting king of EPIRUS. This extravagant hypothesis would provoke laughter, if it did not provoke horror, as I think it must, in the mind of every sincere theist*.

* SINCE there are those who dogmatise boldly about God's manner of being, and of knowing, it is no wonder that there should be those who dogmatise also about his manner of causing, and about the economy of his providence in the government of the world. When they assume particular providences, the instances they bring are often ridiculous: when they speak in general of occasional causes, the instances of these, which force themselves upon the mind, must needs raise horror in

THE makers of hypotheses have not stopped here. LEIBNITZ arose after DES CARTES, and if the second did not equal the first in real, he outdid him and every other philosopher in fantastical knowledge. He rejected the old opinion, that the

every man who believes a God. These doctrines are impertinent in their origin, and abominable in their consequences. If DES CARTES had not made, on his clear and distinct ideas, and his lively inward sentiment, such definitions as could not be reconciled to the universal experience of mankind, he would have been under no difficulty, except that of owning his ignorance, in a case wherein every other philosopher was not less ignorant than he. But rather than not make a new hypothesis without a sufficient regard to the phaenomena first, and rather than not maintain it even against them afterwards, the Supreme Being was brought down, "sicut Deus in china," to deliver this puzzled philosopher out of the perplexity wherein he had involved himself. I would not think of God at all, tho he ought to be always present to our thoughts; I would refuse to acknowledge and adore him in the contemplation of his works, tho I do it from the bottom of my heart, much sooner than I would look on him as the immediate efficient cause of every sensation of human minds and every action of human bodies. Shall I believe that it is God who impresses those frantic sentiments of devotion, which an indian idolater feels on the sight of his idol, and who determines the body of this wretch, on the occasion of these sentiments, to fall under the wheels of the processional car, and be crushed to death? Shall I believe that it is God who moves the arm of a parricide when he plunges a dagger into his father's heart, or that of some low rogue when he picks a pocket? The consequences are horrible: and an hypothesis that should lead to them, even less directly than this of DES CARTES does, would deserve to be rejected with the utmost indignation. Many of the most extravagant opinions entertained by the heathen were capable of being reconciled to an awful sense of the monarchy of a supreme Being. Such opinions as these cannot be so: and christian philosophers and divines have done more to debase our notions of this Being; than all the doctors of polytheism.

soul

soul and body are so constituted and so united by God, as to influence and to act really on one another. He rejected that of the french philosopher likewise, which has been just mentioned. He did not prostitute the divine agency by making God the immediate efficient cause of every effect that body seems to have on mind, and mind on body, as they happen in the human system. But he employed the divine power and wisdom in another manner, and once for all as it were. According to him, every soul has a certain series of perceptions, desires, volitions, &c. every body a certain series of motions, that are determined by the mechanical dispositions of the machine, combined with the various impressions of outward objects that may be made on it. I do not enter into the difference he makes between the human system, and the general animal system, in which he supposes that the same souls have been united to the same organised bodies from the creation, and that these animals do not, properly speaking, die. In the respect in which I quote this wonderful hypothesis here, the case of all these systems is the same. In every one of them the soul and body do not correspond because they are united; but they are united because they corresponded by a pre-established harmony antecedent to their union, and in which LEIBNITZ found, no doubt, that sufficient reason, which is in all cases the reason that the hypothesis requires. Soul and body are united like two tallies, that fitted one another before their union;

but

but with this difference, which makes the metaphysical case the stronger, they were so fitted separately and independently of one another. Bounce felt pain when she was kicked, if Bounce was ever kicked: and so she would have felt it, if she had had no body at all in the same moment. A fair day invited you to walk in your garden; Bounce galloped after you: and so you both would have done, if you had had no souls at all. This hypothesis gives me no horror: and every time it comes into my thoughts, I laugh as if I was at a puppet shew.

THAT of father MALBRANCHE must not be forgot in this place. It stands between the other two in one respect: it is neither so horrible as the first, nor so comical as the last. But it is, I think the strongest instance that can be produced of a fine genius wrought up to a degree of madness by metaphysical speculation and hypothetical enthusiasm, unless the african bishop St. AUSTIN may be compared with him. MALBRANCHE then specifies certain manners, in which we may have ideas of outward objects; the first of which is agreeable to the phaenomena and to the common notion derived from them, and the last of which is his own wild hypothesis. He even ventures to assert that there is no other manner, in which we can have ideas of these objects. The assertion is a bold one; since it assumes that God cannot ordain any system of body and mind which we cannot comprehend. On this

this foundation he proceeds to shew how insufficient all the other ways are of accounting for these ideas, and to introduce his own. If I was to enter into a detail of particulars it would be easy to shew, with the help of Mr. LOCKE's examination, and even without this help, that the hypothesis consists of little else than words that have absolutely no meaning, than figurative expressions that cannot be applied to his subject without the utmost absurdity, than inconsistencies and palpable contradictions. But I believe this will appear to be no unjust charge, even by the very little I shall say. His hypothesis in short is this. We cannot perceive any thing that is not intimately united to our souls. Our souls are unextended beings in this place, tho in another he says they have extension, a narrow one indeed; but, narrow or broad, it is still extension. Now there being no proportion between the soul and material things, these cannot be united to it, nor consequently be perceived by it. Our souls are indeed united to our bodies; but there is a manner of union necessary to perception, and another not so, neither of which is explained. God, who is a substance and the only intelligible substance, is intimately united to our souls by his presence. He is the place of spirits, as space is in one sense the place of bodies: and since he must have in himself the ideas of all the beings he has created (for without these ideas, that is, without our manner of knowing, this philosopher presumes to affirm that he could not have created them)

we may see these ideas in God, as he is pleased to shew them to us: but the good father having no where explained how God shews them to us, he leaves us in the same ignorance in which he found us. It has been observed that this hypothesis bears some resemblance to that of DEMOCRITUS, who assumed that our ideas are God. One idea, that which we have of God, is, I am sure, by this hypothesis, God himself; since it is affirmed that this idea is uncreated. The words are worth quoting.—“ On ne peut
 “ pas concevoir que l'idée d'un être infiniment
 “ parfait, qui est celle que nous avons de Dieu,
 “ soit quelque chose de créé.” I might mention a multitude of other notions quite unintelligible, or repugnant to our clearest ideas and most certain experience; such as these, for instance, that we have the idea of infinite before we have the idea of finite, and that we think of all being before we think of any particular being: but I have said enough to shew that, altho this writer has destroyed the intentional species of the Peripatetics, for he dwells chiefly on our ideas of sight; yet he has left it just as possible, and vastly more probable, that God has ordained certain ideas in the mind, to be excited by certain motions of body in a manner incomprehensible by us, than that we see these ideas in his substance in a manner alike incomprehensible.

I IMAGINE that the plain man is by this time pleased to see common sense force men back,
 after

after a tedious round of philosophical rambles, to the very point from which he has never stirred : for so it must do unless we renounce this gift of God, in favor of human authority. The authority may be great ; but the greater it is, the more strongly do these examples of error shew how little the greatest, how absurd the wisest, how ignorant the most learned, of men become when they presume to push beyond the bounds that God has set to human enquiries. There is so much warning given, the high road to knowledge is so direct, and the bounds of it are so strongly marked, that they who go out of this road, in the vain hope of passing them by a shorter way, as well as they who do not stop when they are conducted no longer by the phaenomena, but hope that metaphysics can carry them forward when physics cannot, are inexcusable.

FONTENELLE, in the elogy he made of NEWTON before the french academy, compares DES CARTES with him. He says that “ DES CARTES, taking a bold flight, meant to place himself at the source of all things, and to make himself master of the first principles of them by some clear and fundamental ideas, that he might have nothing more to do, than to descend from thence down to the phaenomena of nature, as to necessary consequences.” He says that the other, more timid or more modest, set out leaning on the phaenomena, that he might by their means remount to the unknown principles

“ ciples of things, which he resolved to admit
 “ whatever the chain of consequences shewed
 “ them to be. One,” says he, “ sets out from
 “ what he understands clearly, to find the cause
 “ of what he sees. The other sets out from
 “ what he sees, to discover the cause, be it plain
 “ or obscure.” He concludes by saying “ that
 “ the evident principles of one do not always
 “ lead him to the phaenomena such as they are ;
 “ and the phaenomena do not always lead the
 “ other to principles evident enough.” I have
 quoted this passage at length, because, as much
 perplexed as it is by an artful abuse of words, it
 will serve much better to set in a full light the
 truth I would inculcate, than to constitute an
 equality of merit in natural philosophy between
 DES CARTES and NEWTON. I will make, there-
 fore, a short commentary on it. The design of
 the former, as it is here represented, was not a
 bold flight, but an extravagant undertaking. It
 is honor enough to the latter, that he made great-
 er advances towards the first principles of things
 than any of those who went before him : and
 this would have been honor enough for DES
 CARTES too, if he could have acquired it. This
 philosopher might have clear ideas ; for ideas
 that are false may be very clear perceptions in the
 mind, and especially in the mind of one who rea-
 soned on a certain lively inward sentiment of evi-
 dence, as well as on ideas really clear and distinct :
 but fundamental ideas, if there be any meaning
 in the word, he could have none, or none that
 were

were sufficient in the method he pursued. Many of those he employed to make himself master of the first principles of things could be only hypothetical, since he did not frame them on the phaenomena, nor connect them by the phaenomena, according to NEWTON's method; which was not timid, but wise as well as modest. What an immense distance was there between any thing he could understand clearly in his method, and the causes of what he saw? And how could the intermediate ideas be framed? Nay, how does it appear that he understood clearly the things which he is said to have understood so, and from which he set out, when he took extension alone to constitute the essence of matter, and thought alone that of soul? Is it not plain that his evident principles were assumed, as they often are, purely for the sake of what was to follow? DES CARTES might in his method invent, as he did, whatever principles imagination suggested to him; and with the ostentatious appearance of a complete system shew us an universe of his own, not of God's making. NEWTON resolved to invent none; for he resolved to admit such only as he should be led to discover by a chain of consequences, that carried him up to them imperfectly perhaps, but surely; such as God made them to be, not such as he guessed they might be. The one might, and did, fall into error. The other could only fall short of the knowledge he sought. He fell short of it. Like COLUMBUS, he discovered a new world; and, like him, he left

the discovery to be pursued by others. Our knowledge of nature can so little be complete, that the very appearance of a complete system is a reason perhaps to suspect it of being etched out by fancy. Let us suppose a philosopher to arise, and to pursue the discoveries of NEWTON with equal success. Let us suppose that, by dint of experiment and geometry, he confirms the doctrine of attraction or gravitation not as a property, not as an attribute, of matter, if you will, but barely as a new phaenomenon ; and that he discovers a new kind of pulsion, or some other physical cause of it. Attraction, which gives us now the idea of a cause, and which may be, notwithstanding all the silly abstract reasoning to the contrary, a real property of matter, will give us then the idea of an effect, as this new cause must do in it's turn as soon as some further cause is discovered ; and as that further cause must do likewise, as soon as some other still more remote is brought into light. Thus we shall be always seeking, and always to seek. But is this to recal the occult qualities of the schools? FONTENELLE makes himself, not NEWTON, ridiculous, when he does more than insinuate this reproach in the same elogy. If NEWTON's philosophy had terminated, like that of the scholastics, in occult qualities, it would not have risen in reputation as fast as it was understood : and if that of DES CARTES had not been too often, like theirs, merely hypothetical and extravagantly so, it had not been demolished on so many sides, as fast as it was examined.

BUT

BUT I return to observe that the comparison between these two methods is to be applied to our researches about spiritual, as well as corporeal, nature ; and to confirm what I have said concerning them. When I consider how little knowledge the phaenomena give us of one, and that we are not able to go by their help a step beyond the first appearances, whilst we extend our knowledge of the other wider and carry it higher in the order of causes ; I am ready to think that God, who leaves us in many cases to collect his will, as he has made us able to collect it, from his works, shews manifestly in this case how repugnant it is to the designs of his all-wise providence, that we should attempt to acquire knowledge of soul or spirit ; and how conformable it is to these designs, that we should employ our industry and penetration to acquire knowledge of body, terrestrial and celestial, in order to promote in general the advantages of human life, and those particularly that result from an adoration of the Supreme Being in a contemplation of his works.

It has been said, it is a common-place topic, that infidels (for such is every one called by some men, who does not subscribe to all they advance even without proof) are desirous to keep God at a distance from them, whereas they ought to consider that it is “ in him they live, and move, “ and have their being.” This charge cannot be laid justly against any man who believes a

God; for a God without the attributes of an all-perfect Being cannot be the Supreme Being, how inconsistently soever some of the antients might reason about the Divinity. For my own part, I am firmly persuaded that there is a Supreme Being, the fountain of all existence, by the efficacy of whose will the whole universe was made, and is governed, as well as preserved; in a word, who is the first efficient cause of all things, and on whom all his creatures depend. But for this very reason, and because I have this awful sense of the Supreme Being, I do not presume to familiarise myself with him, as the men who bring this charge are apt to do. That he is the first efficient cause, I acknowledge; but I am on my guard against those who presume to penetrate further into the machinery of the universe, and the order of second causes, than the phaenomena, that is, than his works, shed a light on their enquiries; or who are so bold as to deny the efficiency of second causes, because they are not able to account for them, and who employ the first cause on every occasion, for whose action they are as little able to account. This is a common practice, and it has produced a sort of profane and even blasphemous enthusiasm in philosophy. DES CARTES, LEIBNITZ, MALBRANCHE, our friend perhaps, and all those, who, not contented to know, what they may know in some degree, the things that are, make hypotheses of what they can know in no degree, how
and

and why these things are as they are; all these men, I say, have run into this practice, and have spread the enthusiasm.

OUR enquiries into the nature of things and into their causes may be stopped in two different manners. They may be stopped or delayed by the difficulties that are in the way, or by the want of some of those extraordinary genii that are sent into the world, now and then, to penetrate into the secrets of nature, and to unfold them, as it were, by degrees. Few of these men arise. They are as rare as comets, or any of the less frequent phaenomena that they observe: and when one of them has made a certain progress, if he is not interrupted in it by death, it often happens that he stops in his philosophical career, as if his strength were spent. The course is long as well as difficult. Relays are necessary, if I may say so, to carry knowledge even to the human goal: and they are not always at hand. When enquiries are thus stopped, and yet the progress that has been made shews that which remains to be made, other men are encouraged to proceed: lucky incidents may happen to shorten their labor, and the intended discovery may seem to be only delayed. This is, I suppose, the case of the longitude: and we cannot doubt but that it is so of many other objects of philosophical enquiry.

BUT our progress is absolutely stopped, instead

of being delayed only, in many more instances: and in these it is that all efforts are vain, and all industry for that reason impertinent. I will explain myself on this important point as clearly as I can. Besides the general idea we have of an universal relation of cause and effect, between the Supreme Being and his works, all the phaenomena give us particular ideas of the same relation. It is evidently in the system of divine wisdom that they should do so; and the use of it in all the affairs of human life is manifest. Every phaenomenon is a cause to us, when it is considered relatively to those that appear to be the effects of it. Every phaenomenon is an effect to us, when it is considered relatively to those that appear to be the causes of it. Thus God has willed that things should be perceived by us: and if we could discover the whole chain up to the first effects of almighty efficacy, such they would appear, I presume, to us. But humanity cannot soar so high, nor approach so near the throne of God; tho' the sieur DE FONTENELLE assures us that DES CARTES took his first flight thither at least, since he directed it to the source and to the first principles of all being. As far as we can acquire ideas of the phaenomena, and are able to compare them, and to proceed by induction from them, so far, and so far only, are we able to acquire the knowledge we are so fond of, the knowledge of causes, of corporeal causes, that I may keep to the usual distinction, from the corporeal phaenomena, and of spiritual causes
from

from the spiritual phaenomena. When we can acquire no more of these ideas, we are at the end of our line of knowledge in either kind: and as this happens sometimes after a long process of enquiry, so it happens sometimes at our first setting out.

BUT this is not all. As our discoveries of the phaenomena, by which we acquire ideas of second causes, are thus variously limited, so there is another uniform and universal limitation of our knowledge concerning them. Whatever knowledge we acquire of apparent causes, we can acquire none of real causality: by which I mean neither mode nor modal entity, according to the jargon of the schools; but plainly that force, that power, that virtue, whatever it be, by which one being acts on another, and becomes a cause. We may call this by different names, according to the different effects of it: but to know it in it's first principles, to know the nature of it, would be to know as God himself knows; and, therefore, this will be always unknown to us in causes that seem to be most under our inspection, as well as in those that are the most remote from it. This knowledge, however, is that which philosophers mean to attain, or it is impossible to say what they mean in many cases, and for want of which they employ so familiarly the first efficient cause on every turn. They are doubly ridiculous. They seek and pretend to discover causes when they only suppose phaenomena; and when

they have discovered a real actual cause in it's effects by the phaenomena, they reject it because they cannot conceive it's causality, nor assign a sufficient reason why, and how, it is as it is.

IF all the objections to NEWTON's system were answered ; if the facts and calculations were over and over confirmed, a disciple of LEIBNITZ would still maintain that there was no sufficient reason for attraction as an essential property, or as an attribute, of matter ; and that it could not, therefore, be admitted as a cause, how much soever appearances might favor such an opinion ; since nothing must be admitted to exist unless philosophers are able to shew the sufficient reason of it's existence, and to explain it's causality. Well might attraction be exploded by these philosophers, since extension itself run some risque, and had been certainly denied to be an essential property of matter, if LEIBNITZ had not discovered the sufficient reason of it in non-extension. His monades in this system may be called immaterial atoms as properly, as he calls souls immaterial automates in his system of a pre-established harmony : and his reasoning in both will appear intelligible to none but his implicit disciples ; as his letter to the chemists who searched for the philosopher's stone at Nuremberg, which procured him admission into their society, was intelligible to them, tho he did not understand it himself.

It will be agreed, I think, that, on the supposition I have made above, attraction would pass, in every mind untouched by the delirium of metaphysics, for a sufficient cause; tho' the sufficient reason of it could not be given, nor the causality of it be explained. Now I would ask whether the conscious knowledge we have of the reciprocal action of body and mind be not founded in greater certainty, than the knowledge we should have of this *conatus accedendi*, this mutual tendency of body to body? It must be allowed to be so. I would ask therefore, since he, who should deny in this case the attracting, gravitating power to be a property of matter, would deserve laughter instead of attention, as much as he did whilst he doubted in the same manner of extension, till the sagacious LEIBNITZ had found the sufficient reason of it in non-extension, or rather in non-entity; I would ask, I say, what he deserves who denies the reciprocal action of mind and body, because he knows no more than that there is such an action, and because he is unable to discover by what powers, and in what manner, this action is produced?

IF we are conscious that we think at all, we are conscious that we perceive ideas, and that we will actions. We are conscious, in one case, that the cause is without us, and the effect within us. We are equally conscious, in the other, that the cause is within us, and that the effect passes without us. In one case, where we have only

a fenfitive knowledge of the caufe, tho we have an intuitive knowledge of the effect, we may be deceived as to the former. The ftick in the water may be ftrait, tho we perceived it crooked: and the tower at a great diftance from us may be fquare, tho we perceived it round. I chufe thefe trite examples, which have been employed by all thofe who would perfuade us to diftruff our fenfes, thofe inlets of all our knowledge, and which prove for me, on this occafion, better than for them on the occafion on which they urge them. We try our perceptions over and over again; we rectify by experience the deceptions to which they are liable: and all thefe perceptions, the falfe as well as the true, confirm the opinion, if it may be called merely an opinion, that they are caufed immediately by outward objects acting on our organs whether we will or no, in confequence of particular principles or powers utterly unknown to us, and conformably to general laws, fome of which we are able to difcover. In the other cafe, where we have intuitive knowledge of the caufe, and only fenfitive knowledge of the effect, either we have really no knowledge at all, and our whole fyftem is a fyftem of illufion, which it would be furely impious to affert; or we know that there is an immediate action or influence, which amounts to the fame, of mind on body. No man in his fenfes ever doubted, and I am therefore perfuaded that DES CARTES did not doubt, that volition, an act of the mind, determined the motion of his arms and legs when-

whenever he moved them ; tho the interest of his hypothesis, which concerns all these men much more than that of truth, obliged him to maintain the contrary, as it obliged him to advance the other paradox mentioned above concerning animal automates.

THUS have philosophers in all ages amused mankind with systems of imaginary knowledge, raised on fantastical ideas and notions, rather than confine themselves within the limits of real knowledge. Instead of fixing our opinions by evident truth, and giving the mind any solid foundation whereon to rest, they have involved us in doubts, and eternised dispute. Like NOCTAMBULES, they have staggered about, and jostled one another in their dreams. Since the torch of experimental philosophy has been lighted up, these hypothetical reasonings have been exploded, or else confined under certain conditions in all that relates to corporeal nature. But the abuse has continued in all that relates to spiritual nature: and modern philosophers, like tyrants driven out of one province, have made themselves amends, as it were, by exercising a more arbitrary power in another. The exercise of it in this deserves, however, to be restrained more, than in the former. The spiritual nature, of our souls, such as it is now conceived to be, such as authority, and among others that of a council, obliges that it should be taught, is an hypothesis assumed on very precarious grounds, and in opposition to those that are the grounds of every other allow-

able hypothesis. How absurd, therefore, is it in philosophers to assume on an hypothesis much more than they would venture to assume on real knowledge? How absurd is it in the rest of mankind to give any credit to them when they do so?

BUT there is a farther objection to this proceeding, drawn from the unavoidable consequences of it, which should render it odious to every man, who will not sacrifice the integrity of theism to the artifice of minds fraught with vanity, and stimulated by curiosity. The notion, which these metaphysical reasoners have framed about the human soul or spirit, makes them slide easily and almost necessarily into that familiarity with the father of spirits which has been censured above, into conclusions little less, if at all less, than blasphemous. Whilst philosophers talked of corporeal nature logically, that is, improperly, or on supposed principles of matter and motion, that is, ignorantly, they led themselves and others into error, but not into such error. Metaphysicians and divines have this to answer for. Spirit is not certainly an univocal term, tho' these men use it as such. God is not a system of matter; but he is not therefore a spirit, such as we conceive spirits to be: he is not therefore united to our souls by an inconceivable presence or union, nor even by any gradation of spirits up to him; for between him and the highest created being the distance must still be infinite. Thus we should think

think and speak of God. But the men we have to do with here have accustomed themselves to think in the same manner, and to speak in the same style, of the divine and human spirit, with no other difference than that of adding infinite to the one, and finite to the other. They conceive them both to be alike immaterial beings, and substances too, as if they, or DES CARTES, who determined that there are but two substances, knew this any better than SPINOZA knew that there is but one, or than I, who believe there may be several, know how many, or what they are. It is no wonder that such notions of a community, or union, of spirits between God and man, should encourage metaphysicians and divines to draw the Deity down to their level, as their several hypotheses require, whilst they affect to raise themselves up to his, if I may be allowed to use expressions which are no more than proper to signify their attempts. They do in effect spiritualise all the gross conceptions of ignorant and superstitious men, that is, they say much the same things in a less intelligible manner: and the presence of God, according to MALBRANCHE, and according to MOSES, differs in little else. Besides which, if we believe what they affirm, MALBRANCHE had in the Word, or God's eternal reason, an invisible, and the high priest of the Jews in the tabernacle a visible, Shecinah to interrogate,

AFTER all these reflections which I have thrown upon paper, as they occurred to my thoughts,
and

and as the frequent interruptions to which I am exposed would give me leave, nay, after all those which they suggest, or which a man of better parts, more knowledge, and more leisure would be able to make; I doubt not but our plain man would be told that the hypotheses which have been mentioned deserve much respect, notwithstanding all that has been said against them; since they were intended to support the opinion of the immateriality and immortality of the soul, and, by consequence, of the rewards and punishments of a future state, which are the great bonds that attach men to revealed religion. This he would be told, and he would be asked whether he presumes to deny the truth of these doctrines in general; whatever he may think of some particular notions that philosophers may have entertained concerning them? His answer might be to this effect, that it would be for the interest of these and several other doctrines, to let them rest on the authority of revelation; that to make them matter of philosophical speculation is to make them disputable; and that to make them disputable, is to unfix them in the minds of men; since in the natural order of things, revelation may confirm what philosophy teaches, but philosophy can give no confirmation, nor any further authority, to what revelation has taught; and since, if it could do so in other cases, it could not do it in these, where questions, that have been controverted in all ages among philosophers, are concerned. He might add that, revelation a-part, he saw no positive nor
deter-

determining proof of any of these doctrines ; that all the phaenomena from our birth to our death seem repugnant to the immateriality and immortality of the soul, that he is forced to conclude with LUCRETIVS,

Gigni pariter cum corpore, et una,

Crescere, sentimus pariterque senescere mentem.

that God had given him reason to distinguish and to judge, and external and internal sense by which to perceive and to reflect ; but that this very reason shewed him the absurdity of embracing an opinion concerning body and mind which neither of these senses supports ; that how short and imperfect soever the knowledge acquired by observation of the phaenomena might be, he was contented with it, because it was knowledge acquired in God's way, that is, in the only way God has opened to our enquiries about the nature of things corporeal or spiritual : nay further, that if he could suspect himself to be deceived in this way, he would be contented still ; he would conclude on this and other occasions, that whether things appear to him as they are absolutely, and such as the supreme intelligence knows them to be, or not, they appear to him such as it is fit for his nature that they should appear to him. On this undoubted truth he would rest his mind, instead of perplexing it about indeterminable questions, and of struggling presumptuously and vainly to know things

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things otherwise than his nature and theirs admit
that he should know them.

ON such principles as these, tho he could not affirm, he would not deny, the immortality of the soul. What indeed should tempt him to do so? In whatever world, in whatever state he is, he knows that the same God governs. What then has he to fear in one more than in another? Nothing surely, if he thinks as he ought to think of the all-perfect Being. Such God is. Let us not therefore humanise him. Let us not measure his perfections by ours, much less let us ascribe to him, as every system of theology does, under the notion of goodness, what would be partiality, nor, under the notion of justice, what would be cruelty, in man. Let us not presume so much as to ascribe our perfections to him, even according to the highest conceptions we are able to frame of them, tho we reject every imperfection conceivable by us, when it is imputed to him. “As
“ we must not imagine with the Anthropomor-
“ phites (it is MALBRANCHE* who speaks, well
“ in this place, tho very inconsistently with what
“ he says in others) that God has the human
“ figure, because it seems to us the most perfect;
“ we must not think neither that the mind of
“ God has human thoughts, nor that it is like
“ to ours, because we know nothing more per-
“ fect than our own minds.” Such theology as
this, and surely it is orthodox, makes our plain

* Lib. iii. p. 2. c. 9.

man to be flattered, not terrified, with any faint appearance of immortality in prospect, like TULLY, SENECA, and other philosophers, who saw no more grounds in any thing they knew of the nature of the soul for this expectation, than he sees. He is ready to say of this immortality, what the auditor says in the first Tusculan disputation, “ me vero
 “ delectat; idque primum ita esse velim, deinde,
 “ etiamsi non sit, mihi tamen persuaderi velim.”

HE might very reasonably ask the metaphysical divine for what reason he clogs the belief of the soul's immortality with that of it's immateriality, since the former is sufficient to answer all the ends of religion? The doctrine of future rewards and punishments (which is, no doubt, a great restraint on men; and which would be a greater, if it was not so scandalously abused by the ambition and avarice of priests) supposes the immortality of the soul only: and it is much more easy to make men conceive that it is immortal by the good pleasure of God, tho' material, than that it is an immaterial spirit, and immortal by the necessity of it's nature, as God is self-existent by the necessity of his. One may wonder that men, who have adopted so many of the whimsical notions which they found in PLATO, should not have borrowed a hint that they might have found there, or that they rejected perhaps when they found it. The hint I mean is that of souls mortal by their nature, that is, material, but such as should never die, “ solubiles, sed dissolvendae nunquam.”
 “ Since

“ Since you are generated, you are mortal, but
 “ you shall not die; for my will is strong enough
 “ to repair the defects of your nature,” says the
 Supreme Being to the younger gods, the gods
 born of gods, in the *Timæus*; and it is the least
 absurd thing *PLATO* makes him say or do on that
 occasion. The neglect of this passage may be
 imputed to some theological purposes that seem
 to be better served by the hypothesis of immaterial
 souls, than by any other. But the vanity of the
 human heart, which has been flattered by divines
 in all ages, was to be flattered on. What served
 best to this purpose was taken from *PLATO*: and
 how it was improved we need look no further
 than the *Tusculan* just now quoted, to find.
 There *TULLY*, after a ridiculous panegyric on the
 human mind, which, improved by philosophy, he
 thinks able to discover all things in heaven and
 on earth, all that exists, in it’s beginning, pro-
 gression, and end, runs a very profane parallel
 between the divine and human mind. If the first
 “ be air or fire, such is the last. If there be a
 “ fifth element, that new nature which *ARIS-*
 “ *TOTLE* first introduced, it must be common to
 “ both. Whatever has sense, intelligence, will,
 “ and the principles of life, is celestial and divine,
 “ and therefore necessarily eternal.” This is the
 nature of man: and “ God himself cannot be
 “ conceived any other way,” than by analogy to
 it. That we frame our conceptions of the divine
 intelligence as well as we can, by analogy to our
 own, is true. We have no other way of framing
 them..

them. But it will not follow that his nature is analogous to ours, nor that ours is like his, “*mens soluta quaedam et libera, segregata ab omni concretionem mortali, omnia sentiens et movens, ipsaque praedita motu sempiterno.*” Thus absurdly however did the disciples of PLATO flatter human nature: and, finding in the bible that we are made after the image of God, our divines have interpreted the passage according to these prejudices. They will not say directly, I suppose, that our souls are a portion of the divine essence: but what they say sometimes means this or nothing; and what they say always, is but little different from it. Strange vanity! as they assume themselves to be exposed to eternal damnation, and the rest of mankind to be almost entirely damned, rather than not assume that their souls are immortal; so this immortality would not have charms sufficient for them, if it was not asserted to be essential to the nature of their souls.

THUS, I believe, our plain man would leave the matter: and thus I leave it too; having said, I hope, enough to shew that the fondness philosophers have to raise hypotheses, that cannot be raised on real ideas, such as have a known foundation in nature, that is, a known conformity with existence, is a principal occasion, on which the mind exercises its artifice in framing such ideas and notions as are merely fantastical. That the mind exercises the same several other ways, and in some less obviously than in this, as it has

been hinted above, I know full well. But, enough having been said to shew that human knowledge is imperfect and precarious in it's original, as well as slow and confined in it's progress ; and, by one great example, which may serve instar omnium, that they, who pretend to guide the reason of mankind and to improve human knowledge, do nothing better in matters of the first philosophy, than substitute that which is imaginary in the place of that which is real, or in addition to it, in favor of their prejudices, their passions, and their interests ; enough has been said for an essay concerning the nature, extent, and reality of human knowledge.

ESSAY THE SECOND.

CONTAINING

SOME REFLECTIONS

On the folly and presumption of PHILOSOPHERS, especially in matters of the FIRST PHILOSOPHY ;

On the rise and progress of their boasted SCIENCE ;

On the propagation of ERROR and SUPERSTITION; and,

On the partial attempts that have been made to reform the abuses of HUMAN REASON.

THE HISTORY OF THE

REIGN OF

CHARLES THE FIRST

BY

JOHN BURNET

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

IN TWO VOLUMES

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AND LAST

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E S S A Y

T H E S E C O N D.

S E C T I O N I.

HE who asserts that there would be more real knowledge, and more true wisdom, among mankind, if there was less learning, and less philosophy, may offend some mens ears by advancing a paradox; for such at least they will call it: but men who enquire without prejudice, and who dare to doubt, will soon discover that this seeming paradox is a most evident truth. They will find it such in almost every part of human science, and above all others in that which is called metaphysical and theological. The vanity of the vainest men alive, of some who call themselves scholars and philosophers, will be hurt; but they who seek truth without any other regard, and who prefer, therefore, very wisely even ignorance to error, will rejoice at every such discovery.

THERE WAS a time when navigators bent themselves obstinately to find a passage by the north-east or the north-west to Cathay. Neither frequent losses nor constant disappointment could divert them from these enterprises, as long as the fashionable folly prevailed. The passage was not found; the fashion wore out; and the folly ceased.

The bounds of navigation were set: and sufficient warning was both given and taken against any further attempts in those dark and frozen regions. Many such there are in the intellectual world; and many such attempts have been made there with no better success. But the consequence has not been the same. Neither examples nor experience have had their effect on philosophers, more fool-hardy than mariners: and where the former wandered to no purpose three thousand years ago, they wander to no purpose, at least to no good purpose, still.

“IL faut pousser à une porte pour sçavoir qu’elle nous est close,” says CHARRON somewhere in his book *Of wisdom*. He says right, “pour sçavoir qu’elle nous est close.” But when we know, or may know very certainly, by our own experience, and by that of all the strong men in philosophy, antients and moderns, that a door is shut which no human force can open, they who continue to sweat and toil in shoving at it are most ridiculously employed. They who affect to guess at the objects they cannot see, and to talk as if the door stood wide open whilst they peep through the key-hole, are employed still worse. The most antient philosophers may be excused in great measure for attempting to open every door of science; tho they cannot be so for imposing on mankind discoveries they never made. But they, who followed these in the course of philosophical generations, are inexcusable on the first

first head, as well as the last; since what was curiosity in the others became presumption in them: and they scarce made amends, by the good they did in advancing some real knowledge, for the hurt they did in entailing so much, that is quite fantastical, on posterity.

TULLY confesses very frankly that nothing is so absurd which some philosopher or other has not said: and his own works would furnish sufficient proofs of the assertion, under the epicurean, the stoical, and the academical characters particularly, if they were wanted. But this confession does not go far enough: and we may employ upon this occasion against philosophers the objection made against the Jesuits by some of their enemies. The absurdities of philosophers are not to be ascribed to the particular men alone who broached them in every philosophical age, but to their order and institution, if I may say so; the principles and spirit of which lead by necessary consequences to such absurdities. The first founders of philosophy laid these principles, and inspired this spirit in days of ignorance and superstition. Their followers have refined upon them, confirmed them, and added to them. Time and authority have established them all; the oldest and the grossest most. Words that have really no meaning are thought to have one, and are used accordingly. Ideas, that are really incomplete and inadequate, are deemed complete and adequate. Ideas, that are obscure and confused, are deemed

clear and distinct. In a word, time and authority have so well established metaphysical and theological absurdities, that they pass for the first principles of science, like certain necessary and self-evident truths which are really such. Men, who would have been giants in the human sphere, have dwindled into pigmies by going out of it. Instead of heaping mountains on mountains of knowledge to scale the sky, they heap mole-hills on mole-hills with great airs of importance, and boast ridiculously not only of their design, but of their success. They appear to me like sylphs, if you and ARIEL will give me leave to make the comparison, so proud of not being gnomes that they fancy themselves archangels. “*Humana ad deos transferunt, divina mallet ad nos,*” is an expression used by TULLY, and extremely applicable to the philosophers of whom we are speaking. They do most presumptuously the first, and they pretend with equal folly and effrontery to do the last. They ascribe to the Supreme Being the manner of knowing, the ideas, and even the very affections and passions, of his creatures. They presume to enter into his councils, and to account for the whole divine economy as confidently, as they would for any of their own pauntry affairs. This they call theology. They build intellectual and material worlds on the hypothetical suggestions of imagination. This they call philosophy, metaphysical and physical.

By such means, and by such men, truth and error
have

have been intimately blended together from the first essays of philosophical enquiry: and various systems of natural and supernatural theology have prevailed in different ages. Had any one of them been wholly founded in real knowledge and confined to it, as every one of them pretended to be, the certainty and the importance of such a system would have preserved it among the rational part of mankind. Truth, pure and unmixed, would have given it stability. But error has kept them all in a continual flux: and, to the shame of the human head and heart, the most rational, or the most reasoning, part of mankind has maintained this flux by adopting some errors, by inventing others, and by cultivating both.

If there is no subject, and I think there is none, upon which the opinions of men have varied so extravagantly, and have stood in such manifest contradiction to one another, as they have on that of the first philosophy, the reason is, that men have not aimed so much at unattainable knowledge, nor pretended so much to it, on any other subject. Folly and knavery have prevailed most where they should be tolerated least: and presumption has been exercised most where diffidence and caution are on many accounts the most necessary.

“ Quale per incertam lunam sub luce maligna
 “ Est iter in silvis.”

Such

Such is our journey in the acquisition of knowledge, whenever we attempt to travel far. We grope along in those paths which experience and the application of our minds open to us. We discern, according to our manner of perception, a few objects that lie in our way, and we guess at a few more. But we cannot even guess, with as much probability as is necessary to justify us in guessing, at our whole system, nor explain the phaenomena of it. How much less ought we to think ourselves capable of knowing the divine system! We have a very superficial acquaintance with man. Do we hope to become better acquainted with God? One would imagine that metaphysical divines did really entertain this hope. They may entertain it, as well as the huffing opinions, to use a phrase of Mr. LOCKE, which they entertain concerning the human mind or soul. They assume it to be near akin to the divine, something derived immediately from God, and capable of being united to him. An intellectual mirror it is, that reflects from the phaenomena of nature alone, and therefore indirectly, some very few notices of the Supreme Being, beyond the demonstrative knowledge that we have of his existence. But these men, when they lower their pretensions and would appear modest, assume it to be not a mirror that reflects such notices, but a spirit that is capable of receiving them, and that receives them directly from the divine intelligence. They tell us, with great metaphysical pomp of words, that reason, the supreme, eternal reason, is

the sun of their intellectual world, in the light of which they see intelligible objects, just as sensible objects are seen in that of the material sun. On such bold presumptions they proceed: and whither may they not, whither have they not, been carried by them? The farther they go, the more their imaginary light fails them. But they cease not to flatter themselves: and whilst they expect at every moment, as it were, the dawn of a new day, they fall into the shades of night.

“ Ubi coelum condidit umbra
 “ JUPITER, et rebus nox abstulit atra colorem.”

Now since metaphysical divines have wandered thus so many thousand years in imaginary light and real darkness, they are not surely the guides we should chuse to follow. That a degree of knowledge to which I cannot attain is therefore unattainable by them, it would be impertinent to conclude. But I may conclude reasonably and modestly, that a kind of knowledge, whose objects lie above the reach of humanity, cannot be attained by human creatures, unless they are assisted by supernatural powers; which is a supposition out of the present case. I could not have discovered, as NEWTON did, that universal law of corporeal nature which he has demonstrated. But farther than that he could go no more than I, nor discover that action of the first cause by which this law was imposed on all bodies, and is maintained in them. It is the
 kind,

kind, not the degree, of knowledge, that is concerned, and to be compared. Let us return therefore out of this scene of illusion into that of human knowledge; nor flutter, as HOBBS expresses himself, like birds at the window whilst we remain inclosed. We may be the better contented to confine our enquiries to the limits God has prescribed to them, since we may find within those limits abundant matter of real use and ornament to employ the studious labors of mankind. Experimental knowledge of body and mind is the fund our reason should cultivate: and the first is a fund that philosophers will never exhaust. In this part, let deficiencies be noted. There are, there can be, no excesses: and as to the excesses that have been and are to be noted in the other, they are excesses of assuming and reasoning, not of experiment and observation. The phenomena of the human mind are few, and on those few a multitude of hypotheses has been raised concerning mind in general, and soul and spirit. So that, in this part, the improvement of real knowledge must be made by contraction, and not by amplification. I will presume to say that if our BACON had thought and writ as freely on this as he did on many other parts of science, his famous work, which has contributed so much, would have contributed more, to the advancement of real knowledge, and would have deserved it's title better. Men might have learned to consider body more, instead of doubting whether it exists, and to consider their own minds more;

from

from which alone they can acquire any ideas at all of mind; instead of dreaming, like MALBRANCHE, that they interrogate the divine Logos.

What right the first observers of nature and instructors of mankind had to the title of sages we cannot say. It was due perhaps more to the ignorance of the scholars, than to the knowledge of the masters. But this we may venture to affirm, that their right to that appellation could not be worse founded, than the right of all their successors to be called lovers of wisdom. There is an anecdote related by TULLY in his fifth Tusculan, and mentioned, I think, by DIOGENES LAERTIUS, which is much to our present purpose: or at least the tale is pretty enough to deserve to be told. The prince of the Phliasians having heard and admired the Samian, asked him what his profession was. He answered, that he was a philosopher, and he explained himself thus: He said, that the life of man seemed to him to resemble the great assembly or fair of Greece that was held at Olympia, where some resorted to acquire honor by exercising themselves in the public games, and others wealth by traffic; whilst another sort of men came for a much better reason, to see and to observe whatever passed. Thus, he said, some men come into the world to seek glory, and some wealth; whilst a few, despising both, observe and study nature: and these are lovers of wisdom. We might be induced by this tale to think that PYTHAGORAS confined himself

within the bounds of real knowledge, if we did not know, by a multitude of other anecdotes, and by the scraps of his doctrine that have come down to us, how far he rambled out of them. He had been bred in schools where the distinction between human and divine knowledge and wisdom, to one of which we may attain, but not to the other, was so little made, that by aiming at the last they missed in many respects even the former. To observe the constitution and order of things in the physical and moral systems to which we belong, to form general ideas, notions, axioms, and rules on these particulars, and to apply them back again to human action and human use, constitutes knowledge: and the result of the whole is wisdom, human knowledge and human wisdom. But there are men, and there were such in the days of Pythagoras, who talk of wisdom as if it was the result of any procedure of this kind, but a superior principle antecedent to it, independent of human knowledge, and the influences whereof descend on the human mind from above, as christian theology teaches us that grace and faith are bestowed on us.

ACCORDING to such philosophers as these, men of great authority in our learned world, we must date the progress of knowledge and wisdom from ADAM, who was the wisest of men, if it be no blunder to say so, before the fall, and the first and greatest philosopher after it. I will not mispend any time in collecting the puerilities and profa-

profanations that have fallen from the pens of rabbins, and antient and modern doctors of the christian church. It will be enough, and in truth more than the subject deserves, to take notice, that, if we give credit to these writers, we must believe that wisdom was infused into the mind of ADAM by God, and that he came out of the hands of his creator with all the perfections of which his nature was susceptible: and of what perfections was not that nature susceptible, whilst he enjoyed the vision of God, and whilst the Supreme wisdom, that is God himself, “for the Word is God,” was pleased to converse with him, and was delighted in his company*? He had not only innate wisdom, but innate language too; for ADAM and EVE discoursed together in hebrew as soon as they were created. Even after the fall, ADAM preserved all the knowledge and wisdom whereof he was in possession; tho more obscurely than before, because he had no longer the same immediate and intimate communication with the supreme intelligence. It should seem too that he transmitted some faint glimmerings of these original illuminations to all his posterity. PLATO imagined, after more antient philosophers, that every man is born with a certain reminiscence, and that when we seem to be taught, we are only put in mind of what we knew in a former state. Now who can tell how high this reminiscence began, and through how

*—ludens in orbe terrarum; et deliciae meae esse cum filiis hominum. Prov. c. viii. ver. 31.

many former states it may have been continued? Several christian divines have taught, that all men having been contained in the first man, some of his original perfection has descended to them, as well as the taint of his original sin: and we may conceive one, no doubt, as easily as the other.

BUT however all this may have been, and whether ADAM preserved after the fall his whole stock of knowledge and wisdom, or whether he renewed it by experience and meditation in the course of a long life, the progress of knowledge and wisdom is deduced by the same writers from him to SETH, to ENOCH, to NOAH, to the patriarchs, to MOSES, to SOLOMON, to the elders of Israel, to the priests of the family of AARON, to the colleges of the prophets, to those sanctified orders the Rechabites and the Essenians, and in short to all the schools of the chosen people both before and after the captivity. Among this people we are told most dogmatically, that the whole treasure of knowledge and wisdom, as well as of true religion, was deposited by God, that it was preserved there, and that some of these riches were distributed from thence, at different periods of time, to the rest of mankind: so that the people of the whole earth lighted up their candles at the lamp of the tabernacle. JOSEPH is sometimes the antient HERMES, MOSES the younger. Nay JOSEPH is sometimes the fifth MERCURY, mentioned in several traditions,

who

who gave laws to the Egyptians, and taught them letters: and MOSES was the fourth, whom they thought it criminal to name on account of the plagues they had endured at the famous exode. By these men the light of philosophy was spread in Egypt. DANIEL, ZOROBABEL, and others of the captive Jews spread it in Chaldaea: and SOLOMON had spread it, long before, among his neighbours the Phenicians, who left some sparks of it in all the countries to which these famous navigators sailed.

THIS account of the rise and progress of philosophy, with a multitude of other circumstances, is so inconsistent and so unauthorised, or rather so grossly fabulous, that they who give credit to it must first renounce all the conditions of historical probability. JOSEPHUS, EUSEBIUS, CLEMENT of Alexandria, and others, both Jews and Christians, laid the foundations of the whole legend, and dressed up different parts of it. Modern scholars, like BOCHART, HUET, STILLINGFLEET, and many more, have taken a great deal of ridiculous pains to support it. I shall not enter at this time into any particulars concerning the proofs they bring. I will only say, that, by the same methods, it will not be difficult to make antiquity depose just as we please. If we affirm, as it is done in the present case, without even any seeming authority; if we connect at other times broken, and supply imperfect, passages by guesses; and if we paraphrase such as

are obscure, till we make them say what there is no reason, but the reason of our scheme, to believe they were intended to say; in short, and to mention no more of these learned artifices, if we adopt such anecdotes as suit our purpose, and reject such as are not favorable to it, tho' derived from the same or equivalent authority, no historical paradox will want sufficient color to make it pass for truth, at least among those who have, as the writers above-mentioned had, some favorite purpose to serve by it.

THAT arts and sciences travelled from the east to the west, from Chaldaea to Egypt, and from Egypt to Greece, has been a received opinion :

“ Tradidit Aegyptis Babylon, Aegyptus Achivis.”

This opinion agrees so well with our scripture account of the re-peopling the world after the deluge, and of the antiquity of nations, that it ought to be retained perhaps for that very reason. Two writers of more fame, than good authority, but who are principally depended upon by modern antiquarians, seem to have thought so. JOSEPHUS relates that ABRAHAM was enriched by the immense presents the Egyptians made him for instructing them in the sciences that he brought from Chaldaea. EUSEBIUS assures us, from the the same JOSEPHUS, that the Egyptians were ignorant of astrology, and even of arithmetic; and, from EUPOLEMUS, that ABRAHAM conversed, whilst he was in their country, with the priests
of

of Heliopolis. But notwithstanding all the authorities on which this received opinion is founded, a man of ingenuity and much reading would not find it hard to establish another, by a new choice of passages, and by a new disposition of them; for the learned ring different changes on the same set of bells. He might shew us, perhaps, that arts and sciences came from the west in a more remote age, than any the Greeks had knowledge of; that they were introduced and spread by the atlantic people, who over-run Africa and Europe, and of whom SOLON had never heard till the egyptian priests related these wonders to him; or he might bring them perhaps from the kingdom of Uranus, that kingdom to which ATLAS, co-eval with SATURN and his brother according to DIODORUS SICULUS, gave his name; if in truth the people of that kingdom were different from the others who bore the same name: which point of criticism it might be more difficult, than important, to settle, since in all cases arts and sciences would still have been brought from the west to the east. After this, it would be easy to transport them from Aethiopia, the african Aethiopia, or Egypt, to more eastern nations, to the Phenicians, the Assyrians, the Persians, the Indians, and the Chinese.

SECTION II.

BUT to dwell no longer on these serious trifles, let us consider whether the rise and progress of philosophy, especially of the first, may not be accounted for with a probability that is founded on the general tenor of tradition, and on the analogy with what we know of nations that have grown up from barbarity to civility, and from ignorance to knowledge.

I THINK then, on both these foundations, that philosophy neither had, nor could have, in the ordinary course of things, a stated beginning at any point of time, nor in any particular place. It began, at different periods, in different places, and was subject to all the revolutions that attend the human state. It was the growth of some countries, it was propagated into others. It flourished long in some countries, it languished and was soon at an end in others. It thrived more or less, it lived and died, according to the characters of people and the fortune of governments. Wherever it began, the beginnings of it were inconsiderable: for the trees which compose the grove of knowledge shoot up from the smallest seeds. Nor was this all. The imperfections of our nature, which have manifested themselves in the whole progress of philosophy, manifested themselves no doubt even more grossly at the rise of it, tho' ignorance concealed them at that time, as knowledge has disguised them since.

Ignorance

Ignorance preceded knowledge. Error was coeval, and grew up with it. Error flourishes in shades: and before men could get out of those which ignorance spread, error had outgrown and overshadowed knowledge. Superstition accompanied them: and tho error was the principal nurse, even knowledge contributed to rear this child of ignorance and fear.

It is agreeable to antient traditions, and modern relations, to believe that wild uncivilised people, tho reduced into societies subject to some regulations of government, and directed by some general rules which constant experience forces them to observe, have few means and little leisure to improve even in that knowledge, the foundations of which are already laid by urgent necessity among them, and which would render their state, if it was improved, much more comfortable. Their whole time is employed, the whole attention of their minds is bent, to provide from day to day, and from season to season, for their sustenance: and the exercise of reason appears as little in them, as in the beasts they sometimes hunt, and by whom they are sometimes hunted. Arts lie uninvented or unimproved, and science they have not. But the first openings to science, and the first motive to philosophical enquiries, they have even in the state I describe: and this motive shews itself in that curiosity to know the causes of the phaenomena, which is so natural to the human mind. The

most common excite it : those that are extraordinary excite it more : and those, from which they receive much benefit or much hurt, excite it most of all. Another principle, as natural to the human mind, but not very apt to direct our enquiries right, is that whereby we make ourselves the measure, as well as the final cause, of all things. It is this that has represented the unknown causes of the ordinary, as well as extraordinary, of the beneficial, as well as hurtful, phaenomena of nature, to the minds of such savages and demi-savages as we describe, under the images of animal beings, a little different from man, but analogous to him, and endued only with greater power and greater intelligence. These they placed above or below, according to the different scenes of action to which imagination assigned them ; like the captain above and the captain below, the two divinities of the Hottentots. Thus the heaven, the earth, the sea, and the air were soon peopled with divinities that directed all their motions, and directed them all relatively to man. Unable to discover the order of second causes, to trace those that are remote from those that lie nearest to our observation, and those that are more general from those that are less so, which would have led them at last to the first efficient cause of all things, they took a shorter and easier method of accounting for appearances, by ascribing every one to some particular efficient cause. Thus they made gods as many as they wanted ; and, having once made them,

it became equally unnecessary to look after intermediate, and impious to suppose any superior, causes. It thundered: JUPITER was angry. It lightened: he darted one of his fiery bolts at some devoted head. What would curiosity desire more to know*?

* IF ignorance and fear were the two first sources, from which polytheism and idolatry arose, flattery was in process of time another; or that which was gratitude originally, degenerated into flattery. Men who had been honored for the good they did during their lives, or admired for their great actions, were adored after their deaths^a. This custom was extended so far, that in some countries^b not only public benefactors and heroes and kings were deified, but every private man worshipped those to whom he had been particularly obliged^c. Thus it was that the Egyptians came to have whole dynasties of gods and of demi-gods^d. The fame of OSIRIS, whenever he lived, had been great: and the veneration of his subjects for him was such, that they gave his name to their gods, or ascribed the names of their gods to him. Some have imagined, and among them Sir J. MARSHAM, if I remember right, that his whole family and his whole court had their share of divine honors^e: that as his sister, who was his wife too, followed him to heaven under the name of ISIS, so the president of his council became the god of arts and eloquence, under the name of MERCURY: and the general of his troops was the patron of magnanimity and military virtue, under that of HERCULES: nay that his brother and his sons were no more forgot by the priests, than BUSIRIS and

^a CIC. De nat. deor. l. ii.

^b Aethiopia. vid. STRAB. l. xvii.

^c Hic est vetustissimas referendi bene merentibus gratiam mos, ut tales numinibus ascribantur. PLIN. l. ii.

^d Suscepit autem vita hominum consuetudoque communis, ut beneficiis excellentes viros in coelum fama ac voluntate tollerent. Hinc HERCULES, hinc CASTOR et POLLUX, &c. CIC. De nat. deor. l. ii:

Hac arte POLLUX, et vagus HERCULES

Innixus arces attigit igneas. HOR.

Quamobrem major coelitem populus etiam quam hominum intelligi potest, cum singuli quoque ex semetipsis totidem deos faciant, Junones, geniofque adoptando sibi. PLIN. ubi supra.

I MIGHT illustrate what has been said by numerous examples, if I affected, what I esteem

ANTAEUS, the governors of two of his provinces, have been by the poets. SESOSTRIS furnished the same matter to fables, many generations afterwards: and learned men think that several of those in HOMER may be traced up to this famous expedition. These deifications gave occasion to the hymns that were made and sung, not only as parts of divine worship, but as necessary means to preserve the memory of great events. TULLY says somewhere, that the funeral orations in use at Rome had corrupted history; because historians, in the dearth of materials, had taken such as they found in those rhetorical panegyrics. How much more must such hymns have corrupted both history and religion? The simplicity of true theism could never subsist in the figures of poetry. Affected inspiration passed for real, hyperboles were understood literally, and the machinery of an ode was taken for matter of fact.

MEN grew fonder of polytheism by another custom that prevailed. Every sect framed a new list of gods, or gave new names to antient divinities: and altho in some places temples were opened to the whole rabble of the sky, yet in others the gods seemed to be reduced to a smaller number, and every nation was fond to have it believed that the deities they worshipped belonged in a peculiar manner to their country and to them. The birth of BACCHUS, for instance, had been claimed by several nations of Asia and Africa, when ORPHEUS applied to the son of SEMELE the fables he had learned in Egypt concerning another BACCHUS, and instituted, in honor of this new divinity, the orgia and religious ceremonies he had seen practised in honor of others more antient, of the same name and profession, if I may use the term. It would be impossible to enumerate, not only all the different gods, but even all those that were worshipped under the same appellation; for VARRO, I think, reckoned at least three hundred JUPITERS.

BUT before I leave this head I will mention very shortly one or two ways more, by which these superstitions received increase, since they occur readily to my memory. Mistake and

very

very little, particular and critical knowledge of the anecdotes of antiquity. It is enough for me

involuntary error was one, involuntary in the generality, tho often imposed, sometimes helped, and always connived at, by the pious frauds of the priesthood. The Legend of Dodona related, that two black doves took their flight from the egyptian Thebes, one into Lybia, the other into Greece; that the first ordered the temple of JUPITER HAMMON to be founded, and that the latter, perching on a tree at Dodona, and speaking in the human voice, declared it to be in the fates that another oracle of JUPITER should be established there. The fact was attested by all that belonged to the temple, and the miracle passed currently. But the priests of the theban JUPITER, who had no interest in this particular superstition, and with whom HERODOTUS conversed when he was in Egypt, explained the blunder and the fraud to him. Some phenician rovers, it seems, had carried off two priestesses, and sold one into Lybia, and the other into Greece, where they set up oracles on the model of that which was in their own country. BOCHART has shewn how affinity of sounds, which gave occasion to the greek poets to call the priests doves, might give occasion to this fable: and Sir J. MARSHAM cites a passage in HOMER, where doves are said to carry ambrosia to JUPITER. Let me say, by the way, that BOCHART might have learned from hence how precarious a foundation for conjecture similitude of sound is, on which, however, many of his conjectures rest principally.

THAT I may compare this antient, with a modern, instance of impudent fraud and foolish credulity, let me mention, among many, one that prevails at this time even in France. It is believed then in that country by devout persons, that some holy man had formerly a revelation in a vision or a dream, directing a monastery to be built and founded in a particular field, which was shewn to him. The good man published this revelation: a bigot age believed him: the monastery was founded, and a new order of lazy drones was added to the church. Their first and all their other monasteries were richly endowed: and they continue to this day under a name that marks their supposed divine institution, the name of Premontré.

to have read and considered them so far, as to see some general truths that result from them. I proceed, therefore, in the same manner to observe that many antient traditions might induce one to think that the unity of God was the original belief of mankind, and that polytheism and idolatry were the corruptions of this orthodox

IF such gross lies could be imposed, if plain matters of fact could be thus perverted to foment superstition, what errors must have arisen, to have the same effect, from the use of hieroglyphics, symbols, and allegories, wherein physical and moral philosophy were delivered down to posterity? If naked truth, passing through many hands, came to be disguised, what must have happened to truth wearing a mask at her first appearance? The hieroglyphic and the symbol remained, and the fable continued in tradition, when the signification of the one, and the moral of the other, were forgot. Books which treat of antient mythology furnish many instances of this kind. I will mention two out of *DIODORUS SICULUS*, as examples of another way, whereby superstitious opinions and practices increased among the heathen. *PALLAS* was a virgin, born out of the head of *JUPITER*. She was a goddess, famous in many respects; and we see of what consequence her statue was in the Trojan war^a. Now the antient naturalists meant to express, by this daughter of *JUPITER*, nothing more than the air, uncorrupted, and holding the sublimer place among the elements. Thus again, as the Romans carried the eagle, so the Egyptians carried the images of divers beasts, in their ensigns^b. These images, which were preserved only as monuments of their triumphs, came in time to be adored as authors of their victories. The dog, which *ANUBIS*, and the wolf which *MACEDON*, wore on their shields or on their helmets, after having been long honored as emblems of these demi-gods, came to be gods themselves. From some such originals might proceed many other monstrous objects of adoration,

qualia demens
Aegyptus portenta colit. *JUV.*

^a *DIOD. SIC. lib. i.*

^b *Ib. lib. ii.*

faith. CUDWORTH seemed to me to have established this opinion on as good foundations as any opinions of this sort can rest : and I own that I once very much inclined to it. But when it is considered more closely, and without prepossession, I apprehend that it can be supported neither by sacred, nor by profane, authority.

Not by sacred ; because the mosaic account is plainly inconsistent with itself, as it stands in the books we have under the name of MOSES. Not by profane ; because those anecdotes are quite unfavorable to this opinion, and because every probable reason, that can be drawn from the constitution of human nature, and from the ordinary process of the human mind, stands in direct contradiction to it,

METHUSALEM, it is said, saw both ADAM and NOAH, to both of whom God revealed himself in his unity. SHEM, the son of NOAH, lived even to the days of ABRAHAM. Need I stay to shew how impossible it is for any man in his senses to believe that a tradition, derived from God himself through so few generations, was lost among the greatest part of mankind ; or that polytheism and idolatry were established on the ruins of it in the days of SERUG, before those of ABRAHAM, and so soon after the deluge ? I should think it impossible even for the Jews themselves, who swallow so many fables and so many anachronisms. Since the unity of God was not universally taught in those early days,

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days, it was not so revealed, nor preserved in the manner assumed.

IF the inconsistency of this account makes us reject it, we shall find less reason to believe, on the authority of profane traditions, that the unity of God was the primitive faith of mankind. Revelations to the father and to the restorer of the whole human race might have established this faith universally: but without revelation it could not be that even of any one people, till observation and meditation, till a full and vigorous exercise of reason made it such. By considering the phaenomena separately men could not arrive at a knowledge of the one Supreme Being: and such men, as we speak of, were not capable of taking an entire view of the harmony of the whole.

WRITERS are apt to talk of general consent, as if it proved in all cases that opinions so consented to have a real conformity, and bear a real proportion, to the universal reason of mankind. Thus in TULLY there are some attempts to prove the truth of polytheism. Thus a modern philosopher and divine* attempts to prove that the belief of invisible spirits, employed in directing the affairs of this visible world, is founded in natural instinct, and the evidence of reason. It would be easy to shew, in a multitude of instances, that, if this postulatum be admitted, things manifestly false must pass often for true, and things demon-

* THOMASSIN, *Mét. d'étudier &c. la philos.*

strated true, for false. Even the existence of a first intelligent cause, the very unity of God, of which we are speaking, must be owned to want this pretended criterion of truth. But if universal consent be not necessary to establish this demonstrated truth, how much less necessary is it that this should have been the primitive belief of mankind? Polytheism and idolatry are repugnant to right reason, that is, to the conclusions that reason draws from sufficient information, and from the combinations and comparisons of real, not fantastic, ideas and notions. But polytheism and idolatry have so close a connection with the few superficial and ill-verified ideas and notions of rude ignorant men, and with the affections of their minds, that one of them could not fail to be their first religious principle, nor the other their first religious practice.

THERE is so little profane authority for asserting the contrary, that, if the passages produced to prove it were more direct, and more numerous and uniform than they are, they would not prove it to any one, who gives as little credit to our very best systems of antient chronology as they deserve. Suppose it clearly proved by some of these passages in any one instance, that the unity of God was the primitive belief; the term primitive will be equivocal, and the proof precarious. For how shall we be assured that we see clearly in the midst of chronological darkness, which is always thickest the further we go back,
that

that this orthodox faith was not preceded among the same people by polytheism and idolatry, as we shall certainly find that it was succeeded by them? The whole world appears, as soon as we come into historical light, over-run with them. The vulgar embrace them easily, even after the true doctrine of a divine unity has been taught and received, as we may learn from the example of the Israelites: and superstitions grow apace, and spread wide, even in those countries where christianity has been established, and is daily taught; as we may learn from the examples of the roman churches, to say nothing of the reformed, who are less liable to the objection. But still it remains true that the belief of one Supreme Being may be established on the ruins of polytheism and idolatry. In fact it hath been so, in historical ages. Why should it not have been so in that dark age, which preceded even the fabulous age, according to VARRO'S distribution of them? In the theban dynasty, the Supreme Being was piously adored under the name of KNEPH: and the people of it were so far from any idolatrous worship, that they refused on this account, as rigid Jews or Christians might have done, to contribute to a tax raised in Egypt, and applied to repair the temples, the images or pictures, and other instruments of idolatry. Now the theban was the most antient dynasty of Egypt; and the Egyptians were the most antient people of the world: the first men therefore were unitarians, not polytheists. But how can this
conclusion

conclusion stand, when the premises neither have been, nor can be, proved; when there may have been dynasties more antient than this, or various revolutions of religion in this very dynasty; and when I have much more reason to believe, on the reason of the thing and on a general analogy to what has happened in other countries, that the first men were polytheists, than any scholar has, on the precarious authority of a broken tradition or two, to pronounce them orthodox on this article of their faith? In short, there is, I think, no sufficient grounds, on which to believe that natural theology was taught in it's purity first, and corrupted afterwards: whereas reason and observation both make it probable that it has fared with the first philosophy, as with every other part of science, that is, much error has been mingled sometimes with a little knowledge, and especially in the beginnings of men's inquiries into nature; and that, at other times, in the progress of these inquiries, where any progress has been made, more or less knowledge has been acquired with a less proportion of error. Conscious of human weakness and dependency, men have acknowledged in the infancy of philosophy, and even before the birth of it, power and intelligence superior to their own, such as made the world, or such at least as governs it. This was knowledge. But error grew up with it. They adored the visible objects that struck their senses, or at best the invisible beings that they assumed to reside in them. The rational, the orthodox belief,

the

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the first true principle of all theology, was not established, nor could be so, till the manhood of philosophy.

THE progress of this manhood was every where slow, and in some countries none appears to have been ever made. On the contrary, men continued from age to age in the same state, which may be properly called a state of natural error and superstition. Such nations, like changelings or naturals, may be said to have been children to their death. But in others this progress was made, and favorable combinations of circumstances helped to quicken it, in some more, in some less; but in all much more to the improvement of useful arts, and of other sciences, particularly of government, than to the investigation of truths concerning the first philosophy. We read, with a just admiration, the accounts that are come down to us, short and imperfect as they are, of the wisdom and policy of antient nations, of the eastern empires; and particularly, in HERODOTUS and DIODORUS SICULUS, of the egyptian government. All the arts and sciences were carried far among them, several much farther than we are able to imitate: and if we judge of their improvements in other sciences, as we may fairly do, by those which they made in astronomy, we shall find reason to be of opinion that these sunk, instead of rising, in the hands of the Greeks, notwithstanding their boasts, and those of PLATO particularly, that they improved all they learned; as we see
that

that the knowledge of the true solar system was lost soon after the days of PYTHAGORAS, and made way for the false one of PTOLEMY. But when we consider the state of natural theology among the same nations, and at the same time, we admire no longer; we remain astonished that men, who excelled in every other branch of knowledge, should embrace so many absurd errors in this, and deduce from their philosophy a system of religion, that rendered them a proverb even among polytheists and idolaters. To give a full account of this, would be to give an history of the progress of the first philosophy. I shall touch the principal heads as shortly as I can: and indeed the greatest scholars, when they pretend to do much more, to enter into a detail of particulars, and to treat this subject minutely, involve themselves and their readers in webs of hypotheses, one generally as improbable as another, and none of them of any real use. They shew much learning, as it is called, and often much subtilty: and this is all they shew that deserves any commendation, if even this deserves it. I refer you therefore to them, if you are desirous to see more particulars, than you will find here, concerning the rise and early progress of pagan theology and worship.

AMONG people immersed in ignorance and superstition, there arose in antient days, as there have done since, some men of more genius than the common herd, and that were placed in situations and circumstances, which gave them per-

haps opportunities of receiving instruction from others, or at least better means of observing nature themselves, and more leisure for the investigation of truth, and for the improvement of knowledge. These men were the first missionaries, and I suppose the best, that have been seen in the world. They assembled little families, clans or hords, into larger and more civilised communities: they invented many useful arts of life: they established order and good government: and they taught men the great lesson of promoting the happiness of individuals by promoting that of the public, and of preserving liberty by subjection to law. These legislators, however, had been bred in the superstitious opinions and practices of their families and countries: and for that reason one may incline to think that they preserved a tang of this superstition in their legislative capacity; since it is much more rare to see men shake off entirely long habits of error, than to see them rise out of mere ignorance to certain degrees of knowledge. On this supposition, it would be obvious to account for the superstitious opinions and practices, which they propagated and rendered venerable in all the governments they established. But a reflection presents itself immediately, which lets us into a secret, and perhaps a truer, motive that they had to hold this conduct. They might be neither bigots to old superstitions, nor to those that they superinduced themselves. They could not believe that they had a correspondence, which they knew they had

not,

not, with gods or demons, even if they believed the existence of such imaginary beings: and yet they all pretended to this great prerogative. The Egyptian wisdom, their religious and civil institutions, were taught by MERCURY: and their first legislators and philosophers assumed the name, or had it given them, on this account. ZOROASTER and ZAMOLXIS, one among the Bactrians, and the other among the Scythians, had revelations from VESTA. MINOS had them from JUPITER himself, and CHARONDAS from SATURN. NUMA conversed familiarly with AEGERIA, and PYTHAGORAS with MINERVA. I need mention no more, for I will not offend by adding MOSES to this catalogue.

Now since these men imposed revelations they knew to be false, we may conclude they were not much in earnest about several of the doctrines they taught, and of the institutions they made; not even about a doctrine, which most, and I believe all, of them were extremely solicitous to inculcate, I mean the doctrine of future rewards and punishments. They endeavoured to profit of the general disposition to apprehend superior powers, in some of whom superstition had accustomed men to imagine a severity of justice, and even an inclination to afflict and torment: and they knew enough of the human heart, to know that men would be flattered with immortality in any shape, and tho' the consequence of it might be their own damnation. Religion, in the

hands of these philosophical legislators, who succeeded to the authority of fathers of families, was a proper expedient to enforce obedience to political regimen: and neither the doctrines of it, nor the rites and ceremonies and manners of worship, could be too gross for those who had believed and practised many other superstitions in the days of still greater simplicity and ignorance, and whilst they were under paternal government. I can easily persuade myself, for I think it not only possible but probable, that many of these reformers had discovered the existence of one Supreme Being, which cannot long escape the knowledge of those who observe the whole face of nature. But this knowledge, and the consequences they should be able to deduce from it, might not seem to them sufficiently adapted to the character of the people with whom they had to do; a people led by their senses, and by the first appearances of things, with little use of reason, and little exercise of reflection, which might have rendered them capable of rising from sensible to intelligible objects.

NATURAL theology, pure and unmixed, it might be thought, would speak in vain to a multitude, in whom appetites and prepossessions, affections and passions, raised by sensible objects, were strong, and the force of reason small. It was necessary, therefore, in the opinion of these missionaries of good policy and good manners, and, in order to promote them both, of religion
likewise,

likewise, to suit their doctrines to such gross conceptions, and to raise such affections and passions by human images, and by objects that made strong impressions on sense, as might be opposed with success to such as were raised by human images, and by sensible objects too, and were destructive of order, and pernicious to society.

“That true self-love and social are the same,” as you have expressed a maxim I have always thought most undeniably evident; or that the author of nature has so constituted the human system, that they coincide in it, may be easily demonstrated to any one, who is able to compare a very few clear and determinate ideas. But it will not follow that he to whom this demonstration is made, nor even he who makes it, shall regulate his conduct according to it, nor reduce to practice what is true in speculation. We are so made, that a less immediate good will determine the generality of mankind, in opposition to one that is much greater even according to our own measure of things, but more remote: and an agreeable momentary sensation will be preferred to any lasting and real advantage which reason alone can hold out to us, and reflection alone can make us perceive. Philosophy may teach us to do voluntarily, as I have read that ARISTOTLE says it does, what others are constrained to do by force. But the many were not philosophers: and therefore the few might think very plausibly, that fear was necessary to make them act as such.

The influence of reason is slow and calm, that of

the passions sudden and violent. Reason therefore might suggest the art that served to turn the passions on her side.

THO I think that they who instituted religions in the pagan world were not convinced of the truth of their own doctrines, and that their sole view was to add, by this political expedient, divine to human authority, and the sanction of revelation to the dictates of right reason; yet am I persuaded that many of them believed the existence of one Supreme Being, the fountain of all existence, as I said just now. They believed farther, the anecdotes of antiquity make it plain that they did, the existence of many inferior beings; generated, not ungenerated, gods and demons. They erected, as it were, a divine monarchy on the ruins of a divine aristocracy; and in this respect, as well as many others, they refined, whilst they improved in knowledge, out of the absurdities of original superstition, into one that was a little less absurd, and that came nearer truth, or disguised error under more plausible appearances. But all these refinements, at least as soon as the distinction of a public and a secret doctrine was made, whenever that was made, became parts of their hidden doctrine, which was communicated to the initiated alone. Their outward doctrine differed not from that of the vulgar, it was the same: or rather, the superstition they found established by custom and habit, and that which they superinduced by institution, composed one monstrous

monstrous system of ridiculous polytheism and nauseous idolatry. Thus I imagine that the first philosophy, of which I am to speak principally in this essay, took it's rise among the sons of men; and was sometimes purged and improved, as every other part of philosophy was, in certain places, and rendered more abominable in others.

I do not intend to make the apology of those, who destroyed the true principles of natural theology by adopting old, and inventing new, superstitions in order to enforce submission to government, and the practice of morality. I say only, the first reformers of mankind are not without excuse on this head. Great authorities may be cited, antient and modern, pagan and christian; some for imposing things untrue, some for concealing things true, and some for doing both, in matters of religion. But a much better excuse, and such a one as divines particularly will have no good grace in rejecting, may be urged in their favor; and, if nothing can justify, this will at least alleviate, their guilt.

THIS was their case: they found mankind immersed in superstition, and accustomed to licentiousness. To cure them of the latter, they made their profit of the former. They reduced various superstitions, that were taken up by chance, as every man's imagination suggested them to him, and without design, into systems; and they directed these systems, in doctrine and

practice, to the purpose of reforming the manners of the half-savage people whom they civilised, and to the improvement of social life under the influence of law. Appeals to the reason of unreasonable men would have had little effect: and they had no power to force inward conviction any more, than outward profession. They employed therefore the only expedient, as bad a one as it was, that they had, sufficient to force both; the dread of superior power, maintained and cultivated by superstition, and applied by policy.

WHAT now was the case of the famous legislator MOSES? Some excuse for the former will result, I think, from this comparison. When God remembered his covenant with ABRAHAM, an absurd expression, but very theological, the descendants of ABRAHAM had forgot their God. They were become Egyptians, that is, they were attached to the country, and still more attached to all the superstitions of it. They were constrained by miracles to abandon one; but no miracles, no interpositions of providence, could oblige them to abandon the other. God was forced, therefore, to indulge them in several superstitious prejudices, as learned divines scruple not to affirm; and in fact it appears that a great part of the ritual observances and laws of the Egyptians and of the Israelites were the same, or so near alike, as to leave no doubt of their having one common origin. This even HERMAN WITZIUS cannot deny. He allows
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that there was a great and wonderful conformity between them, “*magnam atque mirandam convenientiam in religionis negotio:*” and therefore he would persuade, if he could, against the plainest evidence that antiquity can furnish on any subject, that the Egyptians borrowed these institutions from the Israelites, the masters from their scholars and their slaves: which would not mend the matter neither extremely, if it could be shewn, as he attempted very weakly to shew it, against MARSHAM and SPENCER.

BUT you will ask, and a reasonable question it will be, why was God forced to indulge his people in these superstitions? The divine has his answer ready: Because it becomes Infinite Wisdom to do nothing by extraordinary and supernatural means, which may be done by ordinary and natural; and because wise governors compound, as it were, often with obstinacy, and indulge men in some prejudices, that they may draw them off the more effectually from others*. For these weighty

* THUS it is divines account for the many egyptian rites that were preserved in the mosaical institution, by assuming that God ordered it so out of indulgence to his chosen people, who were strongly attached to the religion and manners of Egypt, and in order to reconcile them to his law, by a little mixture of superstition in the ceremonious part of it. Let another assumption, made on the same principle, and more presumptuous, if that be possible, than the former, be mentioned. It is this: That sincere, pious, and learned man Mr. WHISTON supposes, in his New theory of the earth, that the sun, moon, and stars were made before the six days work of the creation began; tho they are said to have been made at the same time, reasons,

reasons, the God of truth chose to indulge error ; and suited his institutions to the taste of the age, “ ad seculi gustum et usum,” says SPENCER. For these weighty reasons, he would not enlighten the understandings, soften the hearts, nor determine the wills, of his chosen people ; tho he had hardened the heart of PHARAOH a little before against the strongest manifestations of almighty power ;

according to the obvious sense of the words of MOSES. They are said then first to be, or to be made, only because they became first conspicuous then, and their bodies distinctly visible, as in a clear day or night they now appear to us, according to Mr. WHISTON. The point is delicate : and therefore the good man thought himself obliged to account, as well as he could, for this apparent, and I fear real, difference between MOSES and him. He says, in the first place, that MOSES wrote in this manner, because it was necessary to secure the Jews from the adoration of the host of heaven. There was no other way to apply a fitting remedy to that prevailing custom. The worship of terrestrial things was demonstrated, by this account of their original, to be foolish and absurd ; but that of the celestial bodies would have seemed permitted at least, if they too had not been included in the same relation. He says, in the next place, that we ought to look on the mosaic history of the creation, as on a journal of the appearances of things, such an one as an honest and observing spectator on the earth would have made, and have believed true, tho it was not agreeable to the reality of things. Now to the first of these bold assumptions there lies a most cruel objection, of which Mr. WHISTON takes no notice. If MOSES had told the Jews, that the celestial bodies were created beings, as well as our earth, tho created before, even long before it, they would have believed him as soon, and have been as effectually armed against idolatrous worship, by a true representation, as they believed him, and were thus armed by an untrue one. Another objection indeed Mr. WHISTON supposes might be made to him, and he answers it plausibly enough ; for tho there might be no spectator to observe and record what passed,

which is, I presume, as extraordinary and supernatural an operation, as that of softening the heart to yield to such manifestations. We may carry this farther. God contented himself, according to these bold judges of the principles and views of his proceedings, to take ordinary and natural means in a case to which they were not adequate, as he must have known in his prescience that they would not be, and as we know by the history of

yet if the nature of the history required it, MOSES might very properly represent things as they would have appeared to any such spectator who had been present. But Mr. WHISTON immediately destroys the force, such as it is, of his own answer. "To speak my mind freely," says he, "I believe that the Messias was there actually present, that he made the journal, that he delivered it after to MOSES on mount Sinai, and that from thence it appears in the front of his pentateuch at this day." It is no longer MOSES then who represents things untruly, but such as they would have appeared to an honest ignorant spectator. It is the Messias who represents them untruly to MOSES, and deceives others deliberately, for he could not be deceived himself, to prevent by this fallacy an evil, that would have been prevented just as well by the truth. Whatever rank Mr. WHISTON is pleased to allow the Messias, he should have respected this divine person enough, not to impute to him a false journal, made for an unnecessary purpose. But this he does: whilst other divines impute to the Supreme Being an indulgence to the superstitious prejudices and habits of the Israelites, tho reason as well as experience shews that these means, which they assume that infinite wisdom employed, were in no sort proportionable to the end which they assume that the same wisdom proposed. These are the profane effects of theological presumption. I would sooner be reputed, nay, I would sooner be, a pagan than a Christian, or an atheist than a theist; if to be one or the other it was necessary to believe such absurdities as these, which however disguised, and softened by a certain cant of expression, are directly profane, and indirectly, or by consequence at least, blasphemous.

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these people that they were not; their whole history being a continued series of difficult conversions from idolatry, and easy relapses to it. By this comparison it appears then already that MOSES, who pretended to be directed and authorized by God himself, indulged the Israelites in many favorite superstitions: as profane legislators indulged the people with whom they had to do.

BUT, since I am got thus far into this subject, allow me to take a step or two more, and to raise from the dead one of those antient sages, who gave laws to heathen nations. and instituted religions among them. Let me suppose that one of our learned divines summed up the accusation against him and his brethren, and contradistinguished them from the legislator of the hebrew people, thus. Notwithstanding the conformity between some ritual laws and observances of this people, and of the Egyptians, and the frequent apostasies of the former, the knowledge of the one true God was preserved among them by the mosaic dispensation, whilst polytheism and idolatry overspread the rest of the world. Thus the great design of God was effected; and thus the whole economy of divine providence is justified. Would the antient sage be left without any reply? I think not.

HE might insist, in his own excuse, that MOSES, like profane lawgivers, did not only indulge the people in some favorite habitual superstitions, but in others of his own institution; and that

that his predilection for all these, over the real duties of natural religion, made him inflict more severe penalties on those who violated the former, than on those who violated the latter *. He might insist that among the superstitions of mosaic institution there was one, which could be charged neither on the egyptian, nor any other heathen nation, and which surpassed the most extravagant of theirs. Besides the gods, which may be said to have been as it were in common, a local tutelary divinity was assumed by every city or nation, and was distinguished and appropriated by a particular appellation. This superstition he would assert that Moses imitated, and abused and aggravated by his imitation. Tho polytheism and idolatry overspread the world, might he say, the existence of the monad, or the unity of the one Supreme Being, was not unknown to many of us. We could not teach this doctrine with success to the vulgar, incapable of conceiving things purely intellectual; but we taught it to those who were initiated into our mysteries: and if we did not propose the true God as an object of public and popular adoration, neither did we bring the notions of him down to the low and gross conceptions of the multitude, nor expose the majesty of this awful Being

* Proclive est observare, Deum cuilibet legi rituali, manu elata, hoc est proterve et ex praemeditato violatae, supplicium extremum statuisse; quum tamen peccatis sua natura gravioribus, fornicationi, furto, proximi mutilationi, et ejusmodi, poenas longe mitiores irrogavit. SPEN. Lib. i. c. 1.

to their profanations. This MOSES did. He would not consent to take upon him the commission he was appointed to execute, nor go to the children of Israel, till he was able to tell them the name of the God who sent him. In compliance with his importunity and with the prejudices of the people, to whom he was sent, God is said to have given himself a name, a very magnificent one indeed, and such an one as might denote the Supreme Being; but still a name, by which he was to be distinguished as the tutelary God of ABRAHAM, ISAAC, and JACOB, of one family first, and then of one nation particularly, and almost exclusively of all others.

OUR antient sage might add, that the least part of the miracles wrought among the Israelites, with so much profusion, and in a continued series of divine interpositions, would have been more than sufficient to draw any other nation, nay all the nations of the earth, from polytheism and idolatry. That, in this case, neither he nor any other legislator would have found it difficult, by propagating the belief and worship of the true God, to civilise savage people, without having recourse to the expedient they employed. That as they were in a case very different, they deserve excuse and pity rather, than blame, for promoting natural religion and good government at the expence of true theology. But that MOSES deserves neither excuse nor pity, since he chose to make use of superstitions which he did not want,

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nay which defeated, instead of securing, his intent; if his intent was to destroy idolatry by the means of them: for the sage would insist, with great appearance of reason, first, that the true God was made known to the Israelites by such manifestations of himself to them, and that his law was promulgated in so solemn and awful a manner, if there is any truth in the jewish traditions, as to leave no pretence for adding any thing to confirm the knowledge or to enforce the law. He would insist, in the next place, that if the apostasies of the Israelites, after such manifestations and declarations of the one true God, can be any way accounted for, it must be by the effect of the very expedient which our divines pretend that infinite wisdom employed to prevent these apostasies. He would conclude, in short, that MOSES and the heathen legislators employed the same means, with this difference, that these means were better proportioned to their end, than to his; since they designed to govern mankind by superstition; and he meant, or, as divines presume to tell us, God meant, to destroy idolatry by indulgence to the very superstitions out of which it grew. Upon the whole matter, whether the first sages are entirely excusable or not, their proceeding was much more reasonable, than that which was followed by the order, and under the immediate direction, of God himself, as these eunomians, who affect to understand the whole secret of the divine economy, and to

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know God as well as he knows himself, have the boldness to assert.

THO I have said thus much in excuse for those, who were the first to establish religion and government; I shall not attempt any excuse for those who succeeded them, and who cultivated error and superstition on a principle of private ambition. This might be the case sometimes; and to some degree, among the most savage people in antient days, as we see that it is in our own age among the wild nations of America and Africa, who have their conjurers and their diviners, and who practise certain foolish rites under their direction. It was more so, no doubt, when little states began to be formed by assemblages of a few roving families, that fixed themselves in societies under the conduct of some leader of their own, or of some foreign legislator; the memory of which events has been preserved in the fabulous traditions that are come down to us concerning ORPHEUS and others: for a certain concurrence of fabulous traditions may hold out with sufficient evidence some general truths. But we have, if I mistake not, in the story of PYTHAGORAS, an example of error and superstition, propagated on a motive of private ambition, that is more circumstantial and better vouched.

PYTHAGORAS came into Italy with great advantages for effecting his purposes. He came
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among Greeks divided into many little states, under very unsettled governments. He came with great reputation of learning and wisdom and sanctity, from a nation renowned for it's antiquity, for civil policy, and for divine mystery; from a nation from whom the first rudiments of civility and even the use of letters had been imported into Greece, the mother country of all these little states. He had a figure, for even that has been thought worthy of mention, to inspire respect to those who were to be taken by the eye. He had eloquence, to lead those who were to be led by the ear: and his miracles (for miracles are easily imposed on people ignorant or superstitious, and the people PYTHAGORAS had to do with were both) made him easily pass for the pythian or hyperborean APOLLO, for one of the genii that were supposed to inhabit the moon, or for a celestial divinity.

HE opened his school and began his mission at Crotona, where his orations to the old men, to the young men, to the women, and to the children, and much more the miracle of fish, which JAMBlichus relates so circumstantially, gained him admittance and established his credit. As his first school or college, so his first church, was founded here. I may call it by that name, after CLEMENT of Alexandria: and may observe, after that father likewise, a conformity between the pythagorean and christian institutions in this respect. Persons of all ages and sexes, who were

converted by the miracles and sermons of PYTHAGORAS, resorted to this church. They were instructed in the public doctrines of his religion, and in those divine truths, which they were to believe first in hopes of understanding them afterwards: which is the very method that St. AUSTIN in some part of his works prescribes to christian converts. Some few, and such alone as he judged proper after a long and severe probation, like that he had gone through himself in Egypt, and from which neither the recommendations of POLYCRATES nor the favor of AMASIS could exempt him, were admitted into his college, that became a seminary of enthusiasts. They lived there like Cenobites; members of this spiritual family, renouncing their own, and throwing their whole substance into the common stock. Their long silence, their abstinence, their self-denial, their purifications, their austerities, and the torments to which they submitted, prepared them for any trials, to which they could be possibly exposed in the propagation of their master's spiritual empire.

IN such an age, and with such ministers as these, men devoted to him, and ready to be martyrs for him, he could not have failed to succeed among a people, who were already prepared by the errors and superstitions of their former institutions for any, that the scheme of his ambition could render it necessary to impose. But he and his disciples shewed this scheme too grossly, and
too

too soon: for, notwithstanding all the fine things that are said of this famous person by PORPHYRY, JAMBlichus, and other writers, and notwithstanding all the obscurity and imperfection of traditions concerning these grecian colonies, it seems apparent enough that the accusations of CYLO and NINO were not void of truth; nor the jealousy, that prevailed, groundless. PYTHAGORAS caused revolutions in several cities, in Crotona, in Sybaris, in Catana, for instance: and his disciples, such as ZALEUCUS and CHARONDAS, if in truth they were his disciples, assumed, wherever they came, the part of legislators, whether called to it or not; as if it had been a right belonging to this religious society to give laws not only to their own, but to the civil society that admitted them likewise. Such too, we may believe, they pretended it was, since they all pretended to be divinely inspired: and divine inspiration, as well as divine institution, implies an authority far superior to any that is merely human. DIOGENES LAERTIUS hints that the Crotonians killed him for fear of being reduced under tyranny by him: and some traditions say that commanding the army of the Agrigentines against the Syracusians he was beat, and killed in the pursuit.

IN all cases, the declaration he was reported to have made, that he had rather be a bull for one day, than an ox always, was understood; and the bull perished. Almost all his disciples perished with him: and the expulsion of this sect out of

Italy may be properly enough compared to that of christianity out of Japan. The effect was not so entire in the former, as in the latter instance ; since the philosophy of PYTHAGORAS continued to be taught in Italy by ARISTAEUS and others, who took warning, and affected government no longer ; but who thought too, or pretended to think, that the gods would be displeased if they suffered so divine an institution to be extinguished.

THE same spirit, and the same apprehension, did not prevail in Egypt, and the great eastern kingdoms : for which reason I persuade myself that their ecclesiastical and civil constitutions grew up together, and that people, who submitted to kingly, might submit the more easily to priestly, government ; because the priests, who had used to lead them by superstition, had acted in concert with their kings to make these establishments. Kings wanted their influence over the people ; the people wanted their influence over kings : and kings and people were both silly enough to imagine that they wanted such a protection from the gods, and such an intercourse with heaven, as these prophets, and seers, and magicians, and priests, for we may jumble them all together, could alone procure.

SECTION

SECTION III*.

AS beneficial as these men had been whilst they stood distinguished by knowledge and wisdom, or by pretensions to them, not by rank ; as

* I HAVE sometimes thought, and said perhaps in our conversations, that the life of mankind may be compared aptly enough to that of every individual, in respect to the acquisition of science. There is in both a state of infancy, of adolescence, of manhood, and of dotage, to be observed. The ideas of infancy are taken superficially from the first appearances of things to the senses. They are ill compared, ill associated, and compounded into notions for the most part either trifling or absurd. In adolescence, ideas increase and grow a little better determined. Experience and observation compare and compound them better. In manhood, the judgment is ripened, the understanding formed, the errors of former states are assumed to be corrected, and the farther progress of science to be more sure. Thus it should be, no doubt. But affections and passions multiply, and gather strength, in the whole course of this progress. What is gained one way, is lost another : and if real knowledge increases, real error mixes and increases with it. Fancy may not impose, as it did perhaps, but it may incline strongly to error : and authority and custom will do the rest. They will invert the whole order of science. Ignorant ages and ignorant nations will impose on the most knowing : and even in the same age and nation, infancy imposes on adolescence, and adolescence on manhood, till the great round is finished, and the philosopher who began a child ends a child.

LET this be applied principally to knowledge in the first philosophy. Arts of all kinds, and many other sciences, have been improved not so much by building on old, as by laying new, foundations ; not so much by assuming implicitly principles either antient or modern, as by examining all, and adopting, or rejecting, or inventing without any regard to authority. The very reverse of this proceeding has been practised in matters of the first philosophy : and the professors of it at this

individuals, not as members of a particular order ; they became hurtful in many respects when they composed a community within a community, had a separate interest, and by consequence a separate policy. I pretend not to consider how their power encroached on that of the state, and became independent on it, nor how their wealth increased to the impoverishment of all other orders. We may guess at the antient by what we know of the modern clergy, and may be allowed to wonder that in those days, as well as in our own, it has been found so hard to discover that, tho' civil government cannot subsist so well without religion, religion may subsist, and flourish too, without ecclesiastical government. It will be enough for my purpose to observe, to what a degree of wealth and power this order arose in the nations we speak of, and to shew how it propagated error in philosophy, and superstition in religion.

As to the first then, the reverend magi in Persia had the province of teaching princes how to govern, and of assisting their pupils in government afterwards. It was much the same in Egypt,

hour, in the mature age of philosophy, do little more very often, than repeat the babblings of it's infancy, and the fallies of it's youth. These men are more properly antient philosophers, than those whom they call so. They live indeed in the mature age of philosophy. But in this age, whenever metaphysics and theology are concerned, they seem to rush forward into a state of dotage, and affect to hold the language that the first philosophy held in oriental, egyptian, and grecian schools, before she had learned to speak plain.

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where the priests had a peculiar right to admonish and to reprove, indirectly at least, the kings. In Aethiopia, this prerogative was carried farther: for there the kings were ordered to die whenever the priests thought fit, till a sacrilegious king, ERGAMENES I think, arose, broke into the sacred college, and put these ghostly tyrants themselves to death. This did not happen neither till the bloody inquisition had been long in possession of this power, if ERGAMENES lived about the time of the second PTOLEMY. The wealth and the immunities of this order were as exorbitant as the authority and power. We learn from DIODORUS the Sicilian, not only that this order had raised itself to a partnership in the sovereignty, but to an exemption from all impositions and burdens; for the members of it were “*participes imperii, cunctis oneribus immunes,*” and they had also one third of the whole property of Egypt. As to their immunities, there is an astonishing instance in the book of Genesis. The miserable people were obliged in a great famine to sell their lands to the king for bread. But the king gave bread to the priests: they eat their fill, and kept their lands.

To speak now of the manner, in which, and the reasons, for which, this order of men propagated error in philosophy, and superstition in religion, let it be considered how necessary it was for them to maintain that reputation of sanctity, knowledge, and wisdom, on which this esteem and

reverence had been founded. They had provided themselves many supports in the form and constitution of the egyptian and other governments; but they saw at the same time, like able men, how necessary it was to continue in force and vigor the original principles of the empire they had over the minds of men, on which all the rest depended. The general scheme of their policy, therefore, seems to have been this. They built their whole system of philosophy on the superstitious opinions and practices that had prevailed in days of the greatest ignorance: and, by consequence, their principal object was false, not real, science. Real science would have discovered their fallacies in a multitude of instances: and it would have served their chief purpose effectually in none, if they had left it unsophisticated. Besides, men began to rise, as TULLY expresses himself, “à
 “*necessariis ad elegantiora.*” They might therefore have been overtaken by some, who were not of their order, in real, or have been detected in fantastical, science. It was fit therefore that they should guard against both these accidents: and they did so with much cunning. They multiplied and exaggerated their pretensions to such kinds of knowledge as every man was conscious to himself that he could not acquire, and yet as every man was prepared to believe, according to the prejudices of the age, that they had acquired by traditions derived from antient sages, or even by divine illuminations, and a correspondence several ways carried on with gods and demons.

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But still they did not rest their security even on this alone. They had other expedients, and they employed them artfully and successfully. Most of their doctrines were wrapped up in the mysterious veil of allegory. Most of them were propagated in the mysterious cypher of sacred dialects, of sacerdotal letters, and of hieroglyphical characters: and the useful distinction of an outward and inward doctrine was invented, one for the vulgar, and one for the initiated; that is, one for those to whom it was useless or dangerous to trust their secret; and one for those, the ability, credulity, or enthusiasm of whom they had sufficiently tried by a long noviciate. Among the first, allegory passed for a literal relation of facts, and hyperbole was the common style. Among the last, all was fraud or folly. We see enough of the first in the Old testament to make both probable. Much in this manner I think that the corruption of the first philosophy was established in Egypt and the east, from whence it spread to distant countries and distant ages, after it became a trade in the hands of men, in whom the characters of philosophers and priests were confounded.

It would be tedious and useless to descend into many particulars concerning the various systems of polytheism and idolatry. Let us content ourselves with making some few observations that may point out the propagation of error in natural theology, as it descended from the Egyptians
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and other nations to the Greeks. To be particular about the rise of it would be ridiculous affectation. It arose long before the men, who appear to us to have been the first teachers of it, existed. **PHERECYDES** of Syros, who writ in prose, and philosophised out of verse and song the first among the Greeks, was the master of **PYTHAGORAS** and **THALES**, who founded the italic and ionic sects, and lived therefore later than the fiftieth olympiad. **HOMER** and **HESIOD** lived indeed before the institution of the olympiads, and perhaps much about the same time; tho **TULLY**, or **CATO***, places your blind man long before the other.

BUT I am far from thinking that **HOMER** meant his *Iliad* and *Odyssy* should pass for philosophical poems, tho it has been the madness of pedants, almost from his own age to ours, to extol him and censure him as a philosopher. He meant to flatter his countrymen by recording the feats of their ancestors, the valor of some, and the prudence of others; and he employed for the machinery of his poem the theology of his age, as **TASSO** and **MILTON** have employed that of theirs. Had **ARNOBIUS**, and much more such a weak philosopher as **JUSTIN**, or such a warm rhetor as **TERTULLIAN**, lived in our days, you would have been attacked in your turn, and have been made the father of roscrusianism, and of all the silly doctrines about sylphs and gnomes,

* Cic. De senect.

just as reasonably as HOMER has been attacked, by the zeal of christian writers, for teaching polytheism and idolatry. I believe too that you would have been as well defended by your commentator, by his interpretations of your allegories, and by his explanations of the hidden sense of the Rape of the lock, for instance, as HOMER was by those who found out an hidden sense in all his fables, and who judged that he must have been very knowing in natural philosophy, because he mentions sun, wind, rain, and thunder; for which you laugh at POLITIAN and others of his learned admirers*.

THEY who have represented HOMER as a great philosopher, have made themselves ridiculous. They who have represented him as the great author of polytheism, idolatry, and superstition, have done him wrong. Many antient bards flourished long before him. Who they were, whether the name of ORPHEUS, for instance, was given to different persons, like that of PHARAOH, and that of ZOROASTER very probably; whether it was derived from a phenician or arabian word that signified knowledge, as VOSSIUS thought; whether no such man as ORPHEUS ever existed, as ARISTOTLE thought; or whether the verses ascribed to him were writ by a certain Cecrops †, as the Pythagoricians pretended, it matters little. We may reason in this case much as TULLY does about ATLAS, PROMETHEUS, and CE-

* Pref. to the Iliad. † Cic. De nat. deor. Lib. i.

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PHEUS * ; and we may conclude that the fabulous anecdotes, with which old traditions were crowded, about ORPHEUS, to mention the most famous only, and the doctrines he taught, and the mysteries he instituted, prove at least thus much, that egyptian theology and many of those superstitions had been imported into Greece long before HOMER lived. We may easily figure to ourselves with what advantages this theology and these superstitions were introduced among the rude, illiterate, and at that time half-savage Greeks, from a nation as famous as the egyptian, and by men, whether Egyptians, Phenicians, or Greeks, who had been the scholars of priests, prophets, seers, and magicians ; of holy men who saw visions, and dreamed dreams, and enjoyed every sort of divine communication in a country where dynasties of gods had ruled so long. PLATO had the front, in a much more enlightened state of Greece, to publish his own whimsies, or those of PYTHAGORAS, in his Timæus, on the faith of men begotten by gods, and therefore well acquainted with their fathers. Might not these missionary poets, or their masters, pass for such sons of the gods in the dark ages we refer to ? Or might not that divine fury, the sure mark of inspiration, be ascribed to them, which was believed to seize the sibyls, and which seized the prophets and sons of the prophets among the Jews, nay even those who happened to fall in their way, as, we learn from

* Tuscul. quaest. Lib. v.

the bible, that it seized not only SAUL, but even the men he had sent to take DAVID.

WE may believe that HOMER's predecessors went about singing their spiritual and moral canticles, philosophical rhapsodies, and heroical ballads, as tradition reports that he did after them. What became of their hymns or canticles we know not, whether any were preserved, or when they were lost. But lost they were; which the scattered fragments of his works had been likewise, if they had not fallen by accident into the hands of LYCURGUS, as PLUTARCH, whom you cite for this fact, relates; and if SOLON had not perfected the compilation of them, as DIOGENES LAERTIUS relates, whom I wish you had cited likewise, to shew that the two greatest legislators of Greece published the two first editions of HOMER. In this manner his writings became the sole repository to later ages of all the theology, philosophy, and history of those which preceded his. All the scribes of Greece imitated, and pillaged them, and none more than PLATO.

SOLON had studied philosophy in Egypt under the two most celebrated priests of Heliopolis and Sais, and had learned even the atlantic language, according to the report of PLATO. This consideration might influence the legislator strongly in favor of a poet, who had been skilled in the political, mythological, and every other part of egyptian knowledge, above three centuries before he

he went to that school for instruction. But the general reputation of egyptian wisdom, the beauty of those poems wherein they found, or imagined that they found, so much of it interspersed, and the loss perhaps of what their first poetical reformers had committed to writing, if they writ any thing, might raise the esteem for HOMER among all the greek philosophers to that exorbitant and even ridiculous height, to which in fact it rose. As soon as the rage of making complete systems of philosophy, wherein theology and legislative knowledge had always a principal share, began to be the prevailing mode in Greece, every system-maker thought it necessary to be armed with the authority of HOMER : and they did, for this purpose, the same thing by his writings, that, St. JEROM says somewhere or other, was done by the sacred writings, every one endeavoured to drag them to his sense, even when they were contrary to it. “ *Scripturas trahere repugnantes.*”

THE poems of HOMER, and the whole pagan theology, like embroidered or painted curtains, coarsely wrought by superstition first, and afterwards enriched and heightened in their coloring by the imaginations of poets, hid the true scene, wherein the principles of natural theology are to be found, from vulgar sight, which they amused with gaudy and grotesque figures, out of the proportions and forms of nature, divine or human, instead of shewing this scene in that simplicity, in which it will appear to every sober eye.

The

The true scene, wherein the principles of natural theology are to be found, was signified perhaps in that remarkable inscription on a temple at Sais, which PLUTARCH mentions, however differently that may have been interpreted. I AM ALL THAT HAS BEEN, IS, AND SHALL BE, AND MY VEIL NO MORTAL HAS EVER YET REMOVED. This veil represented the works of God, in which and by which alone he is to be discovered, as far as he has thought fit to communicate any knowledge of himself. Beyond this veil the eye of human reason can discover nothing. By the help of these images we may form a just and clear notion of the different ways by which men run into error on this important subject: the generality, by neglecting to contemplate God in the works of God: philosophers, by attempting to remove the veil, to contemplate God in his nature and essence, not in his works alone. The vulgar personified, deified, and worshipped the works, without looking up to the worker, as their poets had taught them: the generation of the visible world was to them a generation of invisible gods; for they had taken ideas of power and wisdom, of good and evil, from the phaenomena: and they personified and deified not only these, but affections, passions, and almost every complex mode that the human mind can frame. When they were in this profuse mood of deification, we cannot wonder if they deified those men from whom they had received great benefits, nor if tutelary heroes became tutelary gods. Some of the philosophers, having

been

been led by a more full and accurate contemplation of nature to the knowledge of a supreme self-existent Being, of infinite power and wisdom, and the first cause of all things, were not contented with this degree of knowledge. They would explain, they would even analyse, the divine nature. They made a system of God's moral as well as physical attributes, by which to account for the proceedings of his providence: and reasoning thus beyond all their ideas, by a certain agitation and ferment of the mind, they remained in the labyrinths of absurdity they had formed; acknowledging the existence of this Monad, this Unity, elevated above all essence and all intelligence, and yet neglecting to worship him; conforming to the practice of idolatry, tho not to the doctrines of polytheism.

BUT how true soever all this may be, and much more to the same effect that might be added, yet the great principle that maintained all the corruptions of natural religion, was that of priestcraft. Philosophers and priests were the same persons long, as I imagine that bards and philosophers had been before: and when they assumed their distinct characters, the priests were too powerful, and the people too bigotted, to hope for any reformation. An opposition to the grossest superstition, or a disbelief of that rabble of the sky, those gods of different ranks and different employments, those celestial husbands and wives, fathers and children, brothers and sisters, would
 have

have passed for atheism; and the best of men would have been reputed atheists, and have been treated accordingly, as SOCRATES was. It was in these countries then, as it is in several countries now. Nothing was too absurd for stupid credulity to receive; nor for artifice, emboldened by success, to impose. Sham miracles were shewn, like other false wares, in a proper light, and at a proper distance; and those errors, which had contracted the rust of antiquity, became, for that reason alone, venerable. In short, the whole scheme of religion was applied then, as it is in many countries, christian and others, still, to the advantage of those who had the conduct of it. The worship of one God, and the simplicity of natural religion, would not serve their turn. Gods were multiplied, that devotions, and all the profitable rites and ceremonies which belong to them, might be so too. The invisible MITHRAS would have been of little value, without the visible, to the magi: and a calf or a cat, nay garlic and onions, were more lucrative divinities in Lower Egypt, than KNERH had ever been in the Upper.

BUT farther: it was not the first philosophy alone that was thus corrupted, but every other part of science that could be wrested and misapplied to the same purposes. The priesthood held it, in Egypt and in the other countries from whence the Greeks derived their knowledge, to be a maxim of ecclesiastical policy, and a wise

one it was, to keep every part of science, like a monopoly, in their own hands, and to be of some real use to mankind in that manner at least. On this principle, they cultivated arithmetic and geometry. Arithmetic might be of use to them in order to calculate the number of their gods and demons, or the revenues they enjoyed; which was no easy task: geometry might help them to set out the bounds of their possessions, and serve to other temporal purposes; for they had not yet discovered, as some modern writers have done, how well geometry may be applied to prove the immortality of the soul, and to the solution of other metaphysical and theological problems. But they had still more use for physic and astronomy, to both of which they applied themselves with industry and success, and both of which they made subservient to their great design. “*Medicina animi*,” physic for the soul, was the title of some books of MERCURY, that were carried in the famous procession described by CLEMENT of Alexandria. It may be, that the principles and rules of theurgic magic were laid down in those sacred writings, and that the egyptian priests pretended to raise themselves and others, by the observation of these rules, to such a communion with the gods, as to employ their divine power and knowledge whenever they were necessary. But the physic conversant about bodily substances only produced another sort of magic, which may be called natural, since it consisted in this, that the

effects

effects of causes very natural were ascribed by ignorant people, not indeed always and absolutely, to a supernatural power, but always to a power and knowledge above those of any other men than their magicians; and that a good chemist was deemed, like our friar BACON, a conjurer. Thus again astronomy, which had been cultivated long under the name of astrology, dwindled into that contemptible science which is at this day so justly distinguished from it. From considering the motions, men grew attentive to the supposed influences, of the stars; and that ridiculous scene of fraud opened itself, which continues still to impose in the east, where astrologers, who cannot make an almanac, govern princes and nations by pretending to read their destinies in the sky.

THE whole system of mythology and pagan theology was so absurd, that it could not have been introduced into common belief, if it had not begun to be so, like other absurd systems of religion, in times of the darkest ignorance, and among creatures as irrational as Groenlanders, Samojesdes, or Hottentots; if, after that error and knowledge growing up together, the former had not outgrown the other, and maintained itself against the improvements of human reason and of knowledge, by the force of habit; and finally, if legislators had not thought it dangerous to cure, and useful to confirm, superstition: and yet, after all, much art was necessary

to keep it in repute, besides the craft that has been already mentioned, as well as to make it answer the design of legislators.

ALLEGORIES that passed for facts, the fraud of oracles, the impertinence of parables that pretended to some meaning, and of fables that pointed at none, except it was to encourage vice by the example of their gods, composed an outward religion, supported a ridiculous worship, and served to amuse the vulgar: for in divine matters, the marvellous, the improbable, nay the impossible and the unintelligible, make the strongest impressions on vulgar minds. It has been said that mysteries are designed to exercise our faith, and allegories our understanding: but nothing can be more foolishly said. A mystery, that is, a thing unknown, may exercise our understanding just as well as our faith, and can in truth exercise neither. We may have faith in an authority we know, but it is faith in this authority, and not properly in the mystery, which makes us acquiesce in it. An allegory may be contrived to puzzle and perplex the understanding, or to hold out nothing to us but itself. In the first case it is impertinent, in the second it is fraudulent, and in both it perverts the sole use it should be employed for, in the didactic, or even in the poetical style. Such allegories become, at best, and when they have really some meaning, a sort of riddles: they are fit to exercise the sagacity, and to be the intellectual amusement of children alone; and yet they have
been

been the pride of great genii. JOSEPHUS, who was a Jew and a cabalist, admired them much: and he tells a silly story, on the authority of MENANDER of Ephesus, to give them credit, or to raise our ideas of the wisdom of SOLOMON, HIRAM, and ABDEMON. The two first had, it seems, a curious correspondence, in which they proposed riddles to one another, and the Tyrian paid most of the forfeits, till ABDEMON taught him to pose the wisest of men. PLATO *, who disgraced philosophy as much as HOMER elevated poetry, by the use of allegory, declared that this poet, whom he banished in another mood out of his commonwealth, should not be read by any who were not initiated in wisdom; that is, who were not able to draw an hidden sense out of his writings; that is, who were not able to make their own inventions pass for the signification of his fables, and the interpretation of his allegories. Allegory, in the true intention of it, is designed to make clearer as well as stronger impressions on the mind: and, therefore, as they who pretend to foretel future events should be suspected of imposture when they deliver their predictions, like those who governed the oracles of the heathen world, in obscure and equivocal terms, that may be applied afterwards, as they often were, to different and even contrary events; so they, who pretend to teach divine truths in allegorical, symbolical, or any mysterious language, deserve to be suspected of im-

* In ALCIB.

fture likewise. There may be good reasons for concealing, there can never be any such for disguising, which is a degree of falsifying, truth. If men reasoned a little better than they do commonly, and were a little less blinded by prejudices, they would not be such bubbles as to receive on one authority what comes to them really on another. The obscure prophecy, and the abstruse doctrine, when one is interpreted, and the other explained, are not so properly the prophecy of the prophet, nor the doctrine of the doctor, as they are such of the persons who apply the prophecy to some particular event, and determine the doctrine to some particular sense, neither of which was possibly intended by them.

RAPIN says, in his comparison of PLATO and ARISTOTLE, that the symbolical theology of the Egyptians seemed to them the most respectful manner of treating divine subjects; and he quotes JAMBlichus for this observation, that they thought themselves obliged to imitate nature on these occasions, who hides the perfections of the mind under the outward veil of the body. Now the first of these excuses will appear ridiculous enough, if we refer it only to the opinions of men. But if we refer it to any divine revelation, it is still more egregiously absurd. The last is an allegorical excuse for allegory, worthy of JAMBlichus, and little worthy of a remark. But the jesuit gives, in the same paragraph, the true and universal reason, so universal and so true,

true, that I wonder at him for giving it, of all figurative theology. “ The priests, he says, “ who had the keeping of these mysteries, authorised this method to support their credit, and “ to draw veneration to themselves by the respect for those holy things, which they hid “ from the eyes of the people that they might “ not be profaned.”

I CANNOT let this subject go, without taking notice of what my lord BACON says upon it, in the preface to his treatise which he calls *De sapientia*, and might have called more properly *De futilitate, sive de insania, veterum*. In that he makes parables and allegories so essential to religion, that he affirms, that to take them away is to forbid almost all commerce of things divine and human*. Whatever reasons this great author had to make such a declaration, it was rashly made. The expression is allegorical, but the meaning of it is obvious; and therefore I say, that as far as man is concerned in carrying this commerce on, we are justified in suspecting it of enthusiasm or fraud; since allegory has been always a principal instrument of theological deception. The chancellor admits, that it serves to involve and conceal, “ *ad involucreum et velum,*” which is in direct contradiction to it’s proper use, for that is to enlighten and illustrate, “ *ad lumen et illustrationem.*” He chose to say no-

* ——— cum ejusmodi velis et umbris religio gaudeat, ut qui eas toliat, commercia divinarum et humanorum fere interdicit.

thing of the former, rather than to be engaged in disputes, “*potius, quam lites suscipiamus,*” and we may add, rather than offend the clergy. For me, who think it much better not to write at all, than to write under any restraint from delivering the whole truth of things as it appears to me; who should think so, if I was able to write and go to the bottom of every subject as well as he; and who have no cavils nor invectives to fear, when I confine the communication of my thoughts to you and a very few friends, as I do in writing these essays; I shall repeat what I have said already, that the philosopher or divine, who pretends to instruct others by allegorical expressions without an immediate, direct, and intelligible application of the allegory to some proposition or other, has nothing in his thoughts but the supposed allegory; and is mad enough to deceive himself, or knave enough to attempt to impose on those he pretends to instruct. If he has any thing there which he distrusts, and dares not venture to expose naked and stripped of allegory to the undazzled eye of reason, it is too much even to insinuate in such a case, and especially on subjects of the first philosophy. We may compare such theology as this to those artificial beauties, who hide their defects under dress and paint: “*pars minima est ipsa puella
“ fuit.*”

If we suppose the Supreme Being concerned in this commerce, as it is called, we suppose
what

what is very profane and audacious. I apply my lord BACON's words, " profanum quiddam " fonat et audax." Can any thing be more so, than a supposition that the God of truth communicates with men by a wretched human expedient, contrived by them to deceive one another, or to help their imperfect faculties in the conception of things, and in the expression of their conceptions? TULLY * entertained, in this very respect, much more worthy notions of the divine nature. He argues against the vanity of divination by dreams, in answer to his brother, on this principle. If they come from the gods, they are sent for the sake of man: and if they are sent for the sake of man, we ought to believe that all such advertisements must be intelligible to man †. Obscure dreams therefore cannot be such advertisements. They would be repugnant to the majesty of the gods §. When God speaks to his creature, it will be always in terms plain and precise. " Hoc ne feceris. Hoc facito." Thou shalt have none other gods but me. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The Stoics thought to evade this objection against divination by dreams, when they set up their sage, that ideal being, for the sole diviner ‡.

* De Divin. lib. ii.

† Intelligi a nobis dii velle debebant ea, quae nostra nos monebant. Ibid.

§ Obscura somnia minime consentanea sunt majestati deorum. Ibid.

‡ — Stoici autem tui negant quemquam, nisi sapientem, divinum esse posse. Cic. De divin. lib. ii.

BUT TULLY laughed at all these pretensions to a supernatural virtue and knowledge, which CHRYSIPPUS made necessary to divination. He affirmed he knew no person who had them; and concluded from thence, that if he should allow divination, there would be no one found to divine*. Thus may we laugh too, and affirm on long experience, that, if we allowed theological allegory to come from God, with all the pretended types, symbols, and signs, there would be no one found to interpret it, so as to fix the sense of it indisputably: and yet, if the sense be not indisputably fixed, human imposture may pass for divine revelation, and the word of man for the word of God.

IF I would enter into such a detail, in this place, it would be easy to collect almost innumerable examples out of jewish and christian writers, to excuse the laugh, and to justify the affirmation. But instead of that, I shall content myself with giving one or two instances, that occur to my memory, of the use that was made of interpretations of allegory in the pagan theology.

STROBOEUS has preserved a passage of PORPHYRY, which shews that the Pythagoricians labored to discover the hidden sense of HOMER, who had spoke more darkly about gods and demons than any of the antients, in order to confirm or improve their own theology by his: and he

* — Vide igitur, ne, etiamsi divinationem tibi esse concessero — neminem tamen divinum reperire possimus. CIC. De divin. lib. ii.

quotes one of these philosophers, PYTHAGOREUS CHRONIUS, who seemed to make the poet's doctrine conformable to his own rather, than to make his own conformable to the poet's*. But the Stoics were remarkable above all others for putting HOMER and the rest of the poets to this use. HESIOD was put to the same use, and his fables and allegories served to the same impertinent purpose as those of HOMER did. His poem was to some, what he professes at the entrance of it that he intended it should be, a theological rhapsody concerning the generations of gods. It was to others a mere physical allegory concerning the formation of the visible world; and accordingly we find that VELLEIUS accuses ZENO, in the first book Of the nature of the gods, of misinterpreting HESIOD by attributing the names of JUPITER, of JUNO, and VESTA, to inanimate beings alone. VARRO, it is said, did the same: and thus the poem became to some a theogonia, and to others a cosmogonia. Another instance of the success philosophers had in their interpretations of allegories and fables, and of their end in making these interpretations, follows that which has been quoted: for after speaking of what CHRYSIPPUS had writ in his first book Of the nature of the gods, CICERO's interlocutor adds, that this philosopher endeavoured, in the second, to accommodate the fables of ORPHEUS, MUSAEUS, HESIOD, and HOMER, to what he had advanced, "ut etiam veter-

" rimi poëtae, qui haec ne suspicati quidem sint,

* Nec tam se ad poëtae opiniones, quam poëtam ad suas accommodare nititur.

“ Stoici fuisse videantur,” that the most antient poets, who had not even a suspicion that there were any such doctrines, might seem to have been Stoicians. Such examples as these are so far apposite, that they serve to shew how ill fitted allegory is to preserve the true sense of any doctrine, and that an allegorical system is easily made a nose of wax, to be turned any way that the interpreters of it please.

WHILST paganism was thus muffled up in allegory to amuse the vulgar, and to maintain and propagate superstition, another art, in some degree the reverse of this, was employed to promote the true ends of natural religion, and the more effectual reformation of the manners of men. The art I mean is that which instituted rites and ceremonies to be performed, and doctrines, to which they were relative, to be taught, in secret. Antient writers, pagans and christians, speak much of these mysteries, for such they were called: the former with veneration, the latter often with an abhorrence, that little became those who imitated them in so many instances, and who suffered their own mysterious rites to run easily into the very same abuses, into which the others degenerated late. To attempt a minute and circumstantial account of these mysteries, and even to seem to give it, would require much greater knowledge of antiquity than I pretend to have, or would take the trouble of acquiring. They who attempt it have been, and always will be, ridiculously and

vainly

vainly employed, whilst they treat this subject as if they had assisted at the celebration of these mysteries, or had at least been drivers of the asses who carried the machines and implements that served in the celebration of them. They write dogmatically about things which could not be known authentically, nor in a detail of particulars, at the time they were in practice. **DIAGORAS**, the Melian, was proscribed at * Athens for revealing, or pretending to reveal them: and the poet **ÆSCHYLUS** † had like to have been massacred on a bare suspicion, that the people took, at a representation of one of his plays, of something which alluded to them. In a word, these rites were kept secret under the severest penalties above two thousand years ago. How can we hope to have them revealed to us now, by the help of tradition, or history, wherein we find the relations of other things, which were of public notoriety much later, so imperfect and dubious? I pretend therefore to nothing more than the mention of a few general notions concerning these mysteries, which seem probable to me: whatever weight you lay upon them, about which I am not over solicitous, they will be sufficient for my present purpose, and for your information. They will serve to shew how men came nearer and nearer to the knowledge of the true God, and a more rational worship.

THE theology and the mythology of the heathen world were no doubt vastly increased by

* **SUIDAS**. † **CLEM. ALEX. Strom. lib. ii.**

poets, who indulged their imaginations, without any other view perhaps, than the ornament of their works; and by philosophers, who, having, like PLATO, more imagination than knowledge, endeavoured to conceal their ignorance under the veil of allegorical physics and chimerical metaphysics. Thus gods and demons, and other hypothetical beings, were multiplied. Festivals and public devotions multiplied with them. Superstition spread, and external religion, which was made up of nothing else, flourished. But they, who instituted religion for the sake of government, saw that such religion as this would not be sufficient alone to answer their end, nor enforce effectually the obligations of public and private morality. It looked no farther than the present system of things, and in this they observed no settled distinction made by their gods between the religious and the irreligious, the best and the worst of men. It was not sufficient, they thought, therefore, either to justify the providence of the gods, or to determine the conduct of men. The imaginary unjust distribution of good and evil had been at all times a great stumbling block to theistical philosophers: and we see accordingly that hypotheses, contrived to solve the difficulty, had obtained in an antiquity beyond our oldest traditions. Such was that of the good and evil principle. Such was that of a future state of rewards and punishments, and of a metempsychosis. Now what they had put to a philosophical, they put to a political use: and the last of these

these was at least one principal, and I suppose the principal, doctrine taught in the mysteries that they instituted.

THE mysteries of ISIS and those of MITHRAS seem to have been the most antient: and the former were those which INACHUS and ORPHEUS carried into Greece. What they were in their original institution; how they were propagated in several countries under the invocation, to use an expression of your church, of different divinities; what alterations from one to another they received; or how those of Eleusis came to be more universal and more revered than the rest, I am unable to tell; and you, I believe, not much concerned to know. But if you ask me how they came to be called mysteries, tho' their principal doctrine, the doctrine of a future state, was publicly known, as I think it was, my answer is ready. This doctrine, altho' known, and the solemn rites that belonged to it, were mysteries among the pagans, just as the doctrines and rites of baptism and the Lord's supper were mysteries in the first ages of the christian church. A general and confused notion of them transpired. But neither these doctrines, nor the mystical rites and ceremonies, were explained even to the catechumens, and much less to others. Nay the whole inward doctrine of the eucharisty was not opened to all those who received it, to those whom St. AUSTIN calls tardiores: and the reason he gives for this reserve is, that they might not despise what they

they saw, "ne contemnant quod vident." He thought, it seems, that no explanation would prevent this so effectually as an air of mystery maintained by the figurative and enigmatical terms in which the fathers affected to speak on all such subjects to the public. This precaution was carried so far, that a curtain was drawn to hide the altar and the priest from the sight of the congregation, when he was about to consecrate, as I remember to have read in some of your writers. Several ages passed, before the pastors of the church thought it safe to let the people know, that a few genuflexions, a few signs of the cross, a few thumps on the breast, and the muttering of a few words, were sufficient to draw God down from heaven, and to transubstantiate bread and wine into his flesh and blood.

THIS air of mystery produced not only the negative good that has been mentioned, it produced likewise a positive good of much consequence. The christian fathers found it necessary, on one hand, to admit converts through several stages of preparation into the church; and, on the other, to keep up the fervor of these candidates for regeneration, and the consequence of it, salvation. The expedient of mystery answered both purposes. It kept them out of the whole secret, as long as that was necessary: and it excited in the meantime their curiosity, and holy impatience, to be in it. St. AUSTIN, who mentions the first, mentions the second purpose. He speaks, in one of

his epistles, of the public prayers made to God, that he would inspire the catechumens with a desire of regeneration; “*ut eis desiderium regenerationis inspiraret:*” and in another part of his works, he avows the human means that were employed for a very human reason, a reason drawn from the weakness of the human mind. He says, that altho the catechumens could have borne a communication of the sacraments to them, this was not done however, that the more honorably these sacraments were hid, the more earnestly this communication might be desired by them. “*Etsi catechumenis sacramenta fidelium non produntur; non ideo fit, quod ea ferre non possunt; sed ut ab eis tanto ardentius concupiscantur, quanto honorabilius occultantur.*”

OTHER authorities might be cited, and other instances produced, if they were necessary; for this was the general policy of the christian church. But there is no need of any authority to confirm that of St. AUSTIN, in such a case as this: and the two instances I have brought are sufficient to shew, for what reasons mystery was established in the heathen devotions, by shewing those for which it was introduced and maintained in the christian devotions. The latter, in this respect, were copies of the former: and these copies, which we have in our hands, enable us to judge of the originals, which we have not.

THE Christians, the primitive Christians themselves,
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selves, could not revere their sacred mysteries more than the pagans did theirs. They could not prepare for them, nor assist at them, with greater attention of mind, with greater purity of heart, nor with greater reverence and awe, than the pagans prepared for and assisted at theirs. The pagans confessed their crimes: and they went through public and private purgations, which we may call penitences, long before they could be admitted to initiation: such, for instance, as abstinence from women and from several sorts of food, with different austerities that are mentioned by PORPHYRY, and that writer of milesian tales, APULLEIUS: after which the public proclamation, “*Procul ite profani,*” and the private examination of every one who presented himself, “*An purus ades?*” followed constantly. No man, who was noted for crimes, durst be a candidate for initiation: and NERO, as much an emperor and a tyrant as he was, durst not present himself as such, after he had killed his mother. We find the dispositions, and the manner, in which they were required to assist at these mysterious rites and ceremonies, described in terms that might edify the most pious and orthodox ears. Let me quote the first that occurs to me, tho it is not the strongest that might be produced with the pains of a little search. The passage is in that oration, which TULLY made on the occasion of some answers given by the haruspices, whom the senate had consulted. In that oration, speaking of those mysteries which CLODIUS had polluted; and exaggerating

gerating the crime, he takes notice that they were such as forbid, not only curious, but even wandering eyes, and excluded not only the wicked, but the imprudent. “ Non solum curiosos oculos “ excludit, sed etiam errantes—quo non modo “ improbitas, sed ne imprudentia quidem, possit “ intrare.” Such was the general character, such the particular behaviour, required of the persons initiated into these sacred mysteries: and the excitements to the observation of all that was thus required could not be greater; since they are summed up by TULLY, who had been initiated himself, in this, that the initiated learned how to live with joy, and to die with better hopes; “ cum lætitia vivendi rationem, et cum spe meliore moriendi*.” They were raised “ ad “ præsentiam et participationem deorum,” says JAMBlichus; a blessing which the Egyptians first enjoyed according to him. Their souls were purged and purified, till they became such as they had been in their original state, and before their descent into the prison of the body. When they left the body, they took their flight at once to the islands of the blessed; nay they became gods, or like to gods, according to some seraphic doctors of platonician divinity: whilst those of the profane, unpurged, unpurified, and clogged by the gross affections of the body; stuck in dirt and wallowed in mire †.

* Cic. De leg. lib. ii.

† In coeno et luto volutari. Diog. Laërt.

SECTION IV.

IT is easy to conceive, by this short account of the heathen mysteries, how well this inward religion, for such I may call it in contradistinction to vulgar paganism, was calculated to form some particular men to virtue and piety, and to promote by consequence so far the good of society, which was the great end of the first legislators, by means more reasonable than those of vulgar religion. The celebration of these mysteries lasted several days, and returned often enough, to afford frequent opportunities of initiation to those of both sexes who were desirous of it, as well as of confirmation and improvement, to those who had been already initiated. Lessons of morality were thus frequently renewed, habits of piety were solemnly maintained; and, to enforce them all, that great sanction, which consists in the rewards and punishments of another life, and which had been added very wisely to the law of nature by human institution, and in belief at least, if not originally and by divine institution, was inculcated so, that every man must apply it to himself, and the impression be lasting.

It may be said, perhaps, that no reformation of manners, no degree of virtue and piety, beyond those which vulgar paganism was sufficient to procure, can be justly ascribed to these institutions; whereas they maintained much, at least, of the same rank polytheism in belief, and the same rank idolatry

idolatry in practice. If this be said, the objection will be easily answered, as far as it relates to the effect they had, by running a parallel, as I shall do in another essay, between pagan and christian reformation of manners: for if it appears, as I think it will, that the latter has in this respect, on the whole, no advantage to boast above the former, some reformation must be allowed to have been wrought by the pagan system of religion; after which there can remain no dispute whether this reformation was owing to the inward and hidden, rather than to the outward and public, part of this system.

BUT I consider here the theology and religion of the heathen with regard to their nature, not to their effects: and I shall proceed therefore to observe, that by the mysteries hitherto spoken of I mean only such as are called the lesser, and as seem to have been preparatory to the greater, which remain to be spoken of. There were certain stages through which men were admitted by slow steps into the whole mystery of christianity: So they were admitted likewise into that of heathenism. The first legislators contented themselves to establish a vulgar religion, in compliance with the ignorance and superstition of the savage vulgar. But they prepared, at the same time, the means of supplying it's defects, and of leading men little by little, and by such a progression as their different talents and characters rendered them capable of making, to a better knowledge of natural theology and natural

tural religion, from fiction to truth, from allegory to that which allegory was intended to signify. There was a state of purgation, a state of initiation, and a state of consummation. The two first were, I believe, those of the lesser, and the last that of the greater, mysteries.

HE who has been curious to examine the religious notions of rude, ignorant, and half-stupid people, in the pale of the christian church, as well as out of it, will not be apt to wonder that there were many in the heathen world who remained contented with the vulgar religion, and little curious about the mysteries; nor that they were led rather by example, than by reflection, to initiation, when it became almost as general among them as baptism is among us; and to the belief of a future state. Now such as these might have been revolted against the mysteries, if they had found the gods they were accustomed to adore wholly degraded in them. These gods, therefore, were to keep their places in some sort, “*suus cuique*” “*honus;*” tho many fabulous stories about them were exploded, or else were represented as allegories, not facts, and explained in a better sense. The doctrine too of a future state of rewards and punishments would have made less impression on such minds, perhaps, if it had not been taught to the eyes, as well as to the ears, by solemn ceremonies and pompous shews. Ceremonies, therefore, and shews seem to have been instituted, and to have been made parts of these mysteries. But then

then there were other persons, and the number of these increased as philosophy came to be more and more cultivated, who could not bear to have the absurdities of polytheism, however mitigated, imposed upon them in any sort, nor think it religion to worship men who had been made gods by poetical licence, with all their vices about them. They could not assist at the ridiculous rites of idolatry, nor be spectators of all the puppet-shews of devotion, without being provoked to laughter or to indignation.

I CAN easily believe, that the foolish creeds, and the burlesque rites of paganism were rendered, in the preparatory mysteries, a little less shocking to the common sense of those in whom knowledge began to get the better of prejudice. But this reformation and improvement could not be carried far at once. Allegory served to disguise ignorance, and to muffle up even knowledge in mystery among the vulgar. To cure this abuse, to take off these masks, and to lay allegory aside whenever it did not serve to illustrate truth, and to improve or facilitate knowledge, required time: and men, who had been bred in darkness, were to be accustomed to the light by degrees. This I imagine that the mysteries did, and were contrived to do. If too much light had been let in at once upon the initiated, they would have been dazzled and hurt by it. Rather than suffer the grossest objects of their superstition to be suddenly removed, these idiots might have clung to them the
more

more closely: just as we have seen in France, that popular tumults have arisen when some bishops have attempted to take away images, and to forbid devotions in which the common people had been too long indulged by the connivance or by the fraud of their pastors. On the other hand, the reformation of vulgar religion, which was wrought by the lesser mysteries, was too little certainly for those who were able to frame true notions of a Supreme Being, and of the worship due to him from his creatures. Thus it became necessary to make a sort of political composition with error: it became necessary for the institutors of religions to separate the few from the many, and to carry the first on alone from initiation to consummation, from the lesser to the greater mysteries. There are good, and I think sufficient, grounds to be persuaded that the whole system of polytheism was unravelled in the greater mysteries, or that no more of it was retained than what might be rendered consistent with monotheism, with the belief of one supreme self-existent Being. Now, on the principles on which this was done, some of the established ceremonies of vulgar religion might seem quite innocent, and others might be tolerated. Some indulgence, and even a kind of occasional conformity to them, could not be safely refused in countries where such superstitions had long prevailed, where they were incorporated into the very frame of government, and where powerful bodies of men had a particular interest in the support of them.

The end of the First volume.



