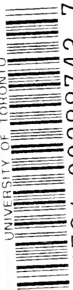

SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON

THE MAN AND HIS PHILOSOPHY

PROFESSOR VEITCH

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SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON:

THE MAN AND HIS PHILOSOPHY.

TWO LECTURES

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE EDINBURGH PHILOSOPHICAL INSTITUTION,
JANUARY AND FEBRUARY 1883

BY

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PREFATORY NOTE.

These Lectures are printed almost as they were delivered. To the Second, that more specially on the Philosophy, I have added a few passages omitted in speaking, owing to the limit of time, but fitted to develop some of the points more fully.

J. V.

The College, Glasgow,
February 1883.

LECTURE I.

I. PHILOSOPHY IN SCOTLAND BEFORE HAMILTON.—THE REGENTING AND THE PROFESSORIATE.

The study of Mental Philosophy has long been a highly characteristic feature of the university system of Scotland. Logic, Physics, and Ethics formed the almost exclusive subjects of instruction in the Arts' Faculty of the pre-Reformation universities—viz., St Andrews, Glasgow, Aberdeen—at their foundation in the fifteenth century, and for a long time afterwards. During the fifteenth, sixteenth, and even the seventeenth centuries, there was hardly a university on the continent of Europe at any time, which did not contain,—I might almost say, was not made famous by—a Scottish Regent or Professor of Philosophy, who had learned his dialectic in his native university. Just as the mediæval Scot sought service and fame on foreign battle-fields, so his poorer compatriot sought the laurel of learning in foreign universities. "The Scots," said Erasmus, "take a natural delight in dialectical subtleties;" and the names of Major, Lockhart, and Wedderburn in the

University of Paris, Mark Duncan in Saumur, Robert Balfour in Bordeaux, Gilbert Jack in Leyden, and numerous others, testify to the fact that dialectic was the strong and cultivated faculty of the Scot all through those times.

In those centuries no doubt the aim of university instruction was culture, rather than the search after new truths, or even putting men in the way of seeking new truths. It was culture, too, of a somewhat narrow kind, being that mainly of intellectual acuteness, dexterity in a debate, in *propugning* or *impugning* a given thesis. It was a culture, in fact, almost exclusively based on the Logic and Philosophy of Aristotle. The circumstances of the times led to this, the character of the teachers as mainly ecclesiastics, but above all the system of teaching which existed, that of *regenting*, as it was called. This meant that the student was handed over at the commencement of his university studies to a single teacher, who carried him through the four years' course, instructing him in the different subjects in turn, and finally presenting him for graduation. The teaching was mainly from appointed text-books, or from *dictata* given by the regent, in the different subjects. These the student had to master. There was little or no room for free thought on the part either of teacher or pupil. The practice of disputation, which allowed some scope for individual thought, hardly rose beyond arguments *pro* and *con* on the given thesis. It is thus clear that there could not be much progress in philosophical speculation or thought on such a system, even had the state of the country been tranquil, free from those devastating English wars,

those civil broils, those constant revolutions in State and Church, which, up to 1688, interfered with intellectual concentration, imperilled the very existence of the universities, and made the life of the Scottish scholar in his own land almost impossible. Any fresh thought which we find in these times was the swell of a wave from without. The existing theses which have come down to us show ever and anon the passing influence of a great thinker, foreign to our soil. In the sixteenth century we find traces of the influence of Ramus, in the seventeenth of Descartes and Locke. But it was only as an echo from other lands; free thought had not yet arisen in the Scottish universities: they had yet no voice of their own; they had not conquered any truth for themselves, and thus as yet had no title to mould the philosophy of other nations.

But a beneficial change and reform took place in the beginning and towards the middle of the eighteenth century. In the universities the old regenting system was broken up; the different subjects of the curriculum were dis tributed among different teachers; the system of the professoriate arose; the student came in contact with a new teacher at every term in his course; dictation and text-books were comparatively superseded; the professor became free to think for himself, was to a certain extent under an obligation to do so. Lecturing in English was substituted for dictation in Latin. There was also in the country greater calm and leisure for reflection; and now it was that there arose the first movement of that free thought and independent examination of the great problems of speculation, — regarding man, the world, and God, — which has grown continuously

within the last hundred and fifty years, and which has been sustained, increased, and widened by a succession of men of original power, industrious research, and simple life and manners, whose names are an honour to any land. Need I mention Turnbull and Campbell of Aberdeen; Gerschom Carmichael, Francis Hutcheson, Adam Smith, Thomas Reid of Glasgow; Adam Ferguson, Dugald Stewart, Thomas Brown, and Sir William Hamilton of Edinburgh? And ought I not to add to the memorable list, though his thinking was cast in a somewhat different mould, James Frederick Ferrier of St Andrews?[1]

And what is more, the course of thought which rose and flowed onwards since the beginning of last century to our own day, has been so continuous and so marked in feature and character as to have deserved and received the name of a School of Philosophy; a school which has influenced the speculative mind alike of France and America, which mainly helped to raise the academic thought of France in the early part of this century above the husks of sensationalism and materialism, and to elevate and beautify it with a sense of the dignity of man, and the feeling of a true spiritualism.

Now I am not here to stand up for every conclusion of this school or of any school. Nor am I prepared to say that it does not require supplement, widening, in some respects courage and elevation. I do not believe in traditionalism in philosophy any more than I believe in stagnation in human life. What we gain in philo-

[1] These and other facts in the history of the Scottish universities were stated by the present writer in two contributions to *Mind*, Nos. v. vi., January and April, 1877.

sophy must be gained for ourselves and by ourselves. It implies a personal quest, and a personal conquest. This is the key to its power and its discipline. But I am prepared to say this, that the school of Scottish Philosophy has represented nationality in thought and feeling; it is sprung from the soil as much as the poetry of Scotland is native born; it is instinct with the spirit of the cautious, sober, circumspect, yet profoundly reflective and analytic turn, of the best type of the Scottish mind. In its origin and main features it has no marks about it of a foreign importation, often as sickly as it is soulless; it is a genuine attempt by genuine men and honest effort to find solutions of the ever-pressing questions of our lives, human personality, freedom, immortality, the nature and meaning of the external world, the nature and meaning of God Himself, and of our relations to Him. And no student of philosophy, no historian of philosophy, can either fairly or intelligently pass by the contribution which Scotland has made to the great science of Mental Philosophy. Any method of philosophising which shall lead a man to do this, is an arbitrary and an arrogant one, grounded neither on the facts of history nor the warrant of reason.

I must in this connection emphasise two facts: the one, that independent speculative thought in Scotland was really contemporaneous with the breaking up of the regenting system and the institution of the professorial; and the other, that the philosophy of Scotland was born, grew up, and was nourished in the universities of the country. The regenting system is essentially the system of teaching which has prevailed, and which now prevails,

in Oxford and Cambridge. It is a system which lives and has always lived on books and text-books, written by others, and so provided for its use. It looks to preparation for examination and graduation merely, or at least mainly. It lives, in fact, on the scraps which fall from other men's tables. It has given rise to no independent course of thinking, to no school of philosophy, either in Oxford or Cambridge. Nay, the exception in this case proves the rule; for the period in Cambridge during which there was an outcome of independent thinking sufficient to be named a school, the epoch of the middle of the seventeenth century, illustrious by the names of Henry More and Ralph Cudworth, to say nothing of Gale, Burnet, Cumberland, and Culverwell, was a time in which the professorial overshadowed the tutorial or regenting element in the university. More and Cudworth remained practically all their lives as Fellows of Christ Church, and they were lecturing professors in the Scottish sense of the term, never accepting ecclesiastical preferment. These are facts worthy of the consideration of university reformers, or at least innovators in our own time. They are worth considering in connection with the legitimate influence of the two opposing systems, the tutorial and the professorial, which have substantially characterised the universities of England and Scotland.

I must further emphasise the fact that the free speculative thought of Scotland was born in the universities of the country; for we must go back to Carmichael and especially to Francis Hutcheson in Glasgow for its true origin. Hutcheson was appointed to the Chair of Moral Philosophy in Glasgow in 1729, exactly two years after

the old regenting system had been broken up in that university. This important fact regarding the origin of speculative thought in our country, has not escaped the keen eye of Cousin. It is almost peculiar to Scotland. In France the free thought of the country was represented by Descartes and Malebranche, in Holland by Spinoza, in England by Locke, followed by Collins and Dodwell: not one of them men identified with the universities of their country, rather out of sympathy with them. Why this was so, why free speculative thought about the fundamental questions of metaphysics, morals, and theology, originated and was continued in the universities of this country, may be explained partly by the fact that the men in the universities represented the freedom, the individualism which undoubtedly characterised the Presbyterianism of the time, as against Episcopacy and the dogmatism of Church authority; partly also by the apparently natural and historical tendency of the Scottish intellect to reasoning and discussion on first principles. That Scottish speculative thought was a product of the universities, that it was given first to a body of students in the way of lectures, and not in the form of books for the world, may serve to explain its moderation, some people would say its timidity, on purely speculative questions; certainly to explain the simple, untechnical style in which it is for the most part clothed.

I cannot here notice all even of the main features of the Scottish school of thought. But I must notice one which is intimately connected with the impulse which helped to give it birth, I mean its attitude to political freedom. An unswerving declaration in favour of polit-

ical liberty has been the feature of the system and the men, since its first uprising. In the hands of Carmichael and Hutcheson, Scottish thought was a reaction, a protest, against two sets of doctrines, that of Hobbes, and that of Locke, the latter, at least, as interpreted by Collins and Dodwell. It revolted against the despotic principles of Hobbes, and in this it represented thoroughly the national feeling; for the country had had enough of uncontrolled despotic power in the time of Charles II., the Lauderdales and the Middletons, who had carried out the unrelenting behests successively of a sensualist and a concealed Papist on the throne. We are apt to forget in these times what we owe to the Scottish philosophy and the teaching of the Scottish universities in our most intimate social condition. It has been the strongest ally of the spirit of freedom in this country. Thomas Reid, not less than Burke and Wordsworth, hailed with fervour the early promise of the recognition of the rights of a nation in the dawn of the French Revolution. And out of the silent thought matured in the Scottish universities arose that system of free political economy which ranked Adam Smith for its master, Dugald Stewart for its eloquent expounder, and Russell, Palmerston, Horner, and Lauderdale for its practical disciples.

While Scottish thought has been true to the cause of political freedom, it has been, at the same time, always opposed to the excess, the licence, of individual opinion. It has sought ever to put in the foreground the convictions at the heart of humanity, those beliefs which give it true dignity. It has held by these against passing individual assault and criticism, against indi-

vidual conceit and caprice; it has held by freedom against fatalism, a disinterested theory of morals against selfishness, and a rational theism. If the poetry of Burns may be described, as I think it may, as common-sense glorified, the philosophy of Scotland may be characterised as the common-sense of mankind analysed, purified, and vindicated.

II. HAMILTON—LIFE AND WRITINGS.

Dr Thomas Reid was still alive in a ripe and honoured old age in the College Court of Glasgow, when William Hamilton, the son of a professor there, was born in the same Court in 1788. His immediate ancestors were professors of medicine. But there lurked somewhat obscurely the fact that his more remote forefathers had been lairds, knights, baronets; had held estates, Preston, Fingalton, Airdrie; that they were a very old branch of the house of Hamilton. They had fought, and some of them had fallen, at Flodden, Langside, and Worcester. A very near ancestor had been fired with the Covenanting spirit; he defeated Claverhouse at Drumclog, and subsequently was beaten at Bothwell Brig. Hamilton's mother, too, an Elizabeth Stirling, was of a good old line, the Stirlings of Cadder. This descent had a strong fascination for him; the historical imagination was a powerful element in his nature and work; it largely moulded all his philosophical labours and thought, and it quickened him, in the early years of his youth and manhood, to special inquiry into the history of his own line. The result was that

he succeeded in serving himself heir to this old line, and in being declared by a jury before the Sheriff of Edinburgh (1816) the rightful inheritor of the baronetcy of Preston, created in 1673. There was a good deal in the story of the great house of Cadzow, of which, I daresay, Sir William was inwardly proud. We may at least note a certain transformation of the fervid Covenanting spirit, and the keen force of the ancestral sword-arm, in the intensity of purpose and the unsparing dialectic of the philosophic representative of the Preston branch.

Young Hamilton entered the University of Glasgow, as a regular student, at the age of fifteen (1803-4). He got a general training from the studies of the place; but that was all. The only distinctive philosophy taught was a kind of sensationalism by James Mylne, the Professor of Moral Philosophy, and this clearly never had any influence on Hamilton's subsequent speculative thought. The Philosophy classes in Glasgow had fallen, under a system of nepotic patronage, from the level of Hutcheson and Reid, almost to a commonplace drill in English composition. But there was the Snell Exhibition there, which had already enabled Adam Smith and Archibald Alison to go to Oxford. Hamilton was preferred to this exhibition, and he went to Oxford in 1807. Intellectual life there at this date was at but a low ebb. The tutorial system of working with text-books was the only means of academic training. There was no freshness, no originality. As Hamilton himself tells us, if the notions got from Aristotle had been taken from the heads of the tutors, not an idea would have remained. Some young men there were in the Common Room of Oriel who were destined to leave their mark on Eng-

lish thought, such as Copleston and Whately. But with these Hamilton had apparently no intercourse. At the same time, Hamilton's Oxford life and studies were to him of incalculable value. The opening for philosophical books which the examination *in Literis Humanioribus* afforded, led him to a study of Aristotle, especially the Organon, which coloured and directed the whole course of his subsequent philosophical thinking. His wide and accurate acquaintance with Greek and Latin philosophy attracted the attention and admiration of the examiners, as it doubtless somewhat puzzled them. And we can see in the close study of the Organon of Aristotle, which Hamilton began at Oxford, and continued through his lifetime, the discipline of that extraordinary dialectic, which was the main feature of his philosophical genius.

Hamilton left Oxford in 1810. With all his distinction there, he got no fellowship. The college feeling was distinctly against the Scot having part or lot in the prizes of the place. Hamilton's friend, Lockhart, once wrote under a notice regarding a fellowship, " No Scotsman need apply." Such was the strength of the decaying English prejudice against Scotsmen, even in the present century, and that in a seat of learning, where we might expect at least men to be regarded for their qualities as men and scholars.

The prospects of life at this time for Hamilton were not brilliant. He had had some idea of following medicine as a profession, as his father and grandfather had done before him, but this he now abandoned; and finally, in July 1813, he passed as advocate at the Scottish Bar. After this he took up his resi-

dence with his mother in Edinburgh. He cannot be said to have made any particular way at the Bar. He was not a ready speaker, had, in fact, a certain nervous hesitation in his speech, which was against his success in public appearances. His, besides, was not the kind of mind that could accommodate itself to the routine of the prosperous advocate's work. He took an interest in civil law and in antiquarian and genealogical cases. But, on the whole, the famous library in the hall down-stairs had greatly more attraction for him than the pacing of the Parliament House. The public profession of the advocate was very much a profession; the real interest and work of the man, his inner life, lay thenceforward in the pursuits of the scholar and the thinker, and these in forms so rich, varied, recondite, and profound, as to admit of almost no parallel in this century in Great Britain.

For sixteen years, from 1813 to 1829, the life of Hamilton is an interesting object of contemplation, alike in its surroundings and in itself. Not doing much at the Bar, and opposed to the dominant political party of the time, and taking little part in political action, his life was that of the pure thinker and scholar, working in lines mostly new to Scottish thought. There was much literary activity about him in Edinburgh, though not of a cast he greatly cared for. Jeffrey and the 'Edinburgh Review,' Wilson and 'Blackwood,' supplied the reading public with a brilliant periodical literature and with their critical estimates of authors. Lockhart, De Quincey, and Hogg were all exerting an influence. Hamilton, though a Whig in politics in that bitter time, was the intimate friend and associate of Lockhart and Wilson, was

privy even to the "Chaldee MS.," in which he figures as "the black eagle of the desert," and to which he is said to have contributed a verse. Somehow, shortly after this, owing probably to some political reference, Hamilton's friendship with Lockhart ceased for ever, in this world at least.

The greatest and most illustrious man of all, Walter Scott, had practically abandoned the field of poetry for that grand pageantry of picture, character, and scenery, of which 'Waverley' was the herald. Each succeeding novel was waited for and welcomed, as no books had been before. Out of them arose the literary atmosphere which people breathed. But, with all deference to Scott and his work, with the fullest appreciation of it, there were interests and questions which he left wholly untouched, and which were alien to the whole cast of his mind. These were the speculative interests and the problems of reflection. And our national literature would have been poorer, ay, incomplete, but for that complementary side of it, that side of lofty abstract speculative thought which was represented by Hamilton, —a noble toil, carried on unknown to the world, and without any stimulus of applause. It is well to have story, legend, and history pictorially delineated; it is well to appeal to the imagination by glowing ideals, to revel in the chambers of imagery; but that national life which is never quickened to ask questions regarding human origin and destiny,—Whence am I? Whither do I go? regarding personality and freedom, and the great realities of the unseen world which encompasses us, wants the touch which makes it pure, reverent, and in the highest form self-conscious. We need the emotions

which spring from the sense of the Infinite around us; otherwise worldly life and interests will very soon make us less than men. Nay, do you even for a moment imagine that if the reflective thought of the country were bounded by phænomenalism, by materialism, by Comtism, by the world of sight and touch, if every human aspiration lay self-locked there, if speculative thought never opened an outlook into the spiritual world, you could possibly have any subject of the highest artistic power, any subject that would thrill and purify you, either even the chivalrous ride of William of Deloraine from Branksome to Melrose, or the heroism of Jeanie Deans, or the protestation of fidelity, amid constrained betrayal, that fell from the bloodless and faltering lips of Lucy Ashton? Nor could the great master of fiction even have quietly resigned himself to rest after life's turmoil, had this been all he saw and felt, or said :—

> "Won is the glory, and the grief is past."

There is one man who flits across this period of Hamilton's life, whose powers were as yet latent, though not without a dawning promise of what they were one day to become. Thomas Carlyle was now in Edinburgh, first as a student, and then after his marriage as a resident in Comely Bank. He and Hamilton had met, felt the power of each other, and become friends.

"Perhaps," says Carlyle, "it was in 1824 or 1825. I recollect right well the bright affable manners of Sir William, radiant with frank kindliness, honest humanity, and intelligence ready to help; and how completely prepossessing they were! A fine firm figure of middle

height; one of the finest cheerfully-serious human faces, of square, solid, yet rather *aquiline* type, . . . and a pair of the beautifullest, kindly-beaming hazel eyes, well open, and every now and then with a lambency of smiling fire in them, which I always remember as with trust and gratitude. . . .

"I recollect hearing much more of him in 1826 and onward than formerly; to what depths he had gone in study of philosophy; of his simple, independent, meditative habits, ruggedly athletic modes of exercise, fondness for his big dog, &c.; everybody seemed to speak of him with favour, those of his immediate acquaintance uniformly with affectionate respect." After referring to his conversational powers, he adds: "The tones of his voice were themselves attractive, physiognomic of the man: a strong, carelessly melodious tenor voice, the sound of it betokening seriousness and cheerfulness; occasionally something of slightly remonstrative was in the undertones, indicating well in the background possibilities of virtuous wrath and fire; seldom anything of laughter, of levity never anything; thoroughly a serious, cheerful, sincere, and kindly voice, with looks corresponding."[1]

This liking of Carlyle for Hamilton, one whose intellectual character was in several respects the antithesis of his own, is a remarkable fact. And it is hardly less remarkable that in the 'Reminiscences' which have made such havoc of Carlyle's early friends and his own former estimates of them, and to some extent of his own reputation, his view of Hamilton seems to have remained substantially unchanged. Carlyle therein shows but a poor opinion of the Edinburgh men of letters whom he

[1] *Memoir*, p. 125.

met at this period, did not think them deep, or of high moral purpose; but to the end he makes an exception in favour of Hamilton, of whom he always speaks as grandly "honest," and thoroughly in "earnest" in the work of life. The keen instinct of Carlyle had felt the intensity and the unworldliness of his friend. And the two no doubt thoroughly agreed in conviction, though from entirely opposite points of view, that there were deeper questions and higher interests for man than were represented in the somewhat smoothed, *bornée*, and ephemeral literature that was current and accepted in the Edinburgh of the time.

But was there to be no outcome of all those days and nights of reading and thinking? For some time it seemed as if there was not to be any. Hamilton was never spontaneously inclined to composition, and his ideal of a piece of literary work was so high as to repress his effort at completion. Then he lost the Moral Philosophy Chair in 1820, when his friend Wilson was appointed. The Professorship of Civil History, which he got in 1821, was almost a nominal thing, though his lectures were fresh and well appreciated; but his disappointment about the Chair of Moral Philosophy had the effect of throwing him back on his habits of private study. And now he was deep in the modern Latin poets, George Buchanan especially, and Balde, Sannazarius, Vida, Fracastorius, and the two Scaligers. These were read and conned with the utmost minuteness; parallel passages and phrases were hunted up with all the ardour and fidelity of a German editor. Then he found time for examining the pretensions of phrenology, and for physiological research into the structure of brain and skull.

Again he would discuss before the Royal Society a new theory of the Greek verb, and cite grammarians, whose very names awoke strange echoes in Edinburgh. Mesmerism, too, with its thrilling suggestions for the imagination, greatly fascinated him and occupied his time.

But all this was still unsatisfactory. It was apart from the main work of his life. To that he had as yet given no effect; but fortunately in 1829 two events occurred. The one was that Sir William married, and the other was that Mr Macvey Napier was appointed to the editorship of the 'Edinburgh Review.' These circumstances supplied the stimulus awanting. There was the need now for some practical effort. Lady Hamilton's wifely devotion, and her remarkable practical ability were shown in many ways, but in none more than keeping her husband to the literary and philosophical work actually in hand, saying virtually, this is to be done now and nothing further or other engaged in. This led to something being really done. And then there were Mr Napier's profound belief in Sir William's powers and attainments, his sympathy with and toleration of his irregularities as a contributor who could keep neither time nor bounds, his urgency to get the contribution finished. This influence, co-operating with that of Lady Hamilton, simply secured Hamilton's work for the world, saved him from utter absorption in his world of rare, noble, and elevated, but ever increasingly unattainable ideals. Otherwise the serene sea of abstract thought would have held him becalmed for life.

The first contribution to the 'Review' was the essay on "The Writings of Cousin, and Philosophy of the Unconditioned," in 1829. With this may be grouped

that on "Brown's Writings, and Philosophy of Perception," 1830; that on "Logic," 1833; that on "Idealism and Arthur Collier," in 1839 (a slight notice). These represent the properly philosophical portion. His interest in researches regarding the universities of the Continent and Britain, his views of university education and of university patronage, are represented by the articles on "The State of the English Universities," and "Oxford,"—"The Right of Dissenters to admission into the English Universities." The essay on the "Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum," 1831, the national satire of Germany, represents his curious, minute, out-of-the-way knowledge of the literature and controversies of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. His views of the means of education and culture come out in the article on "The Study of Mathematics," 1836.

The contributions to the 'Review' represent pretty well the different lines of his intellectual interest, with the exceptions of the study of Modern Latin Poetry, the Life and Times of Buchanan, and Luther and the Lutheran Writings. To his labours in those departments he did no justice in print. The whole of the articles show the wonderful individuality of the author. But one man living could have written them, and that was Hamilton himself. All of them show rare, out-of-the-way research and learning, a strong stern independence, a keen critical and polemical spirit, and a dialectic almost unparalleled in fineness and edge. The philosophical articles were almost wholly new in spirit, in language, in style. They are solid, condensed bodies of thought. There is a supreme indifference in them to the passing questions of the day or hour. They are the

work of a man whose eye is fixed on, absorbed by the problem and the meaning, the very meaning of reality to us, the reality of an outward world, of man, the nature and scope of our knowledge of God, the limits of human thinking and knowledge. Withal, there are touches of literary beauty and grace, antithesis, the power of contrast and pathos, that charm amid the keen cold dialectic and the transcendent thought, as wild flowers on an Alpine height.

Complaints were made in this country, at the time, of the abstract and somewhat technical form of those articles. This arose partly from the prevailing unacquaintance with the course of Continental speculation, and its terms; but chiefly from this, that the mode of presenting the subjects, in themselves somewhat abstract, was so thorough, penetrating, and ultimate, that people unaccustomed to philosophical reflection were unable to rise to the comprehensive point of view of the author. Hamilton is no writer for the indolent or the irreflective. Yet it was by his rising to the height of the loftiest generalisations, the most completely comprehensive statements, in philosophy, that he advanced the decision of the debated questions. No man can do real good in philosophy by pottering in its byways, or only nibbling at this or that question.

I do not know that there is quite a parallel to the philosophical reputation, at home and abroad, which was gained by those comparatively fragmentary contributions to speculative philosophy. They exhibited a rare devotion to the noblest ideal of intellectual effort, an unswerving faith in what is highest and best for man.

There is an indifference to so-called practical interests and passing worldly pursuits,—the writer knowing well that in those discussions lay the germ of future action and the power of future practice, through a regulation of the sphere of knowledge itself. And thus it was that the regard and the admiration of the thinkers of continental Europe was drawn to poor and far-away Scotland, and its almost solitary philosophical scholar.

Sir William's articles on the universities have not had their true merits generally recognised. They really were the first writings in this country which showed anything like a competent knowledge of the university systems of continental Europe, and of their relations to those of England and Scotland. All through them there run the singularly vigorous and elevated ideal of what university instruction should aim at, the little measured scorn of mere professional attainments, and the lofty view of the intellectual man as an end in himself, not an instrument simply for work. His criticism of Oxford bore fruit in the Commission of 1850. It led to the two great lines of reform—viz., the restoration of the university element, which had been dwarfed by the colleges; and of the old practice of public lectures and professorial education, as opposed to the merely tutorial system. It is in these directions that changes are taking place in Oxford, even now. Dean Stanley, Mr Maurice, and the Dean of Wells, Oxford Commissioners, have all borne testimony to the direct and emphatic influence of those articles by Hamilton in the 'Review.'

The incidents in Hamilton's life after this may be briefly told. He was appointed to the Chair of Logic and Metaphysics in the University of Edinburgh, in July

1836, after a considerable amount of trouble in dealing with the prejudices and obfuscations of the body who had the power of election, the Town Council. He got the Chair by four votes over Mr Isaac Taylor.

Of Hamilton's power as a teacher I shall only say that he inspired the youth who listened to him by the feeling of an absolutely disinterested love of truth; of a simple life devoted to the walks of abstract thought, as if therein were for him the highest charm and the natural sphere,—all professional, all worldly ambition being utterly sunk and insignificant. And to those of his students, thus feeling him and thus inspired by him, who gave themselves up for a time to his power, and followed from day to day the clear, firm-paced, vigorous, and consecutive steps of his prelections, he became the moulder of their intellectual life. During the twenty years in which he occupied the chair, from 1836 to 1856, his influence as a teacher of philosophy was unequalled in Britain. It is doubtful whether it had any parallel in a Scottish or a British university before; certainly it has had none since.

From this date of 1836 until his death in May 1856, at the age of 68, there is little to record except his attack of illness, hemiplegia, in 1844, and withal his assiduous labours on Reid's Works and the 'Discussions.' Honours from all parts of the continent of Europe flowed in on him during this period of his life. I wish I could have added any recognition by the Government of Great Britain. The emoluments from the Chair of Logic, which were necessarily small during Hamilton's time, and his illness in his later years, brought on by devotion to intellectual effort and research, were sufficient to draw

attention to his case, even supposing he had not been the great man he was. But true it is that the Minister at the head of the Liberal Government of the day, after solicitation by friends, unknown to Hamilton, offered him the pittance of £100 a-year. This was the politician's estimate of his services and worth. If Lord John Russell did not know how and what to offer, Sir William Hamilton, at least, knew how and what to refuse. To quote his own favourite lines—

> "Dat Galenus opes, dat Justinianus honores,
> At nos philosophi turba misella sumus."

The philosophy of Hamilton is an attempt, like every other philosophy, to state the meaning and guarantee we have of reality as applied to man, the world, and God. Metaphysics is a reflection, an awakening to the hidden or inner truth of things. In result, the philosophy of Hamilton means spiritualism in regard to man, realism in regard to the world, analogical, that is, broken and imperfect knowledge of God, a knowledge, therefore, of the universe of things which is not systematic, yet sufficient for the needs of the moral and spiritual life of man, as a wayfaring from grave to grave. My own conviction is that Hamilton reached certain results which are thoroughly stable and valid. I do not in this commit myself by any means to all his philosophy, or even to certain fundamental points in that philosophy. I am and always have been a disciple of Hamilton, not in the sense of following his opinions, or teaching these, as it pleases certain people for their own purposes to allege, but in the way of the spirit of the man, and the guiding principles of his method—

a method, at the same time, common to him with the whole line of thinkers who, since Descartes, have recognised the authority of experience, and the only vindicable sphere of human knowledge. What I have felt as the greatest thing about Hamilton is, not his philosophy, powerful as this is, but the man himself and the spirit of the man. For there is even a higher standard by which we may test the force of character and the intellectual power of a man than the real or supposed correctness of the conclusions which he has sought to establish, and that is the impulse which the whole course and tone of his thinking are fitted to impart to the actual thought and the motives of thought of the men of his own time and of succeeding generations. The electric force of intellect is not to be measured merely by the degree of illumination which it casts over the field of human knowledge; it is to be gathered as well from the amount of vitality which it imparts to the minds through which it passes, and which it quickens to the life of thought and feeling and lofty speculative effort. And if, besides this inherent power, we find in the man a free, generous, disinterested devotion to truth as truth, we get the highest quickening, the greatest ennobling possible from human intellectual effort.

Few men have shown more conspicuously both these lines of power than Hamilton. He was a man among men, and to the place of a master in the dominion of philosophical thought and learning, he came, as has been said, as naturally, as royally, as a prince comes to his throne. Hamilton has some strong passages in which he declares his preference for the pursuit of truth, over truth itself. The energy, the action, the

intellectual development to which the search after truth gives rise,—that he held to be the highest end of education. "In *action*," he says, "is contained the existence, happiness, improvement, and perfection of our being; and knowledge is only precious, as it may afford a stimulus to the exercise of our powers, and the condition of their more complete activity. Speculative truth is, therefore, subordinate to speculation itself; and its value is directly measured by the quantity of energy which it occasions,—immediately in its discovery,—mediately through its consequences. Life to Endymion was not preferable to death: aloof from practice, a waking error is better than a sleeping truth."[1]

Hamilton's career was a living exemplification of the principle of this passage. Now that he is gone, I feel sure that he would have desired no other test by which to try his philosophy.

[1] *Discussions*, p. 40.

LECTURE II.

I. HAMILTON'S PHILOSOPHY.—THE METHOD.—TRUE MEANING OF COMMON-SENSE.

I HAVE got but one hour this evening to put before you the method and the main results of a great philosophy, the work of a man's lifetime. This is a very abstract philosophy as well. It goes back to the very grounds of human knowledge, to the very essence of reality as we know it. Further, this philosophy has been given to the world in fragments, in a broken, unarranged, indigested form. In the mind of its author there loomed the ideal of a great edifice. We can even see the outlines of the proposed structure. But in his actual writings, there are but the gathered materials for the work. These are very grand and imposing. From the stately parts we can imagine the greatness of the whole, had the master's hand given them union and cohesion.

We may regret that so much of his time was given to the reading of books in philosophy; the fruits of

which in great measure perished with him, as when a richly laden galleon goes down out of sight into the deep waters. But I am not sure that this failure to complete and systematise a life's work was altogether due to this cause. There was in Hamilton a strong feeling, a feeling too that grew with his years, perhaps with the maturity of his thought, that no system of human knowledge is adequate to the universe of things, to the possibilities of being. The position of all others he would have been unwilling to admit in philosophy, is that thought and being are convertible, meaning especially by that a system of thought in our consciousness, and yet identified with the absolute or divine. Perhaps it was the strength of this feeling with him, which partly restrained his hand. In respect especially to the highest form of reality, he very clearly felt that God dwelleth not in a temple made with hands.

However greatly on some grounds we may regret the lack of system in Hamilton, I for my part feel, looking at the intellectual narrowness, the exclusiveness, the hurt done to the breadth and freeness of human life and feeling, the unlovely moral spirit, which are apparently inseparable from certain theories of the world and God, —I say I feel a certain relief in contemplating a system of hints and suggestions, especially if these be at the same time reverent, ennobling, and inspiring.

Now, looking at the philosophy of Hamilton as we have it, there are three salient points. There is, first, the question of his Method. What was the method he pursued with a view to the solution of the question of human knowledge, the nature of truth and reality for man?

Secondly, There is the special question as to the meaning of the term Reality, when applied to the world of the senses, the world of our outward experience, of physical science and its inquiries. Is it real in the sense in which the knower is real? or in what sense can I apply the word to the world around me? Is it more than a display of images or a round of subjective impressions?

Thirdly, What is the meaning of reality as applied to what we call the Infinite, the sphere of being which seems at least to be correlative with this finite reality of experience? Ultimately what is God? In what sense is He, or is He real?

I seem to hear some one saying, Why ask those questions? Why trouble yourself with them? I answer, first, because I cannot help asking them, because ordinary experience and science suggest them at every turn, because I have already traditionally accepted certain solutions of those questions in the very words I use, and in the daily beliefs on which I act; and it is desirable that I should, if I can, get above, beyond, this blind traditional knowledge, and rise to a clear consciousness about this life of mine, this world, and God. We are all metaphysicians, we all dogmatise about what is. The difference is that some people do know and others do not, when they are stating or acting on their theory of being.

And what is the Method of the philosophy of Hamilton? In plain words, it is primarily and essentially the method which Bacon inculcated, and which has accomplished or rendered possible the progress and the triumphs of physical science during the last 250 years.

It is an appeal to experience, to our actual knowledge. In brief, it is an appeal to consciousness in man, to that which gives unity to all our knowledge, to that which is the light of all our seeing, and the measure of all our being. The facts or phænomena, and the laws of knowledge are to be investigated, as are the facts and laws of the physical world.

This is the method of the Scottish school, from its first hint in Turnbull of Aberdeen, towards the beginning of last century, to the close of the labours of Hamilton. And it is a method which is essential to every philosophy of mind, call itself what it may. It must either openly, adequately, scientifically accept this method, or surreptitiously and imperfectly do so. This means simply that we must first know the facts. And this can be done either openly, as by the Scottish method of psychology, or blindly, by what is ignorantly represented as the method of the Scottish school, irreflective common-sense. But to say that the method is Baconian, while true, is not to say all; for it aims at and it reaches principles higher than any mere generalisation can give, any mere summation of particulars, even guided by a determining idea. The principles it seeks and finds are not simply general, but strictly universal in our knowledge. Gradually thus, the method of the Scottish school worked out in Reid, but especially in Hamilton, to the method of Descartes, and to his stand-point in philosophy. That was simply the experimental testing by reflection of the possibilities of doubt. This pushed backwards on the principles assumed in ordinary experience, gradually made it clear that there are laws which guarantee themselves by the impossibility of

subverting them even in thought. This impossibility or necessity being fully realised in consciousness, gives them universality. For what must be thought, always must be thought—in a word, is universal in consciousness. This argument is complete when it is shown that no one can assail those principles without assuming them or their equivalents.

About this method there are several points to be noted.

First, Hamilton resolutely holds that we cannot go beyond the general fact of consciousness. I am conscious, say, of feeling, perceiving, knowing, willing. This is the first fact for me, and beyond its teachings I cannot go. This guarantees itself; this is the ground of knowledge for me. Then think of the universality of consciousness. For you and for me there is nothing felt, nothing perceived, nothing known, if consciousness be not there. There is no meaning in the word you use, unless you have consciousness of it. There is no meaning in the existence of our fellow-men, unless as we suppose them conscious like ourselves. Nay, history is a blank, the actors in history, their motives, their deeds, unless they stand revealed in the light of conscious meaning, unless we take them into the folds of our conscious thought. All that has been said or done by man was once an invisible consciousness, true and real then ere it was embodied. Reality for you and me is in what we think and feel, rather than in what we do. Out of the heart are the issues of life. But do not understand consciousness narrowly. It is not the mood, the arbitrary or passing mood of the individual. It is the consciousness, the mind of humanity which is studied,

consciousness in its full content, and its universal laws. The method as thoroughly understood and applied goes beyond the individual consciousness. It traverses the course of history, philology, political institutions, scientific thought. Wherever and wheresoever man has expressed himself, this method follows him, seeking the origin and genesis of the facts, without preconceived theory, face to face with the realities. It thus imposes no formula on the facts. It does not construct, by so-called "pure thought," a system of knowledge and being, to which experience or the facts must conform, on pain of being denied to be facts at all, and thus arrogantly set aside as unreal, because, forsooth, they are not rational! It does not, in order to suit a *see-saw* theory of being, dissolve human personality into a hazy pantheistic unity; nor does it blur the distinction of right and wrong by postulating everything as really necessary to its opposite, and thus laying down the evil as the essential condition of the good, leaving, in fact, no good or evil in the universe at all.

But, secondly, it may be said, cannot we resolve what we call consciousness or mind back into a physiological process? Cannot we show how this consciousness of ours has arisen from antecedent physiological conditions? No—Hamilton practically answers. No form of nerve or brain energy can be shown to be capable of developing into, or becoming, a state of consciousness. One form of physical energy may become another. Motion may become heat or light or sound. But that is simply one form of sense-being passing into another. These are of the same kind to begin with. There is no analogy here for the purely unconscious passing into the purely conscious.

In this Tyndall and Hamilton are at one. "The passage from the physics of the brain," says Tyndall, "to the corresponding facts of consciousness is unthinkable. Granted that a definite thought and a definite molecular action in the brain occur simultaneously, we do not possess the intellectual organ, nor apparently any rudiment of the organ, which would enable us to pass by a process of reasoning from the one to the other. They appear together, but we do not know why. Were our minds and senses so expanded, strengthened, and illuminated, as to enable us to see and feel the very molecules of the brain; were we capable of following all their motions, all their groupings, all their electrical discharges, if such there be; and were we intimately acquainted with the corresponding states of thought and feeling, we should be as far as ever from the solution of the problem —how are these physical processes connected with the facts of consciousness." This is the statement of an authority on the side of physical science; the view of Hamilton asks for nothing more.

Thirdly, this analysis of consciousness or knowledge is not a mere survey of the facts or phænomena, as we find them, or a mere acceptance of them as such. It is an attempt to run them back to their elements, first of all carefully scrutinising their features. It is "psychological" in the best sense of that word, not "introspective," as it has been called. But it seeks also the ultimate, necessary, universal laws of knowledge. And how does it proceed? Thus, to take the most familiar experience, *I see or perceive the table before me.* The method says,—analyse that experience, test it, and you will find there passing contingent elements, which you can

dispense with; others essential, permanent, necessary, which you cannot dispense with. You will find there a knower and a known; you will find there contrast and difference; you will find the permanency of the knower, the changeableness of the thing known; you will find space and time, and various other notions. Test them by experimental reflection, and you will find that you cannot get rid of them, if you are to perceive or know at all. You may change the object, that table you see, but whatever be the new object, there is always the relation of the knower and the known. You, the individual, thus unite yourself with what is necessary, universal, even ultimate in knowledge, you reach the impersonal intelligence that is in humanity, the great universal standard of truth. You have now, by the individual effort of reflection, risen to the ultimate, cognisable, yet incomprehensible, principles of human knowledge. These are revelations for you. Beforehand we can determine nothing of all this. We are thus not the lords of our knowledge, the creators of the universe; but learners, patient waiters on the revelations of the being around us, and the unfolding of the long line of experience. If you ask,—how do I know? the only answer you can get is, a statement of those essential laws or conditions of the act of knowing. Obviously, if I say I know how I know, I have either assumed a code of knowledge already, or I may put the question again, how I know that I know, and this backwards for ever.

Fourthly, those ultimate principles or laws of knowledge have been called the principles of Common-Sense, and we hear of the Argument from Common-Sense. Now do not allow yourselves to be misled by this phrase.

In ordinary usage, common-sense of course means a general shrewdness and sobriety of intelligence in the affairs of life, native rather than acquired. Because, apparently, of this one sense of the term, which is by no means the historical sense, it has actually been supposed that the thinkers of the Scottish school meant to leave the problems of philosophy to be dealt with by the shrewd practicality of ordinary intelligence. It is easy to produce quite a sensation by supposing such a thing; for is not this the abandonment of the scientific or speculative intelligence, which is our true help to pure knowledge, especially to the deductions of pure thought? Of course, no thinker who can fairly be taken as a representative of the Scottish school ever thought of elevating common-sense in its ordinary usage of native shrewdness to the place of a judge in philosophy, though a little of even this ordinary article might not be a bad thing occasionally for the speculative philosopher. The method of common-sense, as interpreted almost uniformly by Reid, and always by Hamilton, is "not an appeal from philosophy to blind feeling" or to ordinary belief. "The first problem of philosophy," says Hamilton, "is to seek out, purify, and establish by intellectual analysis and criticism, the elementary feelings and beliefs in which are given the elementary truths of which all are in possession. This is dependent on philosophy as an art. Common-sense is like common law. Each may be laid down as the general rule of decision; but in the one case it may be left to the jurist, in the other to the philosopher, to ascertain what are the contents of the rule." I venture to add, that when this is done, and the re-

sults are classified, run back it may be, to certain primary elements, as Hamilton thought they might, the work of philosophy will be wellnigh accomplished.

The common acceptance of such principles is thus obviously regarded neither as the method of philosophy, nor even as the ultimate guarantee of their truth. They are but the materials of a sound philosophy. But once these are thoroughly analysed and sifted as to their content and meaning, they become the tests by which we may try every so-called philosophical system. They are found to be embodied in consciousness, in language, in action, in science, in art, in religion. A philosophy which is true, sound, and complete, must recognise those notions, and seek their guarantee, try to determine their meaning and applications; or if it says they are illusions, it is bound consistently with its pretensions to show how those illusions have grown up in the common consciousness of mankind. It was thus the Scottish philosophy dealt with the system of Hume, when, in virtue of narrow premisses, a meagre psychology, traditionally adopted, he destroyed the subjective reality of the ideas, and, therefore, the objective reality, of the material world, of selfhood, and of God. And thus it is entitled to deal with every system which professes to expound human knowledge, let that system call itself "reasoned out," or "demonstrative," or "deductive," or "transcendental," or anything else, however equally high-sounding or superficially imposing. There is a conviction in us, for example, of the distinction between necessity and freedom, the just and the unjust, selfishness and self-sacrifice, merit and demerit. What do those distinctions mean? Are they real? Wherein, then, is

their reality? Will our life and experience ever be satisfied with an answer which virtually confounds those distinctions, which destroys their practical hold on life, or which supposes that they are but the common outcome of one indeterminate force beyond human experience?

What, it may be asked, is the special relation of this method to Hume, and to his wholly destructive and negative positions? Simply put, it is this: Hume said what we call sensation or impression is all that is known or knowable. There are consciousnesses, states of consciousness, that come and go. Beyond this human knowledge cannot rise. There is no knowledge of a self or person in consciousness, or amid these consciousnesses. They have no tie, bond, or unity of this sort. There is sensation without a sentient, there is passion without a feeler, there is knowledge without a knower.

We speak of impressions from the external world; but no external world is known, no world apart from the conscious impression, no subsisting external world, nothing in the form of independent material reality. All we know is the impression; and this imports nothing regarding an outward cause.

From this theory of the known to the theory of being, the step is easy. This limitation of knowledge gives us the limit of existence. If impression be alone known, if at most there be but a series of conscious impressions, then the universe itself means merely, is merely, a series of impressions, and a series of impressions utterly isolated but for casual or customary conjunction. The external world, selfhood, personality, freedom, cause, God, all disappear as simply illusions of the fancy, of the common ill-regulated imagination.

As notions, they are subjectively empty; they have no corresponding justifying impression; and hence, as applied to things, they are objectively void or unreal.

Now, Reid and Hamilton are sometimes ignorantly represented as "protesting" simply that we believe in those things whose reality, on Hume's doctrine, is denied; that we believe in personality, causality, morality, and God; that mankind do so, and therefore that this belief is a guarantee of their truth. The protest of these thinkers is no such thing. They protested certainly to this extent, that common or universal belief is not explained or satisfied by the results of Hume's hypothesis or basis. The contradiction between sense and reason so called, which Hume had created, was quite admitted; but neither Reid nor any one following him alleged simply the sense side against the reason, and rested there. The allegation against Hume is a much broader one than that. It is that Hume's analysis of experience, of knowledge, is imperfect, one-sided, exclusive. It is denied, for example, that consciousness is or means merely a sensation, or a series of sensations. Hume can say this, on the ground either of a traditional hypothesis, or of an actual professed analysis of consciousness. The former basis, as an exclusive one, is not worthy of philosophy or science. And in regard to the latter, Reid or Hamilton is as much entitled, on the ground of psychological method, to say there are other elements in consciousness, as Hume is entitled to say or assume that there is but one element in consciousness. The result is a matter of testing by reflection, the ultimate court of appeal. The question is a purely psychological one. What do I actually know in external per-

ception? Is the object merely a mode of my mind? or what? Is a series of consciousnesses that, and that alone, which is known and knowable? The affirmative answers to these questions are the bases, the assumptions, of Hume's so-called reason, or rather reasoning. And until Hume can vindicate these, the conclusions he deduces have no absolute or dogmatic significance; they are not such as we need accept. This may be called the method of common-sense, if you choose; it is, all the same, a thoroughly legitimate and scientific method.

But there is more than this in the method. It is not only a method which finds points of knowledge overlooked, essential laws unrecognised; it carries the battle straight into the enemy's lines, for it undertakes to show that the premisses and assumptions of the sensational psychology are not self-consistent; that they presuppose points, notions, for which they in no way account,—nay, which are inconsistent with the conclusions sought to be maintained. Thus it is, when Hume speaks of a series of conscious impressions, or consciousnesses, this method puts the question—how is the fact of a series known, known to me, known in any consciousness whatever? If there be a series at all in consciousness, it is a known series. Well, then, what does this suppose? Isolated consciousnesses in succession may know each in turn, each itself; but what of its neighbour, its precursor and successor? How are these, on this hypothesis, to be connected in knowledge? Only on the supposition that there is more than the mere series; only on the supposition that there is a knower, one knower, a permanent being subsisting in and through the series, capable of comparison, of grasping, — comprehending

the series as a series, as one, and thus reflecting on it a unity which is deeper, more permanent, more abiding than any mere series of passing, vanishing impressions.

It may be asked: these principles which we thus get, are they true, are they veracious? The answer is: how can you prove or disprove their truth, their veracity, without assuming in your proof or in your disproof these very principles themselves or their equivalents in other words? I suppose your proof will be a process of reasoning; you attack Reason by reasoning. Then show me your right to assume other principles than the principles enunciated, those of the *sensus communis*, or show me your right to use the principles themselves in disproof of the principles themselves. Every *critique* of those principles is made by the principles themselves assumed to be and to be true. If this be so, then criticism in any real sense of the word is a simple absurdity; such a criticism is self-annihilated.

This method of the Scottish school and Hamilton is thus simply an appeal to facts, to the fulness and the breadth of our experience. Every system of philosophy is and can only be an interpretation of experience, and, I add, a partial interpretation of experience. And while each system, however brilliant and attractive, has but its little day, and is all the while vaunted as the whole of knowledge, human life, and human action, and human history go on in their course and development, heedless of theories which truncate experience, or of systems which disdain it, and living in and through the spontaneous impulses at the heart of mankind,—the great convictions of personality, freedom, duty, and God,—which are ultimately inscrutable. And the method

which recognises these, is reverent towards them, does not disdain them, because the system has no place for them, is the one which will survive, keep pace with the breadth of facts, the growth of intelligence, and the moral life of mankind. Face to face with these facts, and in contradiction to them, no philosophy of the universe can permanently abide; and the wrecks of the brilliant theories of the world of being which strew our shore of the finally boundless sea of speculative thought, ought to teach us that human experience and human history will in the end triumph over paradox, self-assertion, and broken knowledge set up as a complete whole.

II. FINITE REALITY.—EXTERNAL PERCEPTION.

There is no topic in the history of philosophy with which the name of Hamilton is more closely associated than the theory of External Perception. This question came down to the Scottish school through Descartes, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume. It is, in fact, the question as to the nature of finite reality, as to whether there is in our experience a twofold reality, the material world and the mental world; or only one form of being—viz., either the mental alone, or the material alone. And in this case we have the further question as to which is first and creative, whether the material world is a product of the consciousness, or whether the consciousness is a product of the material world. In the former case, we have a scheme of Idealism, in the latter of materialistic Realism. Obviously this metaphysical question can be settled only by psychological

analysis. This is the fundamental point of the whole question, and this is what Reid and Hamilton, the latter especially, emphatically contended for. Descartes had severed the two worlds of consciousness and extension, and the question was very speedily raised by his followers and others,—how do we connect these? How do we, conscious only, know an extended reality? This question led to various theories as to the possibility of our knowledge of the outward world, all of them thoroughly unsuccessful, in fact, implying the impossibility of knowing it all. It was thus the question came down to the Scottish school, as represented by Reid and Hamilton. It was their merit to challenge the question as to *how* we know an extended or external world. It was virtually said,—that is not the first question; this is, whether, as a matter of fact, we do know anything in the shape of a material and external world. The question as to how we know such a thing, is founded on factitious difficulties, and in any case, it must be second to that of fact,—as to whether this extended object comes into our knowledge at all.

Reid had no difficulty in showing the uselessness, in any form, of the theory of representative ideas and images, of an extended world; we cannot picture what we never saw; we cannot know, if we could do so, that the representation is correct. The real world is for ever outside our world of imagery. We can on such a supposition only blindly, irrationally, believe in it. As little can we get at this world, if we know only sensations or states of consciousness. We cannot infer from these an outward material non-sensational reality. We cannot even thus form such a conception. Even if

we could get to an independent cause of these, we could never say that that cause is a material world. It might quite well be an intelligence, like our own. Left to these hypotheses, there is nothing for us but a world of subjective impressions. How then are we to settle this question? Obviously by an appeal to the testimony of our consciousness as intuitive. What is the object of perception? What is it we directly know?

This question is the ultimate question. It cannot be avoided on any system whatever, be it Berkeleyanism or the doctrine of Hume. Hume's statement that sensation or impression is the object in sense, is either a traditional statement, taken from others, or it is a dogmatic statement of fact. In either case, he cannot avoid this court of appeal. No tradition can *per se* be philosophically accepted; no dogmatic statement as to the fact of the object in perception can refuse to acknowledge the authority of the intuitional consciousness.

The question, then, is,—is the experience in Perception the same as that in Sensation? In Sensation, I confessedly know only states of my own mind, forms of consciousness, temporary, passing, existing for the moment, pleasant sometimes, painful at others, now thrilling, now depressing.[1] It is a world of subjectivity, in which I am not only spectator, but actor or sufferer. Does Perception reveal to me more than this? Is the world to which I am introduced by it also only a subjective world? Or am I now placed on the threshold, but still on the threshold, of a new sphere of being,

[1] Hamilton, of course, regarded Sensation as a state of the animated organism; but this is immaterial to the present point.

another kind of reality, a reality different from myself and all my belongings,—all my passing states and moods, the great sphere of impersonal being? The answer to this question, with its manifold issues, depends entirely, in the first place, on the view you take of those objects in perception which you call resistance and extension. Is this extended, resisting thing on the same level with the heat from the fire, the cold from the snow, the pain from pressure or contact, your subjective states or sensations, or is it a wholly different and new experience? Is it the consciousness of a force, a power, not you, different from you, resisting your power or force, and even overcoming it? And is this thing you call extension, what is no part of you, but a thing subsisting somehow, in some way or other it may be unknown to you, whether you perceive it or not, out of, independently of, your perception?

If you answer in the first sense, then you have a theory of Idealism, as that of the universe, and of subjective Idealism. If you answer in the second sense, you have a theory of Realism or Dualism.

The latter view is the doctrine of Hamilton. Face to face with me the percipient is a resisting something, extended, opposed to my locomotive effort. This is revealed to me in antithesis or opposition to myself, and yet in relation to or synthesis with myself. I do not apprehend it before I apprehend my own effort; the conscious effort and the resisting force are given me in the same indivisible act of perception. This is the beginning, the bare rudiment of our knowledge of the external world, and round it and upon it we gradually build up all the fabric of our sense-knowledge; it grows into definite form or

shape, it is clothed in colour, it is regarded as the source and cause of the innumerable sensations of sound, touch, taste, which we experience. Ask what it is,—the answer is, that in perception it is to us as has been described, certainly a non-ego, or form of a not-self. This is its permanent or abiding character all through our perceptions. I may not be entitled to ascribe to this permanent reality the sensible or perceived qualities, as a thing *per se*, and absolutely. The sensible quality need not exist as I perceive it, whether I perceive it or not; but the potency exists, and produces its effect the moment there is contact with my organism. In other words, the quantum of being in the sensible world, its qualifying power, subsists, remains undiminished. There is change, transmutation; my sensible perception may now be motion and then heat, it may now be steam and then movement. I may know or suppose ethereal undulation and then light, vibratory motion and then sound; but what is through it all is the permanence of the quantum of existence in our sensible experience; the need for this duration; the impossibility of conceiving it lessened; the possibility of transmutation from quality to quality. This is the substantial in the material world. This is what is independent of us, what changes but perishes not. This is all that an enlightened Realism need ask. It need not ask for the permanent form of our perceptions; it need only ask, philosophically and scientifically, for the permanent quantum of our perceptions in a thing having potency,—a potency that comes into play in correlation with the conditions of our organism and the mental laws of our faculties. This is the fair interpretation of what Hamilton has stated in his doctrine of the ulti-

mate incompressibility of matter and in the principle at the root of his theory of Causality, as a change only in the permanent indestructible quantum of being in the universe. The doctrine of Hamilton, got on the philosophical side, is thus seen to concur, to unite itself with the two great modern scientific conceptions, the conservation and the transmutation of energy.

Hamilton's Natural Realism affords a foundation for what is highest in the poetic view of nature. This it does better and in a more marked way than any form of Idealism. In the first place, Nature is not the process in the individual mind or man, of sensations, or subjective states, having but the connection of a contingent custom, as with Hume. In the second place, it is not these bound together by necessary ties, set in subjective frames, and then falsely called objective, as with Kant. In the third place, it is not the other of myself, in which all real distinction is abolished, and nature and self are run back as common manifestations of an empty ground, which has the contradictory capacity of development and development into opposites, as with Spinoza and Hegel. It is not any more a mere relation between me, the percipient, and the thing perceived, neither the percipient nor the thing perceived being real, and yet grounding a relation of reality. But it is that which stands contradistinguished from me, the individual; it is that which has a self-subsistence, it is a power or force which is revealed to me, known by me, but whose existence is not dependent on my knowledge. No doubt, if I seek to know it ultimately, in its essence, so to speak, apart from those properties, qualities, manifestations apprehended under the conditions of my physical

organism, and my mental powers and laws, I am lost and baffled. There the mystery of material reality begins for me; but what I call Nature is at once independent and uniform. I am here to know it, and to be taught by it, to learn from it. I am not in the position of deducing it and determining it, to use cant and current phraseology. Rather in the spirit of Bacon, I become lord of it only as I learn from it. Science observes and interprets it in its own way, so does Poetry. This power, independent of me, outside of me, yet regulated and uniform, passing on before me in endless process-vision, yet linked to me in bonds of reason, feeling, and imagination, makes me patient, observant, teaches me waiting and reverence. The truths I learn from it, the impulses I feel regarding it, the moral and spiritual analogies I may discern between it and my own soul, are not the arbitrary moods of the individual self, but the lessons with which it is charged for all mankind, for every one at least who has singleness of vision and purity of heart. This power above and beyond me, informed with a mysterious life to be communed with only through the soul, not inspired by me, but inspiring and commanding me; the symbol of a still higher Power than itself, leading me through gentle feeling to the overpowering emotions that spring from the infinite in time, in space, and in power, and the notion of an all-pervading life therein; this is simply Philosophical Realism sublimed to Poetic Spiritualism. Such spiritualism is impossible apart from the grounding philosophical conception of difference, and the poetry of Wordsworth is the natural complement of the Realism of Hamilton.

III. INFINITE REALITY.—THE RELATIVITY OF KNOWLEDGE.

The phrase "relativity of knowledge" is of constant recurrence in the writings of Hamilton. To many people who look at the matter somewhat superficially, this phrase appears objectionable. The notion attached to it implies that our knowledge is variable, uncertain, and not adequate to the truth of things. Now there is a sense in which this phrase means variableness in knowledge. It may be supposed to indicate what Protagoras of old sought to maintain, that what appears to be true to each man, is true or real, is the only true or real,—that all things are in a state of flux, transition, or becoming, and that the impressions made in succession on the individual mind from things are the truth,—in fact, the only reality. In this case knowledge would vary with each individual, it would vary with that individual at different times, and in different moods, and there would be no common truth or principle of agreement for the race of mankind. This impression would be true to me; its opposite, if it chanced to be yours, would be true to you. Obviously, on such a doctrine, the terms truth and falsehood cease to have any meaning. Truth and reality alike disappear in the passing shadows of impressions. Hamilton certainly held no such view as this. His doctrine of relativity is that of a mind or self with fixed, necessary laws or conditions of knowledge, which yield a body of truths, permanent for me the individual, and common to all human intelligences. This body of truths is not at the mercy of a precarious experience, which may, in the future,

contradict them or reverse them; it is such experience as we have and shall have under our faculties and conditions of knowledge. But it is by no means, on the other hand, convertible with reality as it is; it does not exhaust the whole sphere of being, and the whole possibilities of knowledge, even for us. It only prescribes the essential conditions under which existence is revealed to us.

This doctrine stands out in marked contrast to the relativity of empiricism as advocated by Mill. Knowledge with Mill is merely impression on the consciousness, a conscious subject or individual being hardly allowed or provided for. It is Hume's series of impressions, illogically buttressed. There is a series of effects on the consciousness, impressions illegitimately supposed to be effects of something unknown, non-mental,—a hypothesis wholly unproved, nay, impossible of proof on Mill's principles. There is nothing stable or common in all this knowledge. There is no proof or possibility of proof that any other conscious subject experiences the same. There is no possibility even of reaching another conscious subject; for this can be construed by us as only a sensation or effect on me, the individual, if there be even such an one. We can know nothing but sensations, yet we are alleged to know an outward, a non-mental object. Mill's whole theory of knowledge is a simple mass of contradictions. He speaks at one time in the language of the crudest realism, and he fails to see that this is utterly inconsistent with his sensational idealism; and that sensation is all we know, is, in fact, all that is.

The net result of Mill's teaching is, that man cannot reach any truth which in other circumstances, or in an-

other environment, may not be an untruth or an error. That we are unable to believe or imagine the reverse of the elementary mathematical truths in our present circumstances, needs no other explanation than the laws of association afford. If it be possible, as he allows, that 2 + 2 may in another sphere, or under a different association, be thought equal to 5; that parallel lines may meet; that two straight lines may enclose a space;[1] —then there is no certainty in any human knowledge, for the very principle of non-contradiction in thought is sapped. There is no longer possible a *yes* against a *no*. And I add, there is no longer possible the certainty of moral distinctions or their perpetuity. Some people, even Deans and Doctors of Divinity, applauded Mill for the wonderful outburst in which he said: "I will call no being good, who is not what I mean when I apply that epithet to my fellow-creatures; and if such a being can sentence me to hell for not so calling him, to hell I will go."[2] Supposing even that any one had said that goodness as applied to God was not only not what we mean when we apply the epithet to our fellow-creatures, but something the reverse, why should Mill object to so calling Him? If even 2 + 2 may equal 5 in another sphere, and a thing thus be exactly what it is not, why should goodness not in the end turn out to be its exact opposite? And in this case, why should Mill lag behind the development of the truth, and object to call Deity what He may possibly be, the precise opposite of the good we know? On his own principles, he has no answer; and his foolish bravado is utterly inconsistent with his professed theory.

[1] *Exam.*, p. 335, 4th ed.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 129.

The question regarding our knowledge of the Infinite, the Absolute, the Unconditioned, is a question which has agitated the schools of philosophy since the days of Plato, since he spoke of the *ἀνυποθέτον*. This had never been properly a question of the Scottish school. In the modern form, at least, it was wholly unknown to Reid, and to Stewart, and generally even in British literature and philosophy. But it is a very important question, perhaps the most important which a man can put to himself, the deepest and most stirring question which occurs in the reflective life of any one who rises to an earnest wrestling with the real problems of the universe in which he spends but a brief earthly life. It is—what knowledge have I or can I compass of that Infinite which I must think in correlation with the finite of my experience?—of that Absolute Being which I must think in relation to the passing relative being of time?—of that Unconditioned Being, that Being, *per se*, or, at least, that permanent Being, which seems to be and to overshadow all this relative, conditioned life of mine, to be the power over all? Or, in plain language, what can I know of God, of that transcendent Being, who is suggested to me at every turn by the relative, the limited, the imperfect of my experience? Let me go back in time, and I am face to face with the alternatives of an endless regress of moments, or of an absolute beginning. Let me go out in space, and I am confronted with the possibilities of the never-ending and the absolutely complete. Let me go back from the present fact or event in my experience, the very word I utter, the very passing object I see, and I am drawn backwards and backwards still; either on the line of an endless regress

of causes, until thought droops in the hopeless mist of the never beginning in things, and finds itself fatally contradicted; or I come, if come I may, to the one, the Absolute Cause, at the beginning of all experience. I am driven back on these questions. If I reflect at all, I cannot escape them. I may sink thought and reflection in worldliness, in money-making, in the cares and the interests and the pleasures of life; but once let me pause, and let reflection awake, I must, at least, feel these questions, and feel the need of answering them, or of seeking an answer. Or I may take refuge in a system, such as Comtism, which bids them away. But this is only to keep them as an uneasy nightmare on the thought and the conscience. Come up for reflection they must. In some form or other, that realm of Being which transcends our experience, and yet is bound up with it, must touch the thought, the heart of the man who earnestly lives, and who honestly puts a question about this life of ours. For the shadow of an Infinite is over all our little earthly life.

Well, then, this problem of the Unconditioned, as it is called, was taken up by Kant; and on this, as on other fundamental points of philosophy, the question took a new departure. But what had Kant done about it? Not much more than Hume, if anything. Hume had bid the whole question away. He had virtually said,—if there be an idea of an Infinite, or Absolute, if there be a God, show me the sense-impression from which the idea arises. There is none. Delude yourselves, if you choose, with the pleasing illusion; but an idea of God, if there be one, is but a copy of a sense-impression. Show me the sense-impression which war-

rants and grounds your notion. There is, and can be no such thing, from the very nature of the case. Your God transcends experience; therefore He is nothing, nothing for you. But what did Kant say?

Well, Kant admitted an idea, a positive idea, of the Unconditioned, and that in several forms. But what sort of idea, after all? Our experience gives no object corresponding to any one of the Ideas,—a real self, or God. The idea is not, therefore, representative of anything actual or real. It cannot even be conceived by the Understanding; it belongs to a faculty called the Reason. Even thus far there is no advance on Hume's position. As with Hume the conception of self or God is vain, because there is no impression corresponding to it, so with Kant the idea is empty, because there is no intuition to fill it,—no fact of experience corresponding to it. Wherein does this differ from Hume? In both cases, the highest objective reality is exploded, on the ground of the emptiness of the notion of it. But there is more than this. Kant also holds that those so-called Ideas are at least, in respect of the world, absolutely contradictory. We have equal reasons for believing a commencement of the world in time and none, that there is a free or unconditioned cause, a first cause, and that all is under necessary causation; that there is a necessary being at the root of the universe, and that there is none, nothing but the order of things. Reason thus, the faculty of Ideas lands us in absolute contradiction; and a contradictory reason, as has been said, is worse than no reason at all. It is at this point that Hamilton comes into the discussion; and he asks that the term Unconditioned should be analysed, that

people using it should know exactly what they mean by it. In one sense, he says virtually it is a piece of mere verbalism, uniting two contradictory terms, and thus annihilating itself as a notion. In another, subordinate, aspect, it may be taken as meaning what goes out beyond relation, beyond our positive thought, endless regress in being or cause; or an absolute beginning, in the form of a first cause. With Kant we have two propositions, regarding reality above experience, subversive of each other, as equally possible. With Hamilton, on the other hand, we are simply unable to understand as possible either of the two extremes; one of which, however, on the ground of their mutual repugnance, the mind is compelled to recognise as true.[1] Make the idea of the infinite or absolute positive in any form, and you are inevitably landed in insoluble contradiction. But put it merely that the idea somehow transcends our actual conception, and yet is a necessary correlate of it, and we are free to wait for the evidence, the evidence of experience, to determine for us on which side the truth or the probability lies. Hence, naturally, the philosophy of Hamilton is a philosophy of experience, of fact. It brings speculation down from the height of the Unconditioned, or the sphere transcending knowledge and experience, where man and the world have alike disappeared. It says this is a fruitless region of verbalism. Look at experience, at consciousness,—analyse that, see what is reflected there, and possibly that may lead you backwards to a first cause and a God. But the way of a direct knowledge of the absolute, or God, or being, *per se*, is a hopeless route; it is

[1] *Discussions*, p. 15.

the very extinction of the condition of knowledge, and the track of barren words. Hamilton's dialectic is here no enemy to insight; but it is the mortal foe of nonsense. Since Kant's day, system-mongering in Germany has begun where he left off, *in vacuo.* It has set up the Pure Ego, or the Neutrum of Being, or the Identity of Contradictories, as the starting-point of philosophy. And the ghost of the defunct Unconditioned has been raised, and has crossed to our shores. As soon as the galvanism is exhausted, the spectral illusion will be seen to be what it is.

Hamilton's view on this point is, that what we call substance or being *per se*,—the Absolute, the Unconditioned, in any form is utterly beyond our conception. What subsists *per se*, not in relation or correlation with our faculties, is for us no object of positive thought. He does not deny the possibility of being or reality that is absolutely irrelative, what exists by and in itself, without relation to time, space, or other being, without relation to any individual mind, but he holds this to be inconceivable by us. And he regards it thus as incapable of yielding any basis for a deductive or demonstrative system of being. You cannot put yourself, he virtually says, at a point above relation and difference, above the conditions of experience or consciousness, in the sphere of unmanifested being; get at the *prius* of nature, yourself, and God, and so exhibit these for what they are in their necessary relations. Take any of the attempts to do so. Take that of Fichte or Schelling or Hegel. The Pure Ego of Fichte, the Neutrum or point of indifference of Schelling, the Pure Being of Hegel, all of these have this in common, that they

abolish the fundamental law of the distinction of the knower and the known. They are all attempts to get behind consciousness and experience, and to show its genesis, the necessary genesis of all the laws of knowledge. The Hegelian effort may be summed up thus: We are supposed to start from a point above consciousness itself, from what is called Pure Being, that is, mere Being, Being *per se*, qualityless Being, without character or definite mark. Yet this characterless Being has a wonderful faculty of development; it is the idea under a necessity of evolution. It first evolves itself into pure nothing, non-being. Then it returns to itself, by the way of becoming, enriched by its process of self-development. It takes a great many turns of this sort; passing always into its opposite or contradictory, then abolishes it by taking this opposite into itself; until it abolishes all difference between itself and the universe, and at last expands by an outburst of ecstatic egoism into God Himself. All difference thus between subject and object, self and not-self, man and God, disappears, and we have supreme unity, the ultimate unity of the Speculative Reason.

I am not, of course, going to discuss this system at present. To tell the truth, I look on it as a piece of mere verbalism, a juggle of abstractions hardly worth discussion. But it may be easily shown that such a system falls to pieces through sheer inconsistency. If Being, for example, be utterly qualityless to begin with, be absolutely empty, it is quite impossible it can at the same time have a power of self-evolution, far less be under a necessity of it. And further, if Being be at first absolutely qualityless and characterless, or be nothing definite

at all, it needs not to pass into pure nothing, it is pure nothing to begin with. And an idea, or anything else which has the power of first contradicting itself, and then swallowing the contradiction that it may enrich itself, is about the most wonderful specimen of a thing calling itself *reason* which the world has yet heard of. But the truth is, the system has no rational coherency; it is not verified by experience; history contradicts it. The history of human thought itself has never followed the course of the Hegelian formula or development of the Logic. The early start of Greek thought contradicts it. The Ionic hylozoism, the Pythagorean numbers, the pure Being of the Eleatics, the becoming of Heraclitus,—this order wholly contradicts it. It is not found in Continental thought since Descartes, nor in English thought since Locke. The force and place of the individual are too strong for it in general history. The individual is not the victim of the idea, he is the maker of the facts. Further, it throws no light on a single mystery either in human life or in the world which surrounds us; as, for example, regarding the origin of life, or the nature of that Deity which it professes to grasp. The unity, moreover, which the system seeks is a fantastic one, like the system itself. There is a unity in the dualism of consciousness, the unity of the one permanent self amid all the flow of the states of consciousness, which it calls its own, a unity of being amid the changing contents of knowledge. This is all the unity which philosophy need seek, and which it will ever find, at least in human consciousness. And any higher unity which may embrace this, can be thought of by us in a very dim way, and only as the analogue of this lower experience.

The relation of difference and plurality lies at the root of all our knowledge, whatever be its object. Hence Hume's attempt to identify the self or knower with the state of consciousness is a failure, for the simple reason that a sensation *per se* is an illegitimate abstraction utterly below knowledge. And Hegel's attempt to run back subject and object, or self and not-self, to pure being is equally a failure, for pure or qualityless being is as much above or beyond knowledge as Hume's sensation *per se* is below knowledge. Hegelianism has been in recent times introduced into this country, and to those ignorant of the history of philosophical opinion, it has seemed to be a new and great system. The commonplaces of German thought are to the British public, as a rule, surprising novelties. Its fossil remains pass with us as "advanced thought." The ghost of a defunct German philosophy is accepted as a real flesh and blood personage. The fact is, that Hegelianism has long run its course in Germany, the country of its birth, and it is now there looked upon as simply an effete verbalism. It was the last and the worst specimen of the system-mongering which began with Fichte, increased in Schelling, and culminated in Hegel. And what does it give you? Thought without a thinker to begin with, that develops by itself into all knowledge and being; being without quality or property, which develops into all being, into all that is; a God who once was a mere indefinite possibility, and ultimately is, only as he realises himself in the forms and laws of human consciousness, in man, who is as necessary to God's true being as God is to his. A God who grows from less to more, from nothing to something, or from nothing to all, is as true, rather is

as poor, a *fetish* as the rudest savage ever conceived or acknowledged.

And what is the result of the whole theory? This, that the world is a construction of what is called thought, but it is not the thought of the individual. Then whose thought is it? This we are not told. It is thought, the *idea*, the universal. Whose idea,—whose thought? Either an impotent abstraction illogically credited with power and personality; or the property not of the individuals of mankind, but of this or that individual in whom the thought arises to clear consciousness. The creation of the world and God waits for this! for the individual in whom the absolute Ego condescends to develop itself! In him alone is the reality of things! And in the end there is no other world than this phænomenal world of ours,—this constituted, created world. There are not two worlds. The phænomenal world of science is not a reflection or appearance, an image of a more real world, as Plato said. There is no sphere of reality, there is no God behind the world, nothing to which we can look as divine cause; it is all in the world, it is as the speculative thinker makes it, as the absolute Ego realises itself in Hegel or some of his followers. There is no natural and supernatural order, no ground of worship and reverence, no mystery, nothing before which we have to bow; the relations realised in the Hegelian speculative thinker are the world, man, and God. One does not need to point the practical *morale* of a system of this sort, or the kind of egoistic worship likely to come out of it. It is not wonderful that French Comtism has at length held out its hand to Hegelian absolutism, and hailed it as fellow well met.

IV. THE POSITIVE SIDE.—OUR KNOWLEDGE AND PROOF OF GOD.

What, it may be asked, is the positive side of Hamilton's philosophy regarding our knowledge of Being, in its highest form,—God?

We have no direct or immediate knowledge of such an object, but we have a mediate, relative, analogical knowledge. God is known to us through experience as the cause of certain facts in experience, as the cause which reflects the character of those facts. But the requisite of the notion of God is more than a mere first cause; it is more, further, than that of a blind force, for this might be omnipotent, all-controlling, yet not God. The true conception of God is that of a primary and omnipotent cause, possessing of Himself intelligence, morality, liberty. These attributes are neither derivative nor dependent. The proof of such a Being is not to be found in the phænomena of the material world, for these, as subject to immutable laws and invariable recurrence, manifest only the blind force of a mechanical succession. If it be true that intelligence in man, the only intelligence of which we have experience, be a consequent of matter, if matter be here first and originative, we must logically conclude, that as in man, so in the universe, the phænomena of intelligence and design are only in their last analysis the products of a brute necessity. "Nullus in microcosmo spiritus, nullus in macrocosmo Deus."

But in mind, as found in our own experience, we have another order. Intelligence in man is a free

power; it is united with freedom; it is independent of an antecedent causality or cause, in matter or organism. Man as a free cause is a first cause in respect of his volition, and, therefore, superior to the sphere of material causation. If this be so, there is an immaterial subject, —a spirit; and "if the spirituality of mind in man be supposed a datum of observation, in this datum are also given both the condition and the proof of a God. For we have only to think, what analogy entitles us to do, that intelligence holds the same relative supremacy in the universe which it holds in us, and the first positive condition of a Deity is established, in the establishment of the absolute priority of a free creative intelligence." "It is only as man is a free intelligence, a moral power, that he is created after the image of God, and it is only as a spark of the divinity glows as the life of life in us, that we can rationally believe in an intelligent Creator and moral Governor of the universe." "Should physiology ever succeed in reducing the facts of intelligence to phænomena of matter, philosophy would be subverted in the subversion of its three great objects, God, free-will, and immortality. True wisdom would then consist, not in speculation, but in repressing thought during our brief transit from nothingness to nothingness. For why? Philosophy would have become a meditation, not merely of death, but of annihilation. The precept, *know thyself*, would have been replaced by the terrific oracle to Œdipus—

'Mayst thou ne'er know the truth of what thou art;'

And the final recompense of our scientific curiosity

would be wailing, deeper than Cassandra's, for the ignorance that saved us from despair."[1]

Hamilton can hardly be said to have developed the argument on this point. Even with regard to the first half of it, there are steps to be supplied. It is virtually said there is mind in man, first in man, above organisation; therefore, there is mind in the universe, first in the universe, above law and organisation. Negatively, it may be allowed that if the converse were true in regard to man, the converse would be true in regard to the universe, or to what transcends experience. But, positively, can we simply by analogy from the fact, supposing it admitted, of mind and the priority of mind in man, infer the corresponding facts in the universe? No doubt we are thus led to think of mind in the universe and its relations of priority. But can we go beyond the conception and at once infer the fact? It seems to me that there are here steps awanting, which may be supplied, but still required. We need a ground of inference from the fact in experience, intelligence here, to the fact above experience, intelligence there. This may be attempted by proof through the beginning of our intelligence in time, its finitude, and the law of cause, and adequate cause. Then, doubtless the law of analogy would help us, for intelligence, if prior here, and independent of material necessity or necessary order, would be properly regarded as so prior there, and so independent, primary, and supreme.

The absence or non-existence of a moral law and order in us, would doubtless sweep away even the possibility

[1] *Metaphysics*, Lect. II.

of such a law, order, and governor in the universe. But how precisely, it may be asked, does Hamilton connect the fact of the existence of these in us with their existence in the universe, or as transcending experience? Is it by analogy simply? Is it meant that, seeing there is moral law, agency in man, there is, therefore, in a sphere transcending experience, the same, or similar, moral law, agency, a moral Governor consequently? To reach this inference we obviously need several links of connection more than the mere fact of the moral order in our conscious experience. Perhaps in the very nature of this order of our experience may lie a necessity for connecting it with a transcendent moral order. But this needs explication and development to complete the argument. The mere fact of the moral order here may be the means and the model of our conceiving the other supreme order and Governor, but the necessity of concluding to it is not given in the mere fact of the conception. The proof is thus but a sketch, and needs supplement and development.

But be this as it may, it is clear that in Hamilton's view we can mediately know a Supreme Cause, intelligent, free, personal, as real at the very least as we are, or any reality in our experience. In fact, he may be regarded as holding the complete implication of such a supreme reality in this finite experience of ours. To regard Hamilton, accordingly, as an agnostic, is entirely to misrepresent the last word of his philosophy. He is an agnostic only in the sense of denying and exploding a ridiculous absolutism.

But a question here arises. We are told that "the Deity is not an object of immediate contemplation; as existing and in Himself, He is beyond our reach; we can know Him only mediately through His works."[1] We may ask: Is this mediate knowledge a sure and true knowledge? or is it such a knowledge that we cannot be sure of its truth, but may find it some day contradicted as to its essence and substance, if we ever come to know Being in itself?

The answer to this seems to me to be, that this knowledge of a Cause, a Divine Cause, is a true knowledge of what is and has been manifested. It is a manifestation to us and our faculties, to their number, their nature, their laws. We cannot grasp God as He is *per se;* we cannot even grasp Him completely in all His manifestations. But we know God as He is revealed. The only thing that could contradict this knowledge would be another and different phænomenal revelation. For of what is called His absolute being, His being apart from manifestation, that can never be knowledge to us, and, therefore, can never contradict what we definitely know. But no other manifestation of God can be to us, constituted as we are, different essentially from what there is now. Our faculties have their nature and laws, and we know Him according to these; and if these be contradicted by any subsequent alleged manifestation in the future, our very power of knowing is subverted, and we have chaos, not knowledge. Our knowledge of God as Cause, intelligent, omnipotent, free, moral, may indeed be sublimated; present

[1] *Metaphysics,* Lect. II.

conceptions may pass into higher of the same order. That would be our gain, not our loss; but that is all the change possible.

But at the best we must emphasise the partialness of even this relative knowledge. The world we know and through which we know God is not necessarily His one, His single, His whole manifestation. A God necessitated to develop Himself is no God; He is not even man, for man, in his true being, is free. An absolute or infinite cause, so called, under a necessity of manifestation, is no absolute or infinite reality at all. One line of development is all we could have under such a condition—one, and one only; the only possible, the best, the poor best we have. It is restricted to this; it can do nothing more. This is a purely helpless absolute. And if this be Deity, and yet under the necessity of manifestation, or passing into another form of being, who can tell that He survives?

But the manifestation of a Divine Cause is different from the manifestation of a verbal Absolute. This is limited by the notionalism from which it springs; the true God stands at the head of experience. As such He must be adequate to the highest thing in experience. And what is this? Not a necessity of manifestation, not a mechanical necessity, even with consciousness, but the full scope of a free power, analogous to our own, at its highest development; when we create by willing or not-willing; when we can accept the rational motive; when we can consent to self-sacrifice, to greatness of emotion, to devotion to the right, the holy, and the pure. A free consciousness above necessitation, above a single

necessary determinate development, above all that we can see, or feel, or know about this world of ours, with all its grandeur and all its compass, manifesting itself, yet not complete or exhausted in the manifestation,—this is for us the highest type, the true analogue of a God. Such a Deity is neither unknowable nor unknown.

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